

A scenic landscape featuring a range of rugged, snow-capped mountains under a clear blue sky. In the foreground, a vibrant turquoise lake reflects the sky, with green and yellow vegetation along the shoreline.

GEODYSSEY

CHILE

AND EASTER ISLAND

Chile travel guide

Where to stay

Tailor-made holidays

Small group holidays

Selfdrive Chile

Active Chile

Natural Chile

Fjord and lake cruises

Antarctic and South

Atlantic cruises



Chile travel guide

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Tailor-made travel

Our knowledgeable specialists for Chile can work with you to design a trip to suit you best. The right itinerary, the right balance of activity and rest, the hotels you'll most enjoy. These suggestions illustrate a few of the options, out of many. Contact us to create your perfect trip.

For family travel see our recommendations on page 27.

Small group journeys

Join a convivial small group holiday.

Selfdrive Chile

Good options for confident drivers.

Active Chile

Walking trekking and multi-activity in one of the best countries in the world for getting out into the wild.

Natural Chile

Nature, local cultures, wildlife and bird watching.

Fjord and lake cruises

Spectacular cruising experiences.

Antarctica and the South Atlantic

The ultimate adventure.

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Welcome

This brochure for Chile is another in our series of in-depth travel brochures for our destinations in Latin America and the Caribbean. In each our aim is always to provide you with a wide choice of travel and holiday ideas that bring out the best in each destination, so that you can pick the holiday that suits you the best.

In each destination we focus on the travel experiences that make that country special. We highlight the distinctive places to visit, ways to gain insights into local cultures and communities, the best opportunities to see wildlife, as well as great beaches and characterful hotels. There are different ways to travel too, from joining a small group with a knowledgeable local guide, taking local tours, or having the luxury of a private guide or driver all to yourself.

Also included in the mix we provide for our clients are special options like expedition cruises, adventurous walking, trekking, biking, rafting and watersports, and specialist wildlife and bird watching at all levels.

We bring all this together for you in a well-organised trip that makes the best use of your precious time and the budget you decide on. Our aim is to provide the best choices, excellent service, and outstanding value.

Geodyssey is not an ordinary travel company. We started life in 1993 and soon developed our own dedicated and personal style that many people seem to like. We have grown, but we are still a small team and we really care about each and every customer. Travel is our passion, and we want to share that with you. Each of us has travelled widely in our destinations (and beyond), so if one of us happens not to have been to a particular place we offer, the chances are that someone else on our team will have been there, probably several times.

When you are deciding where to go for your next holiday you'll want to turn to someone who really knows the area you'd like to visit. Our travel specialists for Chile have lived there or travelled the length and breadth of this wonderful country. We hope you will choose us to help you explore it and enjoy a warm-hearted Chilean welcome.

Gillian Howe
Managing Director



PHOTOS
01 Monkey puzzle forest, Conguillo NP, Lake District
02 A puma licks its paw (The Websters)
03 Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino, Santiago
04 Sunday lunch, Explora Atacama

Flights

There are several ways to fly to Chile from the UK. By far the easiest and most popular is British Airways' direct service from London. All our tailor-made holidays can be arranged to fit BA's schedule and the dates of our small group 'Chile Odyssey' are chosen to work with BA flights. BA also flies direct to Buenos Aires in Argentina and Lima in Peru; our tailor-made holidays combining Chile with those countries can also be tailored to fit BA flights.

We also offer all the other airlines who fly to Chile. You do not need to book your flights with us. You may buy them independently if you prefer.



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01



02

Atacama and the North

Dramatic desert landscapes that offer exciting travel opportunities, spectacular walking and trekking, and a real sense of escape.

Flying from Santiago your plane tracks the northward course of the Andes, cruising beside a spectacular procession of glistening peaks—ice-bound, severe and stark—that split the continent and divide Chile from Argentina.

Close to Santiago, the land runs down to the Pacific with enough water from the ocean air and Andean rivers for vineyards, farms and forests. Going north this soon turns to dry hills and scrub. From your aircraft window you see landscapes turning dusty and brown, crossed by fewer and fewer valleys of green.

Hundreds of kilometres pass beneath you and the earth has become arid and empty. A new chain of mountains has risen closer to the ocean, wringing every hint of moisture from the air and turning this into the Atacama Desert—the driest desert on earth.

ATACAMA DESERT

You land in the Atacama Desert in an unassuming landscape of gravelly sands and rock at Calama, where a dusty mining town justifies an airport and a crossroads. The road to the east climbs to a rim of low hills that block the downwards escape of the few little streams that come from the Andes beyond, tipping them into a giant basin where they are at the mercy of the sun, evaporating their puny delivery of water into thin air and leaving a wide expanse of glistening salt flats.

The road passes a viewpoint above a fractured landscape of jumbled ridges and blistering sands that earns its name of 'Moon Valley'. Stop to stand on a dramatic overhang above the vast

desert views beyond, listen to the wind, and put yourself in one of Atacama's iconic photos. You descend to an almost miraculous oasis where a narrow stream from distant volcanoes arrives to support the settlement of San Pedro de Atacama.

San Pedro lay largely ignored in its desert setting until a couple of decades ago, when a hotel or two opened their doors to explorers and travellers, and the tiny mining village began to evolve into a base for its region. It is still a small patch of dusty streets radiating from a pretty square beside a thatched church, but its humble houses are these days adapted into a handful of cafés and bars, and little shops selling the bits and pieces that travellers buy.

Behind adobe walls and tucked away down country lanes lie beautiful expedition lodges designed by contemporary architects in response to their desert settings. Each offers its own blissful combination of nightly comfort and well-considered cuisine with daytime activity and adventure, exercise and exploration, yoga, spa and pool.

There is something remarkable to explore in every direction. The salt flats themselves (the *Salar de Atacama*) are stunning, stretching a sparkling white to far distant hills, with shallow lagoons reflecting dramatic dawn and sunset skies as flocks of flamingos feed. You can trek for hours into the Moon Valley, or its sister the Death Valley. Within reach of the village there are ancient cave settlements set in valleys of multi-coloured rock, tracks into canyons for biking, and



Atacama facts

The Atacama desert covers almost the whole of northern Chile from La Serena to Arica, a continuous strip nearly 1600km long. The same desert conditions continue into southern Peru as far as Ica and the Nazca Lines.

Some weather stations in the Atacama have never recorded any rain. Even at Arica and Iquique on the coast the annual average is just 1–3mm. Atacama's hyper-arid climate can be traced back 200 million years. Nitrate deposits accumulated in the long dry climate brought a mining boom to areas inland from Iquique and elsewhere. 'Salar' salt flats are also characteristic of these conditions: Salar de Atacama just below San Pedro is the largest of several. The salt flats also contain lithium for the high density batteries that make cell phones and electric cars possible, Chile's latest boom.

The altiplanic or 'Bolivian' winter brings cold air over the Andes from the Amazon for 3–4 days in January or February. Occasionally it brings sudden rain: in February 2012 it brought flooding to San Pedro de Atacama. The desert bloomed.

PHOTOS
01 Moon Valley at sunset, Atacama
02 Tara salt flat, Atacama



Twelve things to do in the Atacama

1 Take in the views

Atacama's clear air landscapes are a perpetual amazement, an evolving array of distant mountains, high Andean volcanoes, wind-sculpted rock, scintillating salt flats, dramatic canyons, and altiplanic lagoons. This is the **Kari Viewpoint**.

2 Hike in the Wilderness

A hat, walking boots, plenty of water and a local guide are all you need to put yourself into empty wilderness of the **Moon Valley**, surrender to the void, and feel the 21st century flee from your mind.

3 Visit the ancients

Near the multicoloured **Rainbow Valley** ancient Atacameños carved rock art beside narrow sleeping ledges. The **Tulor fortress** dates from 800BC and was used to fend off the first Spanish to arrive in the area. In San Pedro the **Gustavo Le Paige** museum holds 380,000 artefacts gathered by a Belgian missionary, its displays cover the changing peoples of the Atacama from earliest neolithic times.

4 Walk in a field of geysers

El Tatio is the largest geyser field in the southern hemisphere, third largest in the world, the highest in the world, and has 8% of all the geysers on earth. Statistics aside it's a remarkable sight—best seen very in the morning when the air is cold and the jets of steam are at their most dramatic.

5 See flamingos

They are beautiful and there are 3 at the **Chaxa Lagoon**: James's (palest pink, red legs, yellow bill with black at the very tip), Andean (dark pink on the lower neck, yellow legs), Chilean (grey legs, red feet, pink knees). Now you're a birder.

6 Watch wildlife and birds

Up in the Andean sierras above San Pedro there's just enough pasture for guanacos, rheas and viscachas. Ibis and waterfowl gather at high ('altiplanic') lagoons below perfect cone volcanoes, some tipped with snow.

7 De-wrinkle in hot springs

Springs from deep in the mountains produce little streams that bring life to narrow canyons and valleys. The thermal pools at **Puritama** charge a modest fee—proceeds go to the local community.

8 Buy fruit in an oasis village

At **Toconao** mountain streams feed irrigation channels to flood each family's fields and orchards for 2 hours every fortnight to create an oasis in the desert. The adobe church of St Luke dates from the mid 1700s, its bell tower is made with cactus wood.

9 Float like a cork

The salt lake of **Laguna Cejar** is 7 times saltier than the sea: you can float as you read a book. 30km from San Pedro it's in biking range for the overactive.

10 Relax by the pool

For those in less need of exercise, San Pedro's luxurious **expedition lodges** have gorgeous swimming pools and excellent spas. If you have been out all day in the desert they are just the place to revive before an exquisite dinner.

11 Potter in San Pedro

San Pedro de Atacama is a bustling little village with a handful of streets with shops, cafes and bars, and lanes between secluded gardens. Ideal for a saunter after lunch or in the evening.

12 Wonder at a billion stars

The Southern Cross, the Milky Way, Orion's belt, all draped above you across the clear desert sky. Wrap up warmly to enjoy them and to see them at their best. Choose nights when the moon is not near its fullest. Enthusiasts at the **SPACE** observatory have set up the most telescopes for you to try. Book ahead with us to visit **ALMA** where the real science goes on.



plenty of opportunities for walking, trekking, horse-riding—and even ballooning sometimes.

To the east of San Pedro runs a dramatic skyline of high volcanoes along the sierras of the Andes. Sixteen peaks, some near perfect cones, are above 5000m and the highest reaches 6046m.

Venturing into the mountains on day trips from San Pedro (at much less extreme altitudes) you find high grasslands grazed by vicuñas and rheas, crystal clear altiplanic lagoons, wind-blown deserts with rocks eroded to fantastic shapes, fields of active geysers spluttering and shooting steam into the morning air, dramatic canyons, and rivers that tumble between pools warmed by hot springs.

As the sun sets your guide may take you to a perfect look-out (with an appropriate sundowner in your hand) before you make your way back to your lodge. After dinner and as darkness becomes complete you might visit one of the several astronomical observatories in the area. Some of the larger lodges have their own.

San Pedro makes a way point for trips into Bolivia, crossing the border on a road that winds through the Bolivian deserts to Uyuni and 4,000 square miles of pure white salt flats.

EL NORTE CHICO

The Norte Chico, or 'near north', is the long expanse between central Chile around Santiago and the Norte Grande which holds the Atacama Desert.

800km from bottom to top, Norte Chico makes a long transition from the fertile central valley to the dry deserts. Its highlights are few.

La Serena is a colonial town (the second oldest in Chile) set back from a long, long beach served by a long, long esplanade of hotels that fill to overflowing after Christmas in the height of Chile's summer holidays. It sits at the mouth of the Elqui river, which flows from the Andes through a delightful valley of vineyards, orange groves, and fruit farms—a long swathe of green winding between its steep dry hillsides. The Elqui Valley is 'A cry of nature rising amidst the opaque mountains and the clear blue sky' in the words of the poet Gabriela Mistral.

Mistral, the first female Nobel laureate for literature, is honoured by a museum in the town of Vicuña. Not far from here are two spectacular astronomical observatories, Cerro Tololo and Del Pangué, that open their doors to visitors. There are several others further afield. **Pisco** brandy is a principal product of the region.



Astronomy

The dry pure Atacama air reveals night skies so clear that the moon is brighter than you ever saw, and stars come out in visible billions—the Milky Way swarming across the sky and constellations marked out like a textbook for the ancients.

The 66 antennas of the massive ALMA (Atacama Large Millimetre/submillimetre Array) project are perched out of sight across a high plain, feeding their signals down to a 'support facility' 30km from San Pedro where the astronomers actually sit. The Atacama skies are frequently so clear that Alma can achieve better resolutions than the Hubble.

You don't need quite so much equipment to become a star-gazer yourself. Several lodges have impressive astronomical telescopes, and local enthusiasts have set up their own collections of telescopes to show you stunning close-ups of the moon, views of planets that will make you gasp, twin stars, and other delights of the cosmos that are hidden in our skies at home but revealed in over 300 clear nights in each year. The Paranal Observatory, which has the European Very Large Telescope (precision polished with UCL technology using robots made by Zeeko in Leicester) is best reached by a long journey from Antofagasta.

PHOTOS
01 Dawn view from San Pedro de Atacama
02 High in the Domeyko range above San Pedro
03 The Elqui Valley





LAUCA NATIONAL PARK

The extraordinary Lauca National Park lies just beyond the Atacama desert, tucked into Chile's north-east corner.

Lauca starts at an everyday 3200m but rises to 6342m, making it one of the world's highest parks. Maximum altitude is provided by Parinacota volcano, with three others over 6000m and several peaks in the 4000s and 5000s. There are more volcanoes just over the border in Bolivia including Pomerape, Parinacota's twin.

The result is stunning. Immense snowy volcanoes stand behind volcanic cones of every size dotted across a wide high landscape.

Unlike Atacama, parts of Lauca are wet from rain and mountain rivers. Chungara Lake is the highest lake, the interconnected lagoons of Cotacotani are among the most scenic. They flow underground to feed wetlands that are a magnet for wildlife.

Vicuñas, guanacos and huemules graze in numbers, armadillos and viscachas are plentiful. Pumas are present, but hard to find.

Lauca's birdlife is particularly special, with 140 on the list, including key altiplano and high plateau endemics. Good road access to much of the altitude range is very helpful.

Despite the strong competition, Lauca could claim to be one of Chile's most spectacular regions, though it is one of its least visited. The best access is from Arica on the coast or from the Uyuni salt flats in Bolivia.

Lauca Biosphere Reserve combines the Lauca and Las Vicuñas parks and borders Sajama NP in Bolivia.

IQUIQUE

Squeezed between the ocean and the gigantic sand dunes that are a feature of this coast (and offer some of the world's best paragliding) Iquique goes about its business with energy

and cosmopolitan style. The town expanded from fishing village to commercial hub in the nitrate boom that created the ghost towns of Humberstone and Santa Laura, both UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

ARICA

The last town before the border, Arica marks the end of the coastal cordillera in a chunky bluff and 110m cliff known as El Morro where an 1880 battle saw this region pass from Peru to Chile. Local holidaymakers, surfing beaches, and docks that serve as Bolivia's access to the sea keep the town busy.

Human history stretches back nine thousand years here thanks to the two fertile river valleys of Lluta and Azapa which were settled by the ancient Chinchorro people, then by Tiwanakus, before coming under Inca control. Geoglyph drawings in the surface of the earth dot the valleys and in 1983 the burial site of 96 mummies was accidentally unearthed at the foot of El Morro, echoing smaller burial sites along the Pacific coast. The earliest mummies from the region predate their Egyptian counterparts by several thousand years.

An excellent Museo Arqueológico nearby in the Azapa Valley houses a collection of Chinchorro mummies, along with ceramics, tapestries and other artefacts from Chinchorro, Tiwanaku and Aymara cultures in the region. It is among the best museums in Chile.

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PHOTOS
01 Twin volcanoes, Lauca NP
02 Cotacotani lagoons, Lauca NP
03 Humberstone ghost town



Route of the Geoglyphs

In the mountains beyond the green Azapa Valley above the coastal towns of Arica and Iquique, the ancient 'Route of the Geoglyphs' takes you on an archaeological journey to a world dating back to 5000bc. The most frequent types of geoglyph are geometric forms: circles, concentric circles, circles with dots, rectangles, crosses, arrows, parallel lines, rhomboids; also typical of early ceramics and textiles. One important image is the stepped rhombus, a staircase of stacked diamond shapes. Wildlife examples include llamas, alpacas, foxes, lizards, flamingos, eagles, gulls, rheas, monkeys, fish, dolphins and sharks. A frequently occurring image is a caravan of llamas, one or more lines of between three and 80 animals in a row. Another frequent image is that of an amphibian, such as a lizard, toad or serpent; in the Andean world all of these are divinities connected to water rituals. Human figures occur in the geoglyphs and are generally naturalistic in form; some are hunting and fishing, others have religious or sexual themes. The Lluta style from the coastal plains to 1400ad shows the body with a highly stylized pair of long legs and a square head, earlier forms in the Tarapaca region, have a forked crest and a body with concave sides. Possible reasons for geoglyphs include cult worship and interpretations of solar alignments. One attractive interpretation is that they were drawn to guide llama caravans through the desert, showing where water and grazing could be found. Large llama caravans were reported by Spanish chroniclers but as yet no direct archaeological evidence of them has been found in the desert.

Where to stay in Atacama and the North

Our HOTEL GRADES are explained on p55

The stars of San Pedro de Atacama are its extremely stylish and thoughtful upper range lodges that provide expeditions into the area with top-rate guides. Three have sister lodges in other parts of Chile (and now Peru and Argentina): these are the 'Expedition Lodge Collections' on page 43. There are other great places to stay in and around San Pedro. In other parts of the north there are good options, but nothing like these.



Alto Atacama TOP RANGE

San Pedro de Atacama

3km down a country road outside San Pedro, Alto Atacama is a contemporary upper range lodge with 42 guest rooms built in modernist desert style inspired by its secluded canyon setting.

Guests stay on an all-inclusive basis and choose from a long menu of daily excursions and expeditions including high Andes lagoons, salt flats, geysers, cave paintings and hot springs. The lodge also features a restaurant, bar, six small pools and a spa. Alto Atacama has its own open deck telescope for guests to marvel at the clearest skies in the world.



Noi Casa Atacama UPPER RANGE

San Pedro de Atacama

Noi Casa Atacama is located in San Pedro making it a great base for day excursions and for exploring the lively little town. All 29 rooms are set around its walled desert garden with a small swimming pool and are nicely decorated with white walls and local art and handicrafts. 18 suites are positioned with views to the pool and have a private covered terrace with an outside seating area.

There is a small spa on site as well as a restaurant serving a mix of Chilean cuisine and international dishes.



Altiplanico MID-PLUS

San Pedro de Atacama

Just outside the village of San Pedro, Altiplanico has 29 adobe-style casitas with interiors in warm desert colours to a contemporary theme.

All the casitas have small individual terraces. Superior casitas have their own outdoor (as well as indoor) showers.

There is a swimming pool and large attractively planted areas to relax. Altiplanico's restaurant offers regional cuisine using local ingredients, and there is an outdoor fire pit for *asado* barbecues.



Terrantai Lodge MID-PLUS

San Pedro de Atacama

Terrantai Lodge is a characterful hotel in the centre of San Pedro de Atacama near the church and village square. Originally a 19th century house, the lodge has plenty of original Atacameño style and charm which has been extended into the newer parts of the property. All the hotel's artwork, textiles and handicrafts is made by local artisans.

There are 21 rooms in total in standard and superior categories, connected by narrow cobble-walled passages and connecting to a secluded patio terrace.



Hotel Kimal and Poblado Kimal MID-RANGE

San Pedro de Atacama

Sister properties across the road from each other in San Pedro, Hotel Kimal and Poblado Kimal are good mid-range options. Both properties are built in adobe style in earthen colours in keeping with the local surroundings. Each hotel has its own small swimming pool and areas to relax, as well as offering some spa services. Hotel Kimal has the main restaurant for guests at both hotels. Poblado Kimal has 21 individual thatched cabins with private decks, Hotel Kimal has 19 more conventional rooms. Both are neat, well-organised and efficiently-run.



Hotel Arica MID-PLUS

Arica

Hotel Arica faces the Pacific ocean at a beach 2km from downtown Arica. The hotel has 114 comfortable, brightly decorated rooms ranging from standard to cabañas, with some having ocean views.

The hotel has two outdoor swimming pools. There is a bar and a restaurant with the option of alfresco dining looking out to the ocean.



NH Iquique MID-RANGE

Iquique

Tucked away in a quiet residential area by the sea, just 30min from the airport, the NH Iquique is a good option that avoids the bustle of the city. The hotel's 78 rooms are clean, spacious and modern in design with views to the city or out over the Pacific Ocean.

There are plenty of communal areas where guests can relax including a swimming pool, gardens and outdoor terrace.



El Terral MID-RANGE

Elqui Valley

El Terral, in the village of Vicuña at the heart of the Elqui Valley, is set in secluded grounds within old adobe walls. It has 31 modern rooms, garden, swimming pool, spa and wellness centre, restaurant and great roof terrace with a bar and Jacuzzis. It is one block from the main square and the castellated Torre Bauer tower, and a 5 minute walk from Gabriela Mistral Museum. El Terral is also a convenient base for astronomy: 9km from the Mamalluca Observatory, and 18km from the more advanced Observatorio del Panguel with larger telescopes but only for smaller numbers of visitors. Booking well ahead is recommended for both.

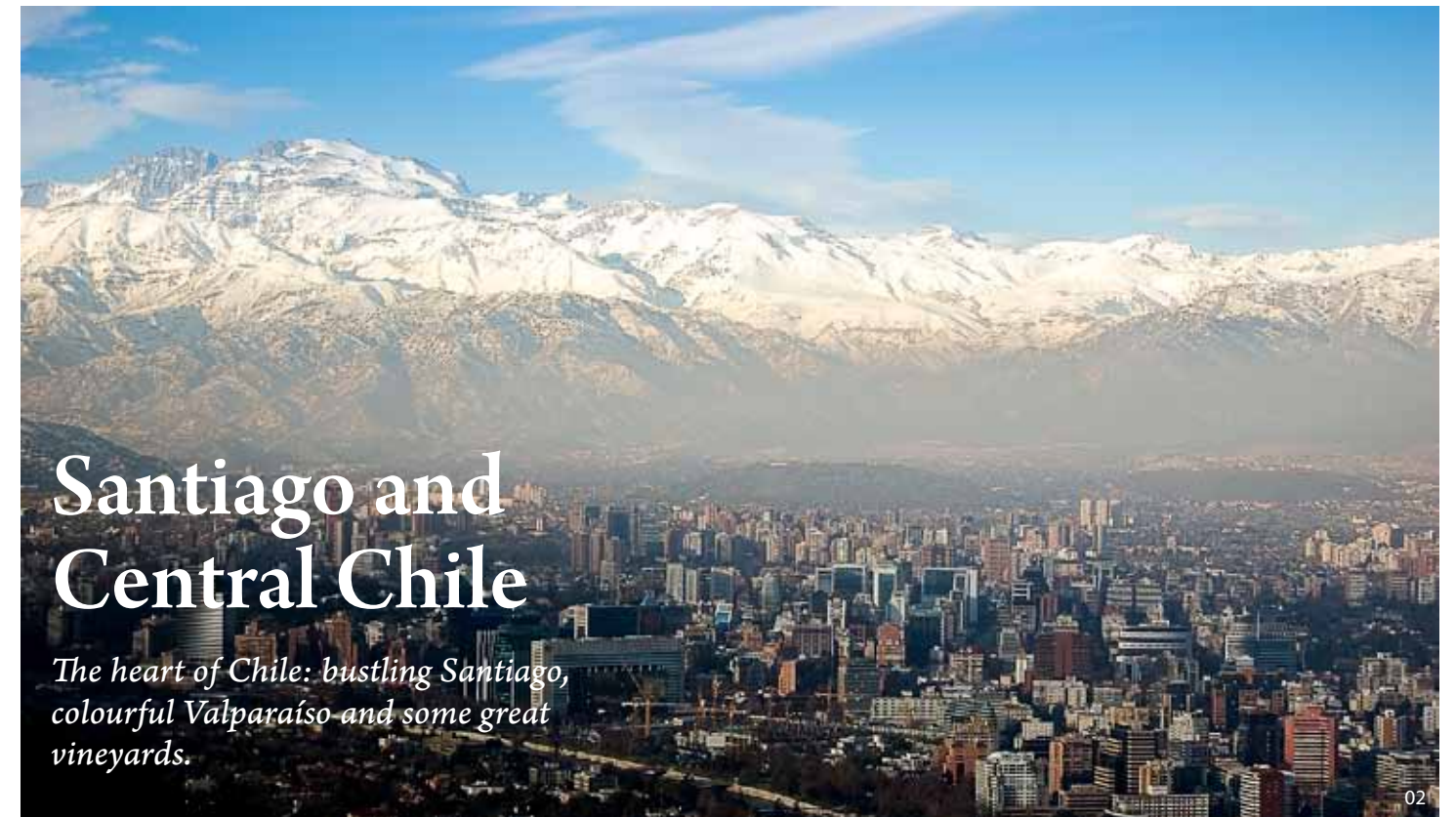
Expedition lodges

- Explora Atacama**
- Tierra Atacama**
- Awasi Atacama**

San Pedro's top-end expedition lodges are a major reason to visit the area. See our 'Expedition Lodge Collections' feature on p43.

Worth a mention

- Cumbres Atacama** San Pedro de Atacama UPPER RANGE
Set in a large 8 hectare property, this high-end lodge has 60 spacious, beautifully decorated guest rooms, each with private terrace and outdoor shower. There are three swimming pools and a spa.
- Hotel O'Antati** Putre MID-RANGE
A good base for trips into Lauca NP. 10 rooms with reasonable comfort, around courtyard and garden. Some rooms have nice views of the valley.
- Mar de Ensueno** La Serena MID-RANGE
By the beach in La Serena and only 20 minutes from the airport, this well-liked seaside hotel has 50 rooms and 10 cottages.



Santiago and Central Chile

The heart of Chile: bustling Santiago, colourful Valparaíso and some great vineyards.

The central zone of Chile, with its vineyards and rolling hills set between the Andes and the Pacific, separates cosmopolitan Santiago, South America's most orderly capital, and Valparaíso, its quirky opposite.

SANTIAGO

Set stunningly against the backdrop of the Andes, Santiago is a colonial city, turned republican capital, turned modern metropolis—the cultural, economic and political hub of the country. Over 40% of Chileans live in its pleasant climate with easy escapes into the countryside, out to the beach in summer and up to Andean ski-slopes in winter.

There is lots to keep a visitor busy. Within the downtown area there is an excellent range of accommodation and restaurants with small boutique style properties springing up in the lively neighbourhoods of Lastarria and Bellavista.

The affluent zones of Providencia and Las Condes east of the centre also make a good base, well-served by the easy to use metro system.

Scattered across these central *barrios* are the country's best museums and galleries, including the principal national and contemporary art collections at the Palacio de Bellas Artes, the very special Pre-Columbian Art museum, and smaller private galleries.

For panoramic views of the city and mountains, San Cristóbal Hill is an essential stop. A funicular lift climbs through the various levels in the park, including a botanical garden, public swimming pools and eventually the terraced restaurant and cafe at the summit.

Back at ground level, Santiago's Mercado

Central was named one of the top 10 food markets in the world by National Geographic, with which we would agree.

The city's important political and church buildings are mostly set around and about the Plaza de Armas. Here you'll find the Metropolitan Cathedral, the National Congress, the present and former Supreme Court buildings, the City Hall, and Santiago's very grand Central Post Office.

You should also see the Plaza de la Constitución, a fine open space in front of the Palacio de la Moneda—the Presidential Palace that in 1973 had such a key role in Chile's history.

Santiago is a commercial city, some areas are downright dull, and sometimes its air becomes trapped and the NOx level rises. A quarter of a century of democracy has healed many wounds and life blooms warmly and with open arms, though fairly quietly, and with a very Chilean sense of good order.

INTO THE CENTRAL VALLEY

Chile's lengthy Central Valley runs north/south between the Andes and the coastal hills that look out to the Pacific. This middle portion enjoys a Mediterranean climate in which agriculture—particularly viticulture—thrives. Rivers from the mountains cross the plain from east to west, and their valleys within the valley are the basis for Chile's wine appellations (see page 13).

Country villages, market towns, churches, fields, forests and vineyards dot the rolling landscape. Traditions are deeply felt, land-owning families hold strong sway, and life on the land is spartan and reserved.

Eleven Things to See in Santiago

1 Palacio de Bellas Artes

A stonking beaux-arts building which houses both the national fine art museum, the oldest in South America, and the very good national contemporary art museum.

2 Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino

One of the most exciting museums on the continent with beautifully curated collections of astonishing art from Chile's much overlooked pre-European communities.

3 Museo de la Memoria

Outsiders only knew of Chile under Pinochet from afar. Little has prepared us all for such a direct confrontation with the inhumanity remembered here on the path to reconciliation. Not an easy experience but essential to appreciate how far today's Chile has come.

4 Cerro San Cristobal

Take a cable car to escape the city streets for views of Santiago's stunning setting against the backdrop of the Andes. Its rival, Cerro Santa Lucía, also has great views.

5 La Chascona

Pablo Neruda's enchanting hillside house below Cerro San Cristobal. See box on p12.

6 Plaza de Armas

Santiago's Plaza de Armas is in the grandest style, flanked by cathedral, national museum, and city hall, and close to other important civic sights.

7 Mercado Central

A thriving, metropolitan fruit, vegetable and fish market beneath a canopy of iron and glass imported from England in 1868. A great place for local food, especially seafood at lunchtime.

8 Sculpture Park

Walk around 30 sculptures by Chilean artists in a peaceful riverside park.

9 Lastarria hip

Street stalls and shops for clothes, decor, collectibles and books. Cutting edge art at MAV Museum of Visual Arts. Ice-creams at 'Emporio La Rosa'.

10 360 degree views

Views all around the city from the viewing gallery at Sky Costanera—South America's tallest at 300m.

11 Eat local, think local

Try *barros Luco* (a beef and melted cheese sandwich) with *mote de huesillo*. Now do you understand what it means to be Chilean?

PHOTOS
01 The gardener's siesta at Matetic winery
02 Santiago



VALPARAÍSO

Some have said that Valparaíso is a ‘Berlin’ of Latin America. Around an hour and a half to the west of Santiago this quirky port on the Pacific is Chile’s second largest city.

Valparaíso’s bright-painted houses are stacked higgledy-piggledy on more than 40 hills around a broad bay. Like Berlin, it’s a town that knows what life is for and how to enjoy it. Unlike Berlin, Valparaíso is all innocence.

The city’s challenging topology, by turns inspiring and exhausting, creates a thousand little neighbourhoods and this seems to put its citizens in a permanently cheery state of mind. When we are all struggling just to get to the top of the street, then why shouldn’t we give each other a grin and a pat on the back when we get there?

It also helps that this house is painted bright red, the one next door is yellow, and the neighbours opposite have painted their cornflower blue. And the sea below us is looking crystal clear today with jolly tugs parading back and forth to docks lined with toy cranes. We are in a permanent live-in-the-moment childhood.

Of course, the cars are ordinary saloons, Big Ears is not sitting behind the wheel, and Mr Plod has not rid the streets of every rapsallion. But where else would you find a supposedly serious city with 15 little funicular railways chugging up and down the hillsides? Built at the start of the 20th century and restored to former glory these little chaps are much the greatest way to gain some elevation. Otherwise, you take the steps and take your time—distracted by pots of flowers, arty murals, humorous signs, and cats curled on window sills as you puff past.

Visit the trendy area around the exit to the ‘Concepción’ funicular or the ‘Peral’. Either marks the start of a flâneur’s walk with lots to see, local street art, bars, cafes and corner shops.

Down at sea level there are some serious-looking naval buildings, a proper port, and the commercial trappings believed essential for life today. There is a thoroughly straight-faced monument to a national hero who played a key role nearly a century and a half ago in the three-way War of the Pacific with Peru and Bolivia: Arturo Prat.

Valparaíso has made money from time to time, and around the hills there are marble mansions and fine houses. Some are museums, and some are boutique hotels. The greatest concentrations are scattered across Cerro Alegre, Cerro Concepción and Cerro Florida. Paseo Atkinson has a fine terrace that would do nicely in Harrogate or Bath, but with the advantage of a gorgeous view over a Pacific bay and a lot more sunshine.

There is plenty that is ramshackle and unkempt. The lavish investment programme that spawned the city’s UNESCO World Heritage status only went so far. But a thriving arts community overflows onto the street, not only directly in the quantity and quality of street art (for which Valparaíso is unrivalled) but also in the sound of a cello wafting from an upstairs window, a street juggler, and a pair of actors rehearsing their lines in the park.

Pablo Neruda, poet, diplomat, Nobel Laureate and sensible man, was very fond of Valparaíso. He created a particularly enviable home here: ‘La Sebastiana’ (see box).



Pablo Neruda’s houses

The great Chilean poet, humanist, diplomat, communist, Nobel Laureate, presidential nominee, and lover of the good life, created three special houses to enjoy with his partners and friends. They have been scrupulously restored and opened to the public with the poet’s presence vivid in them all.

La Chascona

Built for his lover (its name means ‘the girl with the wild hair’) on a scrap of wasteland on the side of San Cristobal Hill in Santiago’s bohemian Bellavista district. Initially a romantic hideaway from his marital home in the city, La Chascona became the new couple’s home where Neruda lived from 1955 until his death in 1973. The house was designed for sharing and Neruda filled it with inspirational objects, art and curios. It invites travel, surreal dreams, love and bonhomie.

La Sebastiana

An escape from Santiago, especially at New Year, La Sebastiana’s terraces look out across Valparaíso, with a tower where the poet could survey the bay like a ship’s captain. Bought as a part-built shell and completed (with a great house-warming party) in 1961, the house has many nautical allusions including several ship’s figureheads, and much else.

Isla Negra

The most extravagantly poetic of Neruda’s poetic houses, Isla Negra was a long 20 years in the making. A stone cabin bought in 1938, was not enlarged until 1943–45 when Neruda was a busy communist senator, shortly before he had to flee into exile. Not until a decade after his return in 1952 did the house reach its final spell-spinning form: gypsy caravan becomes railway carriage becomes sailing ship, boudoir, look-out, seafarer’s bar—a house that bursts with ideas and fantasies.

PHOTOS
01 Valparaíso’s hillside houses
02 Wine-tasting in progress
03 Ready for the vendimia
04 Relaxing in the Central Valley
05 Casablanca bodega
06 Barrels of French oak at Casas del Bosque



Wine

Fine wine is made in Chile as far north as Elqui and beyond in Atacama, right down to Osorno in the Lake District and beyond to Malleco. But it is the Central Valley’s Mediterranean climate, coupled with a greater adoption of organic and sustainable practices, precise irrigation, and cutting-edge vinification overlaid on traditions that extend back to the 19th century, that makes its regions the most important.

Chile’s wine appellation is based on the east-west valleys of Andean rivers. The easiest to reach from Santiago are the Maipo, Casablanca, and San Antonio & Leyda valleys. Not much further are the Aconcagua valley to the north and the Cachapoal and Colchagua valleys to the south.

The best times to visit are during the growing season from September to February and the vendimia harvest season from March to May. Seasons vary by a few weeks between

regions and year to year.

The return of democracy in the 1990s brought a leap forward for Chilean wine after years of stagnation at the hands of the old landed families. It also attracted foreigners: Miguel Torres, Rothschild, Marnier Lapostolle and others who brought a focus on matching the right vine with the right terroir.

Although fully a third of production is Cabernet Sauvignon, Chile’s signature grape is Carménère—whose vines were considered to be Merlot until properly identified in 1994. Merlot itself, Syrah, Pinot Noir, Malbec and Carignan complete the picture for reds.

For whites, the dominant grape is Sauvignon Blanc, at times alongside or jumbled with Sauvignon Vert and Semillon, followed far behind by Riesling, Viognier, Gewurtztraminer and some others.

WINERY VISITS

Our recommendations from the wineries that offer visits. All are visited in our Wine Route of Chile tour on p35

Maipo Valley

Viña Perez Cruz

One of the latest in the Valley with its first reds in 2002, and very much the exciting newcomer. The winery has stunning contemporary architecture in local timber, sustainable processes including gravity flow, and an innovative cellar.

Viña Santa Rita

Multi-award-winning Viña Santa Rita played a role in Chile’s liberation when Bernardo O’Higgins and 120 troops took refuge here, remembered in the ‘120’ label well-known in the UK. The visitor museum has an inspiring collection of artefacts from Chile’s indigenous cultures, with descriptions of their customs, and some stunning Inca gold and Mapuche silver works.

Colchagua Valley

Casa Silva

Casa Silva is one of the oldest in Colchagua and follows tradition. Its cellars, created by the Silva’s forebear who came from Bordeaux in 1892, are among the most beautiful in Chile. The family’s passion for their terroir, their concern for the details of wine making, their use of Colchagua grapes alone, and their commitment to future generations are evident everywhere. They achieve a unique distinctive character to each vintage.

Viu Manent

An established winery that has recently shot to prominence, with awards both for its wines and its tours.

Casa Lapostolle

Opened in 1994 and already one of Chile’s most highly-regarded wineries, Lapostolle’s ‘Chilean by nature, French by Design’ strapline reflects the pairing of Colchagua’s climate and soil with the long traditions of the Marnier family of Grand Marnier. The aspirational winery’s sculptural architecture blends function and design. Its three vineyards cover 370 hectares for varieties of Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Carménère and Syrah.

Viña Montes

In cool contrast to Lapostolle, this quixotic winery combines feng-shui principles and gregorian chants in the cellar with level-headed adherence to sustainable processes—gravity-flow, etc. Its steepest hillsides, some more than 45 degrees, produce their finest grapes which contribute to their ‘Montes Alpha M’, ‘Montes Folly’, and ‘Purple Angel’ labels.

Casablanca Valley

Matetic Vineyards

The avant-garde Matetic showcases its architecturally sophisticated cellars and adherence to an ‘equilibrium’ theme promoted in its EQ label.

Kingston Family Vineyards

A homely winery, with a lovely terrace for lunch with views over the Casablanca Valley.

You can visit Valparaíso in a day from Santiago. Another good option is to have lunch at a winery in the Casablanca Valley on the way from the capital, spend that night in Valparaíso, and explore it properly the following day.

It is also possible to connect from Valparaíso for overnight flights back to the UK leaving Santiago airport.

Any keen birder should fit in a pelagic boat trip from Quintero 45 miles north, one of the world’s best open-sea birding experiences.

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Central Valley appellations and their notable wineries

Maipo

The heart of Chilean wine, French traditions, big name producers. Primarily known for Cabernet Sauvignon, but also Carménère and Syrah.

- Concha y Toro
- Santa Rita
- Aquitania
- Altair (Cachapoal Valley)
- El Principal
- Undurraga
- Cousiño Macul

Colchagua

World-class Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Carménère and Syrah and good whites closer to the coast.

- Casa Silva
- Neyen de Apalta
- Casa Lapostolle
- Casa Colchagua
- Neyen de Apalta
- Clos Apalta
- Viu Manent
- Cono Sur
- Montes

Casablanca

Award-winning whites and new wave artisan reds.

- Emiliana
- Matetic
- Casas del Bosque
- Loma Larga
- Kingston Family
- Loma Larga
- William Cole
- Veramonte

San Antonio & Leyda

Coastal valleys producing predominantly white European style wines. Grapes include Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, Viognier, Chardonnay. Some Pinot Noir also.

Aconcagua

Beautiful scenery, fantastic higher altitude reds.

- Erazuriz
- Von Siebenthal

Cachapoal

Reliable reds, best for Carménère

Where to stay in Santiago and Central Chile

Santiago's new wave of hotels includes some very stylish contemporary and boutique properties. There is also a good selection of more affordable hotels with plenty of character and charm. The best choices in Valparaíso are those in older large houses and mansions renovated by enthusiastic owners. Architect-led winery hotels and relaxed country house properties in the Central Valley complete a very varied picture.



The Singular TOP RANGE

Santiago

Located in Lastarria, the fashionable bohemian heart of downtown Santiago with plenty of local trendy shops, restaurants, bars and cafés. This top range hotel has 62 beautiful rooms, stylishly decorated in a restrained contemporary style, all equipped with en-suite bathrooms with marble features.

The hotel's award winning restaurant is well worth a visit. It specialises in classic French cooking techniques but using local Chilean produce. Be sure to take the lift up to the stylish rooftop bar and pool area.



Ismael Hotel UPPER RANGE

Santiago

Ismael Hotel is a modern boutique hotel in easy walking distance of the Museo de Bellas Artes and the hip Lastarria neighbourhood, facing the Parque Forestal. Many of the 44 rooms have lovely park views. Rooms have air conditioning and wifi. There is a small plunge pool on the roof. A cafe bar serves coffee and breakfast all day.

There is no restaurant in the hotel but there is plenty to choose from nearby, and the friendly front desk staff will help with suggestions and reservations.



Hotel Plaza San Francisco MID-PLUS

Santiago

Plaza San Francisco is a traditional-style hotel conveniently located in downtown Santiago, within walking distance of its principal tourist sites. There are 146 rooms (standard, superior and junior suite) all with wifi, cable TV, hair dryer, safety box, mini-bar and air conditioning. There is a very good restaurant serving modern food with Chilean ingredients. There is also a small fitness centre with a gym, sauna and heated swimming pool.



Le Reve Boutique Hotel UPPER RANGE

Santiago

Located in the district of Providencia, Le Réve Boutique Hotel is in a bustling part of the city close to restaurants, bars, theatres and some popular touristic attractions. The hotel has French inspired décor throughout and succeeds in creating an upmarket, homely charm. Some of the 31 rooms have a pretty private balcony or larger terrace and there is a courtyard garden. Le Réve's open-hearted welcoming style includes a comfortable lounge (pictured), honesty bar and a characterful kitchen open to guests at night for complimentary snacks, coffee and juices.

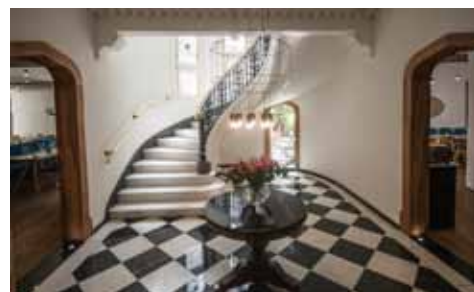


Hotel Neruda Express MID-RANGE

Santiago

Hotel Neruda Express offers guests a comfortable stay in Santiago. Rooms are clean and simply decorated and well equipped with air conditioning, central heating, cable TV and wifi.

The hotel is located in El Golf, the modern, business neighbourhood of Santiago, within walking distance of plenty of shops, bars and restaurants. The hotel has a communal dining room where buffet breakfast is served.



Hotel Magnolia UPPER RANGE

Santiago

Newly redeveloped from a 1920s mansion, Hotel Magnolia is a significant addition to the city, close to Cerro Santa Lucia in the historic 'El Centro' area at the heart of Santiago. The 42 well-equipped superior rooms and junior suites have a calm restful ambience with clean soft lines and neutral tones. The entrance, bar area and restaurant, which serves Chilean dishes, exude a genial elegance and make wonderful use of the building's original architecture blended with sure-handed avant garde flourishes. One of the best choices in the city.



Solace Santiago MID-PLUS

Santiago

Solace Santiago is a modern, arty hotel located in the Providencia district. The hotel has 108 rooms in total in suite or superior room categories. All rooms are spacious, clean and modern in design featuring black and white photographs showcasing Chile's stunning and varied landscape. Guests can enjoy the Zafferano Restaurant located on the ground floor, a bar with roof-top terrace, and the gym and outdoor pool.



Altiplanico Bellas Artes UPPER RANGE

Santiago

Set in an old house dating back to 1909 and renovated into a 24 room boutique hotel. Altiplanico Santiago is designed in a contemporary modernist style throughout worked around some of the building's original features. The hotel is located in the Bellas Artes district, the cultural and artistic centre of Santiago. Guests stay on a bed and breakfast basis. There is a nice breakfast room but no restaurant although there are plenty in the vicinity.

Worth a mention

W Santiago Santiago TOP RANGE

Located in the Las Condes district of Santiago this trendy, upmarket hotel has a rooftop pool with views over the city.

Torremayor Santiago MID-RANGE

A good value mid-range hotel in Providencia. Rooms are spacious and simple in design and the hotel features an attractive rooftop pool.

Hotel Fundador Santiago MID-RANGE

A good, centrally located property comprising 147 pleasant rooms.

Altiplanico Cajon del Maipo Cajon del Maipo MID-PLUS

A charming hotel set in lovely grounds by the Maipo River in Chile's Central Valley. Guests stay on a full board basis.

Hotel Santa Cruz Plaza Colchagua Valley UPPER RANGE

Overlooking the main square in the town of Santa Cruz in a colonial style building. A good base for exploring the Colchagua Valley.

Hotel Vina la Playa Colchagua Valley MID-PLUS

An intimate hacienda style country hotel in the Colchagua Valley surrounded by 250 hectares of vineyards. Just 11 rooms.

Cava Colchagua Colchagua Valley MID-PLUS

One of the Valley's most unique hotels situated on the outskirts of Santa Cruz town. Some rooms are made from large 100 year old wine barrels!



Lastarria Boutique Hotel UPPER RANGE

Santiago

Located in a quiet street downtown in the bohemian neighbourhood of Lastarria, this boutique hotel is set in a former private residence dating back to 1927. The hotel's décor mixes art deco touches and modern art pieces with the original features of the house including a marble staircase. All the rooms are well equipped with air conditioning and heating, cable TV and iPod docking stations. The hotel has a restaurant, spa room and an outdoor terrace which overlooks the garden and small swimming pool.



Casa Higuera TOP RANGE

Valparaíso

Set in a restored mansion in Valparaíso's hillside Cerro Alegre district, Casa Higuera is a sophisticated, boutique hotel with 20 stylish guest rooms. The hotel is elegantly decorated throughout and features a pool and charming outdoor seating area with great views across the bay of Valparaíso. The guest rooms are decorated differently and vary in size, with some having private balconies. The hotel's Mar Alegre restaurant offers alfresco dining and is well worth a visit. It specialises in seafood dishes using regional ingredients.



Palacio Astoreca TOP RANGE

Valparaíso

Perched on a hillside in the heart of Valparaíso near the El Peral lift and Palacio Baburizza Museum, Palacio Astoreca is a restored mansion dating from 1923. It is now an upmarket boutique hotel with 23 stylish rooms, all uniquely decorated in an elegant style blending the charm of the house with contemporary features. The hotel has a basement swimming pool, hot tub, massage room and offers other spa facilities. There is a piano bar, library, wine cellar specialising in Chilean wine, and a terrace offering lovely views over Valparaíso bay—a perfect spot to watch the city's New Year's Eve fireworks. Some rooms have great views of the city.



Hotel Fauna MID-RANGE

Valparaíso

Hotel Fauna is perched on the edge of the western section of Cerro Alegre served by the Reina Victoria funicular and only 5 minutes away from the city centre. The hotel is decorated in a quirky, funky style in keeping with the street art and bohemian feel to Valparaíso. The hotel has impressive views over town, Valparaíso's iconic hills and the bay. All rooms are nice and well equipped but the views in the Superior and Suite room categories make them worth the upgrade. The best views are from the top floor restaurant, bar and terrace.



Casa Real Santa Rita TOP RANGE

Maipo Valley

Hotel Casa Real lies within the Santa Rita winery in the Maipo Valley just south of Santiago. It is one of the closest vineyards with accommodation to the city centre. There are 16 recently renovated neoclassical style rooms, with views over the winery's magical gardens or swimming pool. The 40 hectare Italianate grounds have a small lagoon attracting water birds, and the two restaurants offer high quality food set within the main house or outside in the gardens. Tastings can be arranged at the attached cellar, whilst all rooms come with a complimentary bottle of the house wine.



La Casona Matetic TOP RANGE

Casablanca Valley

10 comfortable traditional-style rooms each named after a grape variety grown at the Matetic vineyard. La Casona is a 1900s style hacienda around a formal garden, set within the winery's spacious grounds with a swimming pool for guests of the hotel. Guests stay on an all-inclusive basis with all meals and a tour of the wine cellars at Matetic. There are several trails for walkers. Matetic is in the Casablanca Valley west of Santiago, approximately 1 hour's drive from the international airport making this an excellent choice before or after an international flight.



Noi Blend Colchagua MID-PLUS

Colchagua Valley

North of the town of Santa Cruz, Noi Blend Colchagua is a converted country hacienda. The rooms are individually designed in a modern style, with a private terrace looking to the gardens or the swimming pool. The hotel has the 'Blend' restaurant on site which has an attractive patio terrace with views over the surrounding countryside. It serves local and international dishes and has an extensive wine list.



Vina Vik Chile TOP RANGE

Colchagua Valley

Vina Vik Chile is an ultra-modern, avant-garde style hotel and winery located on a hilltop. The 22 rooms and suites look to the Colchagua wine valley or the Andes mountains. All the bedrooms are creatively designed with floor to ceiling windows to maximise the fabulous views. The hotel can arrange excursions for guests along the walking or mountain biking trails through their grounds, and there is the option of wine tastings at their vineyard.



Lapostolle Residence TOP RANGE

Colchagua Valley

Lapostolle Residence was opened in 1994 by Alexandra Marnier-Lapostolle, a member of the family behind Grand Marnier liqueur. The architect designed the main hotel building to resemble sections of wine casks. The hotel offers high quality cuisine with top level accommodation within one of Chile's best known fine vineyards: Clos Apalta. There are lots of areas to sit and enjoy spectacular views across the valley. Lapostolle Residence is a Relais & Châteaux member.



Lakes and Fjords

From Chile's fabulous Lake District and mystical Chiloé Island down to the remote ice fields of Aysén reached only by expedition cruise ships or by one road—the Carretera Austral

02

Chile's beautiful Lake District is a land of forests and lakes, dairy farms and small towns in an alpine landscape below snowy volcanos.

They call the Lake District the 'Gateway to Patagonia'. Patagonia begins where the Andes almost meets the sea east of Puerto Montt, and continues for a thousand miles of wild, rugged nature crumpled by mountains and incised with fjords with no large towns until the modest Punta Arenas in the far south.

LAKE DISTRICT

Long lakes lie between fingers of mountains and major volcanoes either side of the jagged line that marks the border with Argentina.

Settlers recruited from Germany, Switzerland and Austria brought an alpine feel to 'lake districts' on both sides of the national border. Both are part of the heritage lands of Mapuche peoples, which extend from the Pacific to the Argentine pampa.

Conguillío NP in the north surrounding Llaima volcano (3125m) has a lot of hiking options and skiing, but the heart of the area lies between the towns of Pucón and Puerto Varas.

Pucón is a full-blown adventure capital with every outdoor activity in the book. There are extensive trails for moderate walks through national parks, challenging treks to volcanic craters, kayaking on serene lakes and rafting down tumbling



01

rapids. There's mountain biking, paragliding, parachuting, flights over volcanoes in light aircraft, zip-lining, rock-climbing, rustic hot springs and silken spas. And skiing, snowboarding, dog sledding and snow-shoeing. And parasailing, jet-skiing and stand-up paddle boarding. There's more, but let's stop at that for now.

Puerto Varas, which looks across a beautiful lake to the stunning perfect cone of Osorno Volcano, is more sedate and less all-out (though there are lots of hiking and rafting options) and connects well with other good things.

From Puerto Varas you can sail across three lakes to reach Argentina on the other side of the Andes: the 'Lake Crossing'. See pages 33 and 49.

Down the road at Puerto Montt there are good flight connections, a dock for cruises departing for the remote fjords of Aysén, and a ferry to the extraordinary island of Chiloé.

CHILOE

The large island of Chiloé has steered its own course, separate from the mainland though not isolated. Here the Spanish colonists mixed with the established Huilliche and Chonos communities and together they evolved Chiloé's distinctive culture, which blends them all.

There is plenty of fishing and a countryside that thrives in Chiloé's Scottish climate, and together they support little communities along the inland coast on the Golfo de Ancud.

The island's first capital, Castro, was founded in 1567 and for a while was the world's southernmost city. Colourful timber homes are set on hilly land around a bay, whose waterfront



The Road to the South

The iconic Carretera Austral winds south for 1240km from the northern edge of Patagonia into a land of forests, snow-capped mountains, fjords, islands, glacial streams, and swift-flowing rivers.

The road has helped to open Aysén to adventurous Chileans and these days Aysén has become one of the most talked-about parts of Chile. New lodges are opening up (including some that are very special), new trails are being established, and adventure companies are setting up shop for hiking, biking, rafting, kayaking and other lovely things.

Such a sparsely populated region is not well served with public transport so exploration is best done independently with a hire car, or from the water on an expedition cruise.

Flights arrive daily into Balmaceda from Puerto Montt or Santiago, whilst expedition cruise voyages (see page 49) sail from Puerto Montt down the Gulf of Ancud between the mainland and Chiloé and onwards to the south into a glorious complex of channels, remote islands and untouched fjords.

The Carretera Austral comes to a halt as a single track unpaved lane shortly after Villa O'Higgins, squeezed between the Southern Ice Field and Argentina. Adventurous travellers journey beyond by ferry then foot, horse or bike to Lake Desolation in Argentina, Fitz Roy and El Chaltén.

Standout highlights of many along the route include the San Rafael Glacier, Lago General Carrera (Chile's largest lake) and its Marble Caves, the Baker River (Chile's largest river) and a succession of National Parks from Queulat to Bernardo O'Higgins helping to safeguard the wilderness.

PHOTOS
01 and 02
Osorno Volcano
Lake District



is lined with hugely picturesque *palafito* houses on stilts over the water for fishermen to tie up to, landing their catch straight into their back room.

The Jesuits established a circuit of churches to tend to the island's small communities. Their builders created a homely architecture of timber finished with wood shingles. 16 of the surviving 60 wooden churches, built without nails, are now collectively a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The island's blended heritage has produced a vivid oral folklore of goddesses, evil forest dwellers, witches disguised as owls, snakes that bring fatal coughs, and a beauty that dances on the shore to indicate whether there is much fish around at the moment.

NORTHERN PATAGONIA

Northern Patagonia begins as it means to go on, with a wilderness that is even now barely penetrated, such are the obstacles of its intricate mountain topography. The valleys are all dead-ends, the mountains all tangled. The high Andes is governed by immense ice fields, together the third largest weight of ice outside the poles, their glaciers and waterfalls descending to deep fjords and sea channels.

Aysén, the Chilean region that covers almost all Northern Patagonia, is an extraordinary world of wild nature, with just a few settlements, some populated more from Argentina over the Andes than from north or south in Chile.



Huge areas are protected by Pumalín and Corcovado national parks, which owe much to the pioneering conservationist Douglas Tompkins, founder of North Face clothing.

You can take Aysén's Carretera Austral (p17) to Lago General Carrera, and its marble caves, and down to little Caleta Tortel perched beside Baker Fjord between the Northern and Southern ice fields. See p39.



THE FJORDS OF ANCUD AND BEYOND

The Gulf of Ancud separates Chiloé from the mainland and leads into channels behind the Chonos and Guayaneco archipelagos. Eventually it reaches the astonishing Glacier San Rafael. You can explore this rugged wilderness from the comfort of an expedition cruise ship, see p49.

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PHOTOS

- 01 Palafito houses, Castro, Chiloé Island
- 02 Marble Caves, Lago General Carrera
- 03 Wooden Church, Chiloé Island
- 04 Lago General Carrera (box: Grey Glacier, with Bernardo O'Higgins NP behind)



Bernardo O'Higgins

A colossus of the South American independence movement, 'Don Bernardo' is first among those credited with Chilean nationhood. Chile's largest national park, which begins in Aysén and crosses into the far south, bears his name.

Bernardo's father was an Irishman from Sligo who was a junior officer in the Spanish colonial military when Bernardo was born in 1778, but who catapulted to prominence to become governor of Chile and Viceroy of Peru by the time his illegitimate son was twenty. The two never met. Bernardo was sent to London for his education, where he quickly became involved in the nascent Latin American independence movement, inspired by the Venezuelan Francisco de Miranda. He moved to Spain then returned to Chile when his father died, leaving him enough land to become a very wealthy gentleman farmer.

When Spain fell to Napoleon its colonial elites began to rebel—some as royalists, some as nationalists. In exile O'Higgins and Carrera allied with the Argentine San Martín, and returned to Chile to overthrow the royalists in a series of battles. A long-running feud with Carrera ended with the latter's demise. O'Higgins' real success now began. He governed Chile for 6 years, setting up the most important civil structures: courts, colleges, hospitals. He then instituted land reform.

This last was too much for Chile's ever-powerful landowners and O'Higgins was deposed into exile, briefly joining Simón Bolívar in the liberation of Peru before retiring to private life in Lima. He died there in 1842.

Where to stay in the Lake District, Chiloé and Aysén

Our HOTEL GRADES are explained on p55

There are plenty of options at all levels in the Lake District, many in timber, some styled on Swiss chalets, some more exotically imagined. On Chiloé Island there is a scattering of stylish contemporary lodges and some characterful family-run small hotels. Venturing south into Aysén and for the Carretera Austral the breadth of choice rapidly evaporates, but there are enough workable places to stay for an enjoyable trip.



AWA Hotel TOP RANGE
Puerto Varas

AWA Hotel is an architecturally impressive property on the shores of Lake Llanquihue. It is built in bare concrete with large windows for stunning lake and volcano views from all areas of the hotel. Guest rooms have walls of timber and exposed brick, wooden floors, local textiles and handicrafts, and full height windows. The restaurant specialises in local cuisine, with some ingredients grown in the hotel's organic garden. There is a spa and swimming pool. The hotel offers an extensive selection of local excursions.



Casa Kalfu MID-RANGE
Puerto Varas

Casa Kalfu ('kalfu' means 'blue' in the Mapudungun language of the Mapuche), is a characterful hotel in Puerto Varas. The hotel has 19 comfortable rooms, 6 with views of Lake Llanquihue and the Osorno Volcano. All are nicely decorated with local handicrafts and wooden furniture made with reused timber from native trees. The friendly hotel is run by English-speaking owners who are knowledgeable about the local area. There is a small lounge and bar area.



Cabana del Lago MID-PLUS
Puerto Varas

Five blocks from the centre of Puerto Varas this is a large hotel with 157 rooms, but family-run and with a friendly attentive atmosphere. The hotel stands just above the shore of Lake Llanquihue. All rooms (standard, superior and suite) are comfortable and pleasantly decorated with a homely feel and have either park or lake views. There is a spa with heated swimming pool, an indoor restaurant with large panoramic windows, an outdoor terrace for alfresco dining and a bar.



Casa Molino UPPER RANGE
Puerto Varas

Casa Molino is an intimate 11 room hotel with charm and a home-from-home feeling. Set beside the shore of Lake Llanquihue, it has impressive views of Osorno, Calbuco and Tronador volcanoes

Rooms are clean, spacious and nicely decorated and the hotel features a dining room, lounge and a lovely garden terrace where guests can enjoy the really spectacular views across the lawn to the lake. The hotel is on the outskirts of Puerto Varas, which is a short drive away.



Palafito 1326 MID-RANGE
Chiloé

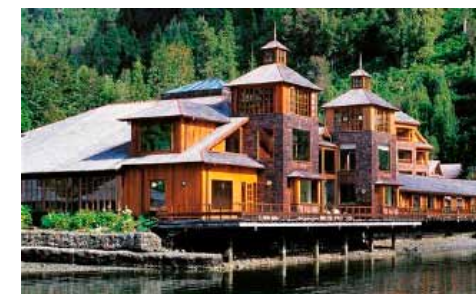
Palafito 1326 is a very sweet boutique B&B in a traditional stilted Chilote building on the seafront of Castro, Chiloé's capital.

Rooms either have town or bay views. All are decorated with native woods, local textiles and feature large windows. Guests can enjoy the communal dining area with views across the bay, as well as a roof terrace area with views along the coastline. Only simple snacks are served.



Hotel Parque Quilquico UPPER RANGE
Chiloé

Hotel Parque Quilquico is a small 21 room modern hotel drawing on authentic Chiloé themes and using local wood and textiles. 13 of the rooms are in the main building and 8 rooms are in traditional stilted villas. All have a large window and balcony. The villas have two bedrooms and a living room area and are a good choice for families. The hotel has a strong green ethos, and is big on recycling. It offers some spa facilities, a swimming pool and restaurant specialising in seafood.



Puyuhuapi Lodge & Spa UPPER RANGE
Aysén Region, near Queulat NP

Puyuhuapi Lodge has an amazing, isolated setting on the edge of Dorita Bay in the midst of lush forests. Rooms are decorated in local style and feature private balconies for views of the spectacular location. The hotel places strong emphasis on its isolation and encourages guests to immerse themselves in nature: there are no TVs and wifi is limited. Guests stay on an all-inclusive basis including excursions such as sea-kayaking, trekking, thermal waters and thalassotherapy. Balmaceda is the nearest airport: 4h by road, then 10min by boat to arrive at the lodge.



El Mirador del Guadal MID-RANGE
Puerto Guadal

El Mirador de Guadal is reached by the Carretera Austral and stands on the southern shore of the General Carrera Lake with views over the water and glaciers of the southern ice field. This small hotel has 9 cabin style rooms with a small living area, private terrace and access to the lakeside. Each cabin is named after a regional plant or animal. The larger suites can accommodate up to four people, and are located by the edge of the lake. The hotel's restaurant serves Chilean and international dishes using many ingredients from the lodge's garden.

Expedition lodges

Tierra Chiloe

See 'Expedition Lodge Collections' feature on p42-43.

Worth a mention

Hacienda Hotel Vira Vira Pucón TOP RANGE

Top range lodge set in 55 acres of native forest offering a range of excursions from hiking and horse riding to helicopter rides.

Hotel Antumalal Pucón UPPER RANGE

Boutique hotel just outside Pucón on the shore of Lake Villarica.

Hotel Malalhue Pucón MID-RANGE

Mountain style hotel with 24 pleasant guest rooms, restaurant, bar and outdoor heated swimming pool.

Ocio Territorial Hotel Chiloé UPPER RANGE

Restored old house on the Rilán Peninsula recently renovated in a traditional style using local materials and native wood.

Mari Mari Resort and Spa Punta Puga TOP RANGE

Gorgeous new coastal retreat in a private reserve 2h west of Puerto Montt.

Hacienda Tres Lagos Puerto Guadal UPPER RANGE

By the Carretera Austral with views of the Negro Lake this hotel offers comfortable, cosy rooms in rural surroundings.



The Far South

Dramatic landscapes at the end of the world

02

Patagonia comes to a crescendo in the south, where the dry empty steppe in Argentina runs into Chile's complex of peaks, glaciers, lakes, fjords and ice fields. Here the Andes have lost none of their power to impress, but they are much, much lower.

TORRES DEL PAINE

The huge Southern Patagonian Ice Field, held aloft between Andean sierras, stretches south losing height as the mountains descend into lower and lower stages to reach Chile's extreme tip. But geology holds a final surprise: a collection of great peaks thrown up from deep inside the earth, daunting pinnacles and spires of granite, defiant and forbidding, an icon of Patagonia—the Towers of Paine.

The *Torres del Paine* massif gives its name to Chile's most spectacular national park and UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The park and the areas around it are a stunning destination that draws adventurers from around the world.

The massif is a complex collection of peaks. The towers stand majestically in their own group to the east. An equally striking pair of peaks, the 'horns' of Paine, rise over a long lake to the south, between the hulking Paine Grande and Mt Almirante Nieto. The Grey Glacier pushes down from the ice field on the west of the massif, spilling icebergs into Lake Grey. Beyond, peaks furl off the remaining Andean sierras as they stream south. If you feel the need to climb them all you should put aside a lifetime.

Torres del Paine is hallowed ground for walkers with less time than that. There are beautiful day walks all around the lower levels of the park. In the pure clean air you stretch your legs with stunning views of lakes, glaciers and peaks

01

following trails that lead across low hills and valleys, through beech woods alive with birds and meadows grazed by guanacos. With more determination you can take challenging hikes into the massif itself, ascending to the base of the Towers, into valleys that penetrate deep into the centre, or skirting the mountains to glacier lookouts. See p40-41.

You needn't exert yourself at all. You could drive through the park stopping at viewpoints, or take the boat that sails up the long lake to the very snout of the Grey Glacier. Or simply relax in a spa at one of the top expedition lodges that serve the park.

These lodges offer the ultimate experience. Their architecture is stunning. Their rooms, food, and facilities are all first rate. They send you out into the park with the best guides on daily expeditions of your choice, leaving the spa to others until the evening. You emerge renewed: rested, nourished and exercised. See p42-43.

Wildlife is, of course, superb. Pumas are the highlight, and are reliably seen in the right seasons with suitable effort. You will certainly see elegant groups of guanacos dotted around the hillsides, deer, flightless rheas (South America's answer to the ostrich), eagles and condor soaring above, and black-necked swans and a host of other waterbirds on the lakes. See p44, 46 and 47.

The park holds plenty of treats for geologists. A small example is thrombolites: extraordinary boulders of light limestone around the shores of some of its lakes. Produced by cyanobacteria they are now extremely rare, but once these bacteria created the first oxygen on Earth, for which we are all grateful.

Not quite so far back, around 10,000 years



Before the Europeans

The far south of Patagonia has a long human history. The southern fjords of Aysén down to Tierra del Fuego is the land of the **Kaweskar**, a seafaring people who sailed in 9m canoes that held the whole family. 3,000 identify as Kaweskar today despite much resettlement. The fjords of western Tierra del Fuego and the southern islands to Cape Horn are the land of their neighbours, the **Yaghan**—the world's most southern people—whose history spans 10,000 years. Traditionally nomadic, they hunted sealions, dove for mussels, and fished from large canoes. Against the cold, they used little clothing but put lots of grease on their skin and lit open fires—even in their canoes. Not an easy life. The **Selk'nam** people, whose lands cover the steppe areas of Tierra del Fuego, had little contact with European settlers and retained their culture until the late 19th century, when they were hard hit by gold rush incomers. The few hundred that remained in 1918 were photographed by Martin Gusinde, an Austrian priest and ethnologist, who made a vivid account of their *Hain* initiation ceremony (see photo above): look for the museum in his name in Puerto Williams.

PHOTOS
01 Los Cuernos, Torres del Paine
02 Wulalaia Bay, Tierra del Fuego



01

ago, the park was popular with giant sloths, or mylodons. Some lived in a particularly large cavern that you pass on your way to the west of the park, now open to visitors as the Cueva de Milodon, where their fossils were found, and even pieces of skin.

PUNTA ARENAS

The small port of Punta Arenas looks across the widest part of the Strait of Magellan to the shores of Tierra del Fuego.

The town has an air of breezy remoteness, an outpost at the end of Chile. It was founded to safeguard Chile's claim to its southern territory, grew with the boom in sheep farming, served for a while as a nest of spies keeping track of passing shipping, and now enjoys a comfortable time with a bit of this and that.

There are mansions built by sheep barons, an artful cemetery, a naval museum, and the wood-panelled bar which welcomed Ernest Shackleton to the town in the period after the wreck of the *Endurance*. A few doors away stands *Castillo Milward*, the gothic fantasy where Bruce Chatwin's great uncle (the discoverer of the Milodon) had Shackleton to stay while he arranged the second and third attempts to rescue his ice-bound crew.

Punta Arenas has the best air connections to Santiago, and is the jumping off point for most trips to Torres del Paine, Tierra del Fuego, and expedition cruises into Chile's southern fjords and Cape Horn.

TIERRA DEL FUEGO

Across the water from Punta Arenas lies Patagonia's final twist: the 'Land of Fire'—a romantic name some attribute to a Spanish king who thought 'Land of Smoke' seemed dull, and others say was inspired by the sight of fires aboard native canoes.

The main part of Tierra del Fuego, Isla Grande, is mostly steppe. A straight line separates Chile from Argentina. Sheep are reared on isolated ranches down to its southern coast at *Estancia Harberton*, the last ranch in the world, along the coast from Ushuaia, the last city in the world.

Ushuaia, which is on the Argentine side of the line, is the starting point for most cruises to Antarctica. The ships sail out on the Beagle Channel, where in 1833 the young Charles Darwin saw his first glacier and 'Jeremy Button' a young Fuegian taken to London in the Beagle's first voyage was returned to his family.

Gold was discovered in 1884. Enthusiastic coverage in the Buenos Aires press led to a fevered gold rush as more finds were made and a thousand miners arrived. Punta Arenas did nicely at the time, but the sources were soon exhausted and Isla Grande returned to a quiet life.

FJORDS

Patagonia's dramatic western coast is a labyrinth of wild islands, sheltered channels and awesome fjords below dramatic mountainsides and rows of glaciers that descend from the Andes' ice fields and high peaks. This world of rugged powerful beauty that began in the Aysén (p18) continues all the way into western Tierra del Fuego. Separated from the placid Isla Grande by a narrow isthmus, the Darwin range of low icy volcanoes—the last gasp of the Andes—spills its glaciers into the Beagle Channel. The last of the maze of islands beyond it to the south is the Cape Horn archipelago, the stuff of mariners' legends.

This extraordinary world can be visited during the Fuegian summer by expedition cruise ship, see p48: short cruises that complete a visit to Patagonia.

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03

PHOTOS
01 Pia Glacier, Tierra del Fuego
02 Guanaco and the Torres del Paine peaks
03 Puma, Torres del Paine



Magellan

In September 1519, at the age of 40, with a turbulent career of sea battles, exploration and controversy already behind him, Ferdinand Magellan set sail from the harbour below Seville with 5 ships, 237 men, and a mission to succeed where Columbus had failed: to find a westerly route to the Spice Islands. Magellan went south, exploring the Atlantic coast of South America as others had done, then sailed further until his fleet (now reduced to 4 ships) edged into an inlet whose briny waters signalled the hoped-for link to an ocean beyond. He sent 2 ships to explore the channel, one of which took fright and turned tail for Europe. With his remaining ships Magellan sailed into the strait that now bears his name and then passed easily through to the Pacific, where he turned right and went on to 'discover' the Marianas, Guam and the Philippines—where Magellan was killed in a foolish skirmish in 1521. His ships sailed on, finally returning to their original harbour reduced to one ship and 18 men, having achieved the first circumnavigation of the planet.

Sailing from east to west, all routes lead through to the Pacific. In the other direction the opposite is true, a maze of channels, fjords, bays and inlets were all cul-de-sacs to frustrate explorers in the years after Magellan. Their charts express their frustration: Useless Bay, Paso Tortuoso, Last Hope Sound.

In Magellan's day these were not just new lands far away, this was true peril—the edge of Antichthon, the upside-down world where the sun shines black—the nest of hell, where Dante's Ulysses saw Purgatory as the waves closed over his ship. No wonder Magellan kept to the opposite shore.

The Strait of Magellan, that key link in the history of exploration, is today crossed at its narrowest point by small car ferries in 20 minutes. Stand on deck among the truck drivers and listen for the echoes of Magellan's men in the swirling wind and the cries of Ulysses on his way to the Inferno.

Where to stay in the Far South

Our HOTEL GRADES are explained on p55

Torres del Paine leads the way with stunning contemporary architecture in stunning settings, headed by the three expedition lodges created by Explora, Tierra and Awasi (see p42-43), and some inspiring eco-builds. Lodges further afield, including those near Puerto Natales, have access to other good sites in the region with easy access into the park itself. Hotels in Punta Arenas are generally conventional in style.



The Singular TOP RANGE
near Puerto Natales

Part award winning luxury hotel, part museum, the Singular is a stylishly adapted former cold-storage plant on the shores of Señoret Channel just outside Puerto Natales. Original factory machinery has been preserved to showcase some of Patagonia's human history, whilst the location takes advantage of spectacular views across the Last Hope Sound. Spacious and modern rooms have large picture windows facing across the water. Guests can stay on an all-inclusive expedition lodge basis with a choice of up to 20 excursions into the Torres del Paine NP or the Puerto Bories area.



Remota UPPER RANGE
near Puerto Natales

An architecturally impressive building, designed with its Patagonian surroundings in mind, featuring large floor to ceiling windows in a panoramic effect so that guests can feel Patagonia throughout the hotel. The 72 rooms are spacious and decorated with wooden features and regional textiles. There are plenty of large, bright communal areas to relax as well as a swimming pool and spa. Guests can stay on a bed and breakfast or all-inclusive expedition lodge basis with walks and other active excursions.



Patagonia Camp UPPER RANGE
Torres del Paine

On the forested shore of Lake Toro with distant views of the Paine massif, and just 15km from the entrance to Torres del Paine National Park. Patagonia Camp's 18 luxury yurts offer glamping style accommodation. The yurts have en-suite bathrooms, normal windows plus a roof window to enjoy the stars, and private terraces. They are well-heated. In the main hotel building there is a lounge, bar and restaurant. Guests stay on a bed and breakfast or all-inclusive expedition lodge basis with a menu of excursions in and around the national park and surrounding forest.



Hotel Las Torres MID-PLUS
Torres del Paine

Hotel Las Torres is one of the few hotels actually inside the boundary of Torres del Paine National Park, making it a popular place to stay. All rooms are warm and cosy but suites and superior rooms have larger windows and better views. The hotel has a spa, bar and restaurant specialising in Patagonian dishes. There are stables on site for guests to go on a horse riding trip in this memorable location. Guests may stay on a bed and breakfast basis or an all-inclusive expedition lodge basis with a menu of active and other excursions available to them.



Weskar Lodge MID-RANGE
Puerto Natales

This no-frills lodge clad in lenga wood maintains a welcoming, rustic Patagonian style with a living room with fireplace, reading room, bar and restaurant. Guest rooms in two sizes have either a fjord or interior view, and all have central heating. The lodge is a 1.2km walk from Puerto Natales beside a coastal road where you can see black-necked swans, ducks and geese.



Hotel Lago Grey UPPER RANGE
Torres del Paine

On the shores of the Lago Grey lake with impressive views across the water, Hotel Lago Grey is in the western sector of the park, a good location for a number of walks, as well as the boat rides up to the snout of the Grey Glacier itself. The lodge consists of 60 rooms (standard and superior) in low blocks connected by open wooden walkways. The superior rooms in particular are well designed for the spectacular views, with full height windows framing the lake with the Paine massif behind.



Hosteria Pehoe MID-RANGE
Torres del Paine

Hosteria Pehoe was one of the first lodges in Torres del Paine, and has one of its most iconic locations on an island accessed by a long wooden footbridge. Its 40 simply-furnished cabin rooms are inward facing, but the hosteria's restaurant and cafeteria look out across Lake Pehoe to the Cuernos del Paine. The standard of lodging here is more basic than other options in and around the park, but the location gives good access to the centre of the park and the view is amazing.



EcoCamp Patagonia UPPER RANGE
Torres del Paine

Within sight of the Torres peaks, EcoCamp specialises in comfortable sustainable accommodation. Among the first of its kind, its ethos is inspired by the Kaweskar 'leave no trace' lifestyle. Its geodesic domes run almost entirely on solar and hydraulic energy. There are three levels of room, from basic standard domes with shared outdoor bathrooms, to the full glamping experience in the suites which have state of the art composting toilets in fully equipped bathrooms, and low-emission stoves to warm the rooms at night.

Expedition lodges

- Explora Patagonia**
 - Tierra Patagonia**
 - Awasi Patagonia**
- See 'Expedition Lodge Collections' feature on p42-43.

Worth a mention

- Hotel Cabo de Hornos** Punta Arenas UPPER RANGE
Central with modern rooms, views to city or Strait of Magellan.
- Isla Rey Jorge** Punta Arenas MID-RANGE
Renovated old house by the main plaza, 22 well equipped rooms.
- Rio Serrano** Torres del Paine MID-PLUS
Beside Torres del Paine NP by the Serrano River. 95 rooms, B&B or AI.
- Pampa Lodge** Torres del Paine MID-PLUS
Small, hip hotel beside Torres del Paine NP by the Serrano River, large windows to spectacular surroundings.
- Simple Patagonia** Puerto Natales MID-RANGE
Hip hotel echoing traditional Chilean farmstead styles with panoramic windows giving open views of Last Hope Sound and beyond.
- Lakutaia Lodge** Puerto Williams UPPER RANGE
Tierra del Fuego looking to the Beagle Channel, with excursions.



"In Easter Island the past is the present, and the shadows of the departed builders still possess the land. The whole air vibrates with a vast purpose and energy which has been and is no more. What was it? Why was it?"

Katherine Routledge

Easter Island

One of the most inspirational places on earth



02



Easter Island is one of the wonders of the world. Just 14 miles across, it is one of the planet's most isolated fragments of land—the tip of a huge volcano rising from the deep sea bed in the emptiness of the Pacific Ocean.

Properly called Rapa Nui (while its people are Rapanui) it was first settled from Polynesia 2,000 miles away, probably by chance and perhaps only once. There is little agreement as to exactly when.

The pioneers flourished on an island that they found with lush palm forests and the largest bird colony in the Pacific. In their isolation they developed an extraordinary culture which is still surrounded by mystery and conjecture.

Their god, accompanied by birdman deities, gave the leaders the power to safeguard and nurture their people. Some believe that the island's gigantic stone figures were erected to remember the leaders and preserve the power they helped to bring down from on high.

These great *moai* statues are among the most recognised images in the world—a symbol of all that is remote, exotic and still mysterious. They inspire the world to travel, to explore, and to witness at first hand the things that have made us human in our different ways.

The statues are dotted around the island, many on special platforms within the outlines of ceremonial plazas. They are often in truly stunning locations.

Rapa Nui is shaped in a tilted triangle with a large volcano in the north and two smaller ones at east and west. The whole island is a national park and UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Polynesian influences are echoed in the island's

open and welcoming culture spiced with an independent spirit. About half its 5,000 residents identify as Rapanui, and the Rapanui language is spoken around the island alongside Spanish. 95% of islanders live in or around the little town of Hanga Roa on the west of the island.

Hanga Roa is a very agreeable place that dawdles along a wide rocky bay, with small beaches, a wharf for fishermen and other necessities. It has the only mains electricity and running water on the island, both its banks, the only hospital, and practically all its shops and restaurants. A small airport for flights from the Chilean mainland separates the town from the slopes of Rano Kau volcano.

There is a good choice of accommodation, with some very fine options at the top end of the scale. Getting around the southern part of the island is reasonably easy on its small roads, while much of the north is accessible only on foot or horse.

Rapa Nui's rocky coastline also has some pink-tinged sandy beaches for relaxing and clear waters for snorkelling and scuba diving. The island is especially good for walking. Frequent clear skies give good opportunities for star-gazing.

The Tapati festival, usually in February, coincides with the peak season of visitors to the Island. The festival fortnight crowns a Tapati Queen and there are numerous jolly competitions from dancing to canoeing.

Make it happen

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Moai statues

Lost in the middle of the Pacific, the island's community was inspired by the sea birds that came and went freely across the ocean. Their creator god, *Makemake*, is shown in rock carvings alongside Birdman deities with the round eyes and hooked beak of a frigatebird. The sea birds on whom the frigatebird preys were important to the islanders. Terns and boobies flew in to nest on the small islets below the stunning cliff-edge crater of Rano Kau volcano, laying eggs that brought the islanders a sudden feast of food.

Fetching the eggs from the islets developed into a ritual, with each village sending its leader to a ceremonial site at Orongo on the top of Rano Kau. Each leader sponsored a competitor in a contest to be first to bring an egg from the bird colonies out at sea up to the top of the volcano.

The winning leader became sacred. He was kept in seclusion for a year, fed by attendants and not allowed to cut his hair or fingernails. He mediated with Makemake in some way, perhaps to bring support and protection to Rapa Nui and his village.

It is suggested that Rapa Nui's iconic statues, or *moai*, might reflect this. They are placed on special platforms, or *ahus*, around the island. The statues seem to celebrate the leaders' seclusion with topknots of stone for their uncut hair, and long fingernails.

These great statues, weighing up to 80 tonnes, were mostly carved in soft volcanic 'tuff' rock (though the *moai* in the British Museum is unusually of basalt) at a single quarry and transported by a well-coordinated team effort, perhaps by walking them upright.

The final puzzle of the many that swirl around Rapa Nui is why most *moai* came to be placed face down on the ground. This seems to have coincided with the arrival of the first Europeans though it happened over a long period. The *moai* were respectfully lowered, rather than toppled, and you will hear many intriguing theories on the island as to why.

PHOTOS
01 Ahu Tongariki
02 Ahu Tahai
03 Anakena Beach



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Our Chile specialists designed these trips to be the best. You can choose them just as they are to start on any date.

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North to South

Chile from top to bottom. A wonderful trip to experience the very best of Chile, neatly designed for excellent value. A full array of amazing highlights, with much that goes beyond them.

Santiago

Day 1 B You are met on arrival at Santiago de Chile and transferred to your hotel where you stay for two nights.

Day 2 B This morning you are collected from your hotel for a tour of Chile's capital. With your guide you stroll to Santa Lucia Hill, where Pedro de Valdivia founded the city in 1541. You visit the main Plaza de Armas with City Hall, National Museum, Central Post Office and Cathedral and other notable buildings nearby.

Atacama

Day 3 B This morning you are transferred to Santiago airport for your flight north to Calama. You are met on arrival at the airport and taken to San Pedro de Atacama where you stay for the next 3 nights to explore this spectacular area.

Day 4 B You begin to explore Atacama with a visit to the stone fortress of Pukará de Quitor—one of the most important archaeological sites of the area. You continue to Tular, one of Atacama's first settlements.

In the afternoon you head to the village of Toconao which looks out across the wide salt flats. Toconao's Church of San Lucas has a distinctive bell tower, built in 1750 from cactus wood and adobe. A small handicraft market is popular for alpaca wool and crafts.

Descending to the Atacama Salt Flat, you cross to Chaxa Lagoon where flamingos quietly feed as you enjoy the sunset.

Day 5 B Today you travel high into the Andes reaching 4800m, the height of Mt Blanc—there are good alternatives at lower altitudes, close to the mighty Licancabur Volcano (5916m) and the border with Argentina.

Your journey through a *puna* landscape of lagoons and meadows, and pastures where llamas have grazed for centuries, to the weirdly eroded *Los Monjes de la Pacana*, where wind and frost have sculpted standing rocks into the shape of monks—*monjes* in Spanish. The monks guard the *Salar de Aguas Calientes*. Look for flamingos, vicuñas, rheas, ibis and other wildlife of the altiplano here. You return to San Pedro in time for lunch.

In the latter part of the afternoon you leave your hotel again for the lunar setting of the Moon Valley—one of the Atacama's most iconic sites. You look across Death Valley with its impressive salt formations before enjoying the sunset at Kari viewpoint.

Day 6 B A pre-dawn start for the drive to the Tatio Geysers (4320m) among the world's largest and most impressive geothermal fields, puffing and steaming in the early morning chill.

As you return you stop by the wetlands of Putana and at little Pueblo Machuca before arriving back in San Pedro.

You are transferred to Calama airport for your flight back to Santiago for one night.

Chilean Lake District

Day 7 B Today you fly from Santiago to Puerto Montt in the Chilean Lake District.

You are met on arrival and taken for a tour of the city: the main Plaza de Armas with its unusual wooden cathedral built from native larch, Melipulli Hill for views down to the port and fishing boats in the Tenglo channel, and Angelmo Market where the day's catch is laid out for sale and Chilean specialities such as *curanto* and *paila marina* are on the menu in nearby restaurants.

It is a short drive north to Puerto Varas on the shore of Lake Llanquihue opposite snow-capped Osorno Volcano and the peaks of Calbuco Volcano and Mt Tronador. The town's Germanic architecture reflects its founders' origins, and you visit the hillside church with your guide who gives you an introductory tour around the town where you stay for the next 2 nights.

Day 8 BL Start today's touring with a short visit to the beautiful Petrohué Falls that cascade down volcanic rock, before boarding a boat across the beautiful Lake Todos los Santos to Peulla, a remote village in stunning countryside for lunch.

The snow-capped Osorno and Tronador volcanoes are ahead of you as you sail back across the lake, on a service that forms part of the fabulous 'lake crossing' route through the Andes to Argentina. From the landing you return by road to Puerto Varas.

The Far South

Day 9 B You are driven to Puerto Montt to fly south to Punta Arenas where you are met and taken to Puerto Natales, your base for the next 3 nights. During the 3 hour drive across the grasslands of the Patagonian steppe keep an eye open for grazing guanacos and *ñandu* or rheas.

There is some free time for you to explore Puerto Natales for yourself and line up a restaurant for dinner.

Day 10 BL Today you are collected from your hotel and taken to the pier at nearby Puerto Bories for a cruise along Last Hope Sound.

This is a very scenic journey through Patagonian landscapes, which, if the Patagonian weather is being kind, gives long views of mountain sierras, waterfalls, and forests that give way to sheep farming estancias. Along the shore you should see black-necked swans and colonies of cormorants.

You reach a point below Balnearia Glacier, which descends from the Southern Ice Field and calves small icebergs in startling blues into the Sound. At little Puerto Toro you disembark for a walk of about an hour through native *coigüe* woods to reach a stunning viewpoint near the snout of Serrano Glacier, creaking and cracking in the remote silence.

Your boat continues to a small estancia where you stop for a traditional *asado al palo*, or 'lamb on the cross' roasted by an open

fire, with an opportunity to experience life on a sheep farm, and walk out or ride horses onto the lakeside steppe if you wish. You sail back to Puerto Natales and are transferred back to your hotel by the late afternoon.

Torres del Paine

Day 11 BL Leaving Puerto Natales early, you travel by road into the spectacular Torres del Paine NP, undoubtedly one of the most beautiful and impressive reserves in the world with its distinctive granite peaks, lakes and glaciers.

During the day you tour the main sites of the park, from the Cerro Castillo entry to the exit near the Milodon Cave, including many of the iconic views of the Paine massif, such as Lago Sarmiento and the Amarga Lagoon where on a sunny day the granite towers are mirrored in the clear water.

You visit the Salto Grande waterfall, you stop at Nordskjöld Lake for views of the *cuernos*, or horns, and at Lago Grey where you can walk across a hanging bridge over the Rio Pingo and along the lake's shingle shore to an island forest of *lenga* trees and views of the floating Grey Glacier. Leaving the park you stop to walk inside the Milodón's Cave beside a replica of the mylodon, a giant sloth from the Pleistocene era whose remains were found here.

You should reach your hotel in the early evening after a very full day.

Santiago

Day 12 B Saying goodbye to the south you travel back to Punta Arenas to fly back to Santiago in central Chile for a final night.

Day 13 B A free morning to explore Santiago some more before you are collected and driven to the airport in time for your overnight flight back to the UK.

If you have more time, you could easily extend this trip, perhaps to visit Easter Island, or to spend a few days among the vineyards of the Central Valley and in Valparaíso.





Self-drive Chile

Self-drive is a very good option in some parts of Chile. You need to be a calm confident driver who doesn't mind adapting to different conditions. The knack is to take some extra care and drive at cautious speeds.

Minor roads are often unpaved but usually decently maintained, like the one in this photo.



16 DAYS / 15 NIGHTS
Suggested design for a tailor-made holiday

On the Road in the Lake District and Patagonia's Far South

Time to explore. A superb trip with great experiences, made easy by good conditions for careful confident drivers.

Santiago

Day 1 You are met off your flight and taken to your hotel in Santiago. Your English-speaking guide gives you a brief introduction to the area by your hotel, restaurants and things to see. You have the rest of the day free to explore or relax.

Poetry and wine

Day 2 **BL** A lovely introduction to Chile before you get behind the wheel: a full day shared tour travelling out from the capital to the Pacific coast to visit the poet Pablo Neruda's 'Isla Negra' beach house in a landscape of eucalyptus and pine reminiscent of the south of France. The tour continues to a winery in the Casablanca Valley for lunch and a guided visit to hear about the process of wine making from growing to harvesting, vinification and tasting.

Chile has a strict zero alcohol rule for drivers, so this may be your only opportunity for wine at lunch. Return to Santiago.

Pucón

Day 3 **B** You are collected from your hotel for your flight to the town of Temuco in the northern Lake District where you pick up your hire car for the 2hr drive to Pucón on the shores of Lake Villarrica—a major centre for adventure activities such as whitewater rafting or hiking the Villarrica volcano.

Day 4 **B** Having a car gives you plenty of options around Pucón. Huerquehue NP is a beautiful protected area of forests and lakes with walking trails in gorgeous surroundings, and views to Villarrica volcano. In town you can arrange rafting or kayaking on the river Pucón, mountain biking and horse riding.

Huilo Huilo

Day 5 **B** Drive 3h south through Villarrica NP (where you might break your journey at hot springs) to Huilo Huilo, an award-winning private reserve combining conservation, research and ecotourism in Valdivian rainforest straight out of The Hobbit. A collection of fantastical buildings reflects the setting: the Magic Mountain, the cantilevered Nothofagus Hotel, Mushroom Kingdom Lodge, forest cabins and tree houses. Conservation projects include the *huemul*, or southern Andean deer, Darwin's frog, and the tiny Colocolo opossum.

This region is notable for its strong heritage of Mapuche and Pehuenche communities.

Day 6 **B** There are self-guided walks within the reserve or the lodge can arrange guided biking or rafting, an exhilarating network of canopy zip lines, visits to Huilo Huilo falls, and more.

Puerto Varas

Day 7 **B** Puerto Varas, where you stay 2 nights, is around 300km direct on Ruta 5, but you should turn off to drive a little further via Frutillar, a civilised lakeside town with German heritage opposite

snow-capped Osorno volcano. The town hosts an international music festival in late January and early February.

Day 8 **B** Free day. You might head east beside Lake Llanquihue towards Osorno, and visit the beautiful Petrohué Falls. The road continues to Lago Todos Santos and a volcanic beach with views across the lake to the mountain village of Peulla.

Southern Patagonia—Puerto Natales

Day 9 **B** In the morning drive to nearby Puerto Montt airport (21km), drop off your car and fly to Punta Arenas in the far south. Collect your second hire car of the trip for the 250km (3h) drive across the dry grassland of the Patagonian steppe (look for rheas and guanacos) on your way to Puerto Natales on Last Hope Sound.

Torres del Paine

Day 10-11 **B** Two full days to explore the spectacular scenery in and around Torres del Paine from Puerto Natales. Fill the tank and buy a picnic lunch and snacks before you set off into the park by car. You could tour by road, perhaps including a boat ride past icebergs to Glacier Grey, or go walking or riding.

Walks in the park vary from strenuous full day treks that need an early start from Puerto Natales, to easy circular walks of an hour or two. A fee is payable at the park entrance. Other options include the boat trip from Puerto Natales to Balmaceda glacier, best pre-booked so let us know in good time to do this.

You might visit The Singular at nearby Puerto Borries for dinner one evening.

Day 12 **B** Either spend the morning in the same area or drive straight to Punta Arenas—well worth a few hours' sightseeing.

Tierra del Fuego

Day 13 **B** An early start to make sure you are at the terminal for the morning car ferry from Punta Arenas across the Strait of Magellan to Tierra del Fuego.

You arrive at a landing stage close to the quirky town of Porvenir. There should be time for lunch in town before driving to the shores of Useless Bay to a colony of King Penguin, one of most accessible places in the world to see these spectacular creatures. The reserve is closed on Mondays. Return to Porvenir for the night.

Day 14 **B** Most of the morning in Porvenir—you could visit its small ethnographic museum—before you must be back at the landing stage for the ferry back to Punta Arenas. Afternoon free.

Santiago

Day 15 **B** Drop your hire car at the airport and fly back to Santiago, where you are met and transferred into the city for one night.

Day 16 **B** Morning free to see the city before you are collected back at your hotel in time for your international flight home.



7 DAYS / 6 NIGHTS
Suggested design for a tailor-made holiday

Driving the Carretera Austral

An adventurous, but very do-able, week-long road trip travelling the pioneering road deep into true wilderness. Readily expanded or extended.

Balmaceda to Coyhaique

Day 1 You fly from Santiago to Balmaceda in the northern section of Patagonia's Aysén region, pick up your car and begin your adventure with the short drive north to Coyhaique, the only proper town in the whole region. The 45km journey on paved road takes around 1 hour—an easy introduction to driving in this part of Chile.

Check in at your hotel and explore Coyhaique. Around the pentagonal *Plaza de Armas* there is an artisan market and shops for jewellery, leatherwork, weavings, pottery and wood carvings. The town's Patagonian Museum includes photo displays on the Carretera Austral's creation, engineering and construction.

Coyhaique to Puerto Guadal

Day 2 **B** A beautiful 5h drive south on a road that becomes one of the most scenic in South America.

You drive back towards Balmaceda but turn to enter the Cerro Castillo reserve. Thick forests and 2000m peaks replace the low hills and pampas with which the day began. The road follows a winding course with Cerro Castillo (2675m) in and out of view ahead. Keep your eyes open for the elusive *huemul* deer. Mountain ranges with hundreds of icy peaks appear in the distance to the south, as you enter beech woods along the wide valley of the Ibanez river and arrive at little Villa Cerro Castillo. After this village the roads are unpaved and conditions more rugged. Weather from the mountains can flip from glorious to shocking and back again in no time. Drive with extra care.

Through scenery that grows more and more impressive you turn down a side valley that leads below the Erasmo snowfields high on your right, then beside the Murta river which flows into Lago General Carrera. You follow the lake's western shore to the hamlet of Puerto Rio Tranquilo, perhaps at a good time for lunch. 5km further at Bahía Mansa boat trips visit the 'Marble Cathedral' and 'Marble Chapels' formations in a large vein of pure marble that crosses the lake. The 'cathedral' is a steep-cliffed promontory jutting over the lake and the 'chapels' are niches sculpted into its base by the water. Swirling striations of marble and the play of sunlight off water that is sometimes turquoise, sometimes emerald, conjure special effects. Take a boat trip if the lake is not too choppy from the day's winds, otherwise return for calmer morning waters. Kayaks are available for experienced paddlers: be wary of rapidly changing conditions.

Leave time for your onwards journey—with fine views across Lago General Carrera—to Puerto Guadal, beautifully situated at the south west corner of the lake, where you stay the night.

Puerto Guadal

Day 3 **B** Puerto Guadal is a hub for a huge array of outdoor activity: scenic walks, longer treks, kayaking on the lake, river rafting, horse-riding through forests to a scenic lookout with views

across the lake to the Northern Ice Field, and fly fishing for trout, landlocked salmon, and *pejerreyes*. 5km from town at Maquis Falls a series of cascades tumble through the forest. You could go hiking by yourself, or we can book escorted trips for you in advance.

You could instead spend the day driving the 'Valle de los Exploradores'—a 170km circuit between Lago Tranquilo, La Nutria Falls, Lago Bayo, Exploradores Park and the Exploradores glacier.

Puerto Guadal to Caleta Tortel

Day 4 **B** Today is one of the most scenic drives you may ever experience as you continue 203km to the southern corner of the Aysén region. A viewpoint on the road looks out to where the clear blue waters of the Baker River cascade down a wide cataract to be joined and turned turquoise by the milky Nef river. Driving beside Lake Cochrane and through jumbled foothills along the Baker River you continue through the little settlement of Cochrane with the low Cordón Esmeralda mountains ahead. You pass four lakes in succession, each backed by mountains, in landscapes of untouched wilderness as your little road threads its way through low woods and beside small bubbling rivers.

Joining the banks of the Baker River again, now a magnificent swathe of water through the mountains, you suddenly arrive at Caleta Tortel, a fishing village in isolated splendour on Baker Fjord. The fjord, which is ringed by mountains and cypress forests, is fed from the north by the huge Northern Ice Field and from the south by the *ginormous* Southern Ice Field. Incidentally there is no road on the planet west of you right the way round to Argentina. Overnight in Caleta Tortel.

Caleta Tortel to Cochrane

Day 5 **B** You can choose to spend most of the morning in Caleta Tortel (or add a day to your trip for long boat trips to Glaciers Steffens or Jorge Montt) before turning back north to Cochrane, or you can head back early to explore sights around Cochrane Lake, Tamango Reserve and San Lorenzo Hill. Overnight in Cochrane, a good stop for fuel and groceries.

Cochrane to Puerto Guadal

Day 6 **B** A short 75km drive to Puerto Guadal leaving lots of time for its adventures. You could raft grade II rapids on the Baker River, bike forested trails to a 'hidden mine', try the strenuous Meliquina Lake trek or something less demanding, or head for the mountain of fossils past Puerto Guadal with breathtaking views of the San Lorenzo and San Valentin peaks. Overnight in Puerto Guadal.

Balmaceda

Day 7 **B** Driving straight back to Balmaceda airport (241km), you return your hire car and either fly back to Santiago, or to Puerto Montt for the Lake District, or down to Punta Arenas and the Far South.



Active Chile

They say that Chile is one of the best countries in the world for getting out into the wild.

With all those opportunities to hike across deserts, trek in the Andes, bike on dirt tracks, raft down rivers, kayak on lakes, or ride horses into the countryside, who wouldn't agree?



14 DAYS / 13 NIGHTS
Suggested design for a tailor-made holiday

Multi-Active Chilean Lakes and Patagonia

Leave the city behind and go hiking, biking, kayaking and rafting in Chile's wild landscapes and untouched nature. Readily adaptable to different levels of energy and skill.

Santiago

Day 1 You are met off your flight and taken to your hotel in Santiago, your English speaking guide giving you an introduction to the area around your hotel, nearby restaurants and things to see and do. After your brief tour, you have the rest of the afternoon free to relax or explore the city.

Aconcagua Valley

Day 2 **BL** An early start this morning for a brilliant day walk to the summit of La Campana in the Aconcagua Valley, through the country town of Olmué to arrive at the entrance to Campana NP around 9am. The trail takes about 5 hours up, and the views from the top are amongst the most spectacular in the region. On clear days you should have good views of Aconcagua to the east, the highest mountain in the Americas at 6965m, and the Pacific Ocean to the west. A perfect introduction to Chile. After a picnic lunch the descent should take about 3 hours, then return to Santiago.

Chiloé

Day 3 **B** You are driven to Santiago airport for your flight to Castro, on the remote island of Chiloé. Direct flights to Chiloé do not operate every day, the alternative is to nearby Puerto Montt and a transfer by road and ferry to Castro. You are dropped at your hotel in town, where you are free for the rest of the afternoon.

Day 4 **B** Tantauco NP is the largest on the island and has over 150km of walking trails. Leaving early from Castro you head south with your local guide towards the Yaldad area, beginning the hike through dense forests before eventually arriving at the Yaldad Lagoon. This trail is a good introduction to the flora and fauna of Chiloé's unique ecosystems with an array of native plants and regional mammals such as Chilote fox, *puđú* (the world's smallest species of deer) and the *huillin* or southern river otter.

Day 5 **B** With your guide you head north from Castro towards Chepu for some kayaking. After a safety briefing you start to paddle on the river Chepu along its estuary to the Pacific, through a 'ghost forest' formed in 1960 when the land sank by 2m in an earthquake, a dramatic and peaceful scene with fantastic birding. You have around 3 hours on the water, then a boat ride to Punihuil Bay and small islets that support a nesting colony of Humboldt and Magellanic penguins between November and March. After a typically Chilote lunch return to Castro.

Lakes & volcanoes

Day 6 **B** Taking the ferry to the mainland, you are driven to lakeside Puerto Varas, the centre of the Chilean Lake District, with fantastic views across Lago Llanquihue to the snow-capped cone of Osorno volcano—your target for tomorrow.

Day 7 **B** Around the lake to Vicente Perez Rosales NP, passing Cascadas, then by dirt road to the start of a fairly strenuous guided hike on the flank of Osorno Volcano below its magnificent cone.

You trek, partly through native forest, emerging to incredible views of Puntigüdo and walk on to 1100m at the pass between Osorno and Picada North. Stop for lunch as views begin of Tronador in Argentina, highest in the area, and Lake Todos Los Santos to which you gently descend, crossing lava channels onto flatter areas and arriving at a wild beach for a dip before walking on to your waiting vehicle. Return to your hotel in Puerto Varas.

Day 8 **B** Stretch some different muscles today with a bike ride along the shore of Llanquihue to the German settlers' town of Frutillar north of Puerto Varas, a cycling distance of around 30km on a mix of dirt and paved roads, with the prospect of fantastic views of Osorno throughout. The return to Puerto Varas is by van, unless you would prefer to ride some or all of the way back.

Day 9 **B** Off at 08.30 to join a rafting trip on the Petrohué River. The start is quiet enough to practise some paddling techniques and enjoy stunning views before the pace of the river accelerates for an exhilarating ride through grade 3 and 4 rapids. English speaking guides are on hand throughout the trip. Safety equipment is provided and there is a briefing before you take to the water.

Torres del Paine

Day 10 **B** Transfer to the airport at Puerto Montt for your flight to Punta Arenas in southern Patagonia, where you immediately head north across the steppe to Puerto Natales on the shore of Last Hope Sound where the scenery dramatically changes to the mountains, lakes and glaciers of this part of Patagonia.

Day 11 **BL** Today you enter Torres del Paine NP, for the iconic hike to the tarn in front of the Towers themselves. You leave your hotel in Puerto Natales at 8am or before reaching the park entrance at Laguna Amarga and continue to the start of the trail. The first section rises quickly and then follows the river along the Ascencio valley, partly forested, before a very rugged steeper section across a boulder field finally emerges up at the lagoon, with the huge granite spires of the towers starkly opposite you. You have some time to enjoy the stunning setting before returning by the same trail. The total walk time is around 6h. Drive back to Puerto Natales.

Day 12 **BL** Pick-up from your hotel and transfer to the dock to start your day cruise along the Last Hope Sound towards the Balmaceda and Serrano glaciers. Look for black-necked swans, cormorants, grebes and others. Icebergs appear as you arrive below the majestic Balmaceda glacier. Continue to a landing where you disembark for a short walk through a lush Patagonian forest to the foot of the Serrano glacier. After lunch you sail back for a final evening in Puerto Natales.

Santiago

Day 13 **B** Today you are transferred from Puerto Natales to Punta Arenas airport in time for your flight back north to Santiago. You then have one final night in the Chilean capital.

Day 14 **B** You are driven to the airport for your flight to the UK.

Chile ★ ACTIVE CHILE



15 DAYS / 14 NIGHTS
Suggested design for a tailor-made holiday

Day Walks in Southern Patagonia

Jaw-droppingly good day-walks in Argentina and Chile in Patagonia's spectacular scenery. Stretch your legs. Get fit. Enjoy a good dinner and a great night's sleep in a comfortable bed.

Buenos Aires

Day 1 You are met off your overnight flight and taken to your city hotel for 2 nights. Your guide takes you to some of the landmarks, such as Plaza de Mayo and the Obelisk and to explore San Telmo, La Boca, stylish Palermo, Parisian Recoleta, and Puerto Madero.

Day 2 **B** Free in Buenos Aires for museums, galleries, shops and cafes. There are lovely city parks and the Costanera Sur nature reserve. We can suggest tours to suit your interests, we can recommend restaurants, and perhaps an evening tango show.

El Calafate and Perito Moreno Glacier

Day 3 **B** You are picked up from your hotel for your flight to El Calafate and your first taste of Patagonia. You are driven to your hotel in town or by the lake shore. The rest of the day is free.

Day 4 **BL** You team up with a local group for a day's adventure at the Perito Moreno Glacier, by road and then boat across the 'Brazo Rico' of Lake Argentina. Supplied with crampons you are taught to walk on ice before a mini-trek on the glacier, beside extraordinary ice formations, deep crevasses, and small lagoons in shades of blue. You loop back through Magellanic forest, sail to the dock and transfer to the main visitor area for impressive views of the glacier from its range of catwalks. Overnight in El Calafate.

The mini-trek on the glacier is 'moderate', for ages 10-65. About 1½h is spent on and around the ice, in groups up to 10. When adverse conditions prevent trekking on the ice you walk in other areas.

Day 5 **BL** An early start for the boat across Lake Argentina to Estancia Cristina, founded in 1914 and beautifully set by the lake in a remote valley below Andean peaks. By 4WD up a long rough track you crest a ridge and set off walking to emerge beside the massive Southern Patagonian Ice Field stretching to the northern horizon, with serrated Andean peaks to the west, and the mighty Upsala Glacier separating for its journey down into Lake Guillermo to the south—a view that will stay with you forever. In this remote world you start a magnificent 14km hike on a rough trail beside the ice field, then into the *Cañadón de los Fósiles*, a rugged canyon scoured by glaciers revealing marine fossils that include belemnites and ammonites. Condors eyed us from their cliff-edge roosts when



we did this walk. You arrive back in El Calafate in the early evening.

The trek is moderately challenging over uneven terrain, with no turning back, at a pace to catch the return boat. Minimum age 12.

El Chaltén and Mt Fitz Roy

Day 6 **B** You are driven around Lake Argentina and along the north shore of Lake Viedma. As you near the rufy-tuffy village of El Chaltén the Fitz Roy massif stands straight ahead in an iconic view. We suggest you drop your bags at your hotel and take the easy self-guided hike to *Mirador de los Condores*.

Day 7-8 **BL** Two free days in one of Argentina's very best hiking areas. We recommend the classic *Laguna de Los Tres* trail to the lagoons below the ring of mighty Fitz Roy peaks (a challenging 9hr trek). There are many other self-guided trails of varying lengths.

Day 9 **B** A morning free in El Chaltén then transfer to El Calafate. Comfort stop at La Leona, the roadhouse where Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid holed up after robbing a bank in Rio Gallegos.

Torres del Paine

Day 10 **BD** You cross into Chile, a journey of 4-5hr across Patagonian steppe as the outline of Torres del Paine comes into view, to your chosen expedition lodge to stay 3 nights with all meals and your choice of guided expeditions, see p42-43.

Day 11-12 **BLD** Two full days of walks, rugged treks, and activities ranging over many areas of the national park and around.

Santiago and the Central Valley

Day 13 **B** Transfer to Puerto Natales, or further south to Punta Arenas, fly to Santiago to be met and taken to your hotel in the city.

Day 14 **B** A private guided tour of the city, strolling lanes to Santa Lucia Hill and in the lively Lastarria neighbourhood. You cross to bohemian Bellavista, and take the funicular for a panorama across the city to the Andes. In the afternoon you visit Concha y Toro's mansion, vineyards and cellars, ending with a short wine tasting.

Day 15 **B** At the appropriate time you are transferred to Santiago airport in time for your flight onwards or home overnight.

Los Dientes de Navarino

Deep deep down in the south, across the Beagle Channel, lies the rugged Isla Navarino, whose dramatic rock towers rise from nothing to 1000m in next to no time. Beyond is Cape Horn, then Antarctica.

The 4-day *'Los Dientes de Navarino'* is the world's southernmost trek, a 55km circuit in a remote and magnificent wilderness. Seasoned Patagonia trekkers hold this route in awe, though it is little known outside the region. It is not to be undertaken lightly.



7 DAYS / 6 NIGHTS
Starts/ends Punta Arenas

The 'W' Trek

The undisputed star of Chile's many treks. For serious trekkers. Nights in mountain hostels.

Puerto Natales

Day 1 You are met off your flight to Punta Arenas and driven to Puerto Natales by Last Hope Sound. You overnight in the town.

Day 2 **BD** You are picked up from your hotel for the drive north into Torres del Paine NP and up to a mountain refuge where you spend your first night in the park ready for the start of your trek.

Las Torres 7-8h 13km Hard

Day 3 **BLD** A spectacular day on the park's most famous trail. Start with a tough upwards hike on broken ground carrying your pack. As the trail levels you check-in your pack at El Chileno refuge. With your daypack walk by a mountain river, cross a bridge into a magical forested area, rising again across a difficult boulder field to crest a ridge to find the immense Towers facing you across a lagoon. Rest and revive before the return to overnight at El Chileno.

El Chileno to Los Cuernos 5-6h 11km Medium

Day 4 **BLD** This moderate trek ending at Los Cuernos Refuge is one of the most scenic and varied on the route, with fantastic views throughout over Lake Nordenskjöld and of hanging glaciers.

The French Valley 11-12h 25km Hard

Day 5 **BLD** A strolling start to Camp Italiano, leave your pack and continue with a daypack as you climb into the French Valley, with its hanging glaciers and spectacular look-outs at Frances Glacier and Britanico. Collect your pack on the return and continue to Paine Grande Lodge at the end of a long and beautiful day.

Glacier Grey 8-9h 22km Medium

Day 6 **BL** Trek all the way to the look out in front of Glacier Grey—one of the most impressive glaciers in this part of Patagonia. There are great views around the halfway mark, then another 1½h to the most spectacular views of the glacier, Cordon Olguin and ice floes on the lake. Return to take a ferry across Lake Pehoe where you are met and driven back to Puerto Natales to stay the night.

Day 7 **B** You are taken to catch the bus to Punta Arenas to stay the night before moving on to your next destination.

From the small town of Puerto Williams the trail leads south, passing through *lenga* forest and climbing to a broad ridge with magnificent views along the Beagle Channel to Ushuaia. You cross a plateau below the highest peaks seen across a valley dotted with lagoons, and soon camp. The trail ascends across scree and rock to a pass between two towers and enters the southern side of the island, with views to Cape Horn, and down to the next camp beside a lake with panoramic views of the *Dientes* range. The next two days walking is through magnificent scenery, moderately easy with some boggy areas. At any time walkers can be exposed to unstable weather conditions, including high winds, rain and snow—and swooped on by condors! Favoured months are December to March.



15 DAYS / 14 NIGHTS
Suggested design for a tailor-made holiday

Chilean Expedition Lodges

Minimum fuss. Maximum experience.

Your choice of expedition lodges—Explora, Tierra, Awasi or the independents—in the ultimate landscapes of Atacama and Patagonia. As much exercise as you and your partner each choose: you decide when you are there. Good spas, good food, good sleep. Family friendly. Return renewed.

Santiago

Day 1 Arrive in Santiago. You are met at the airport and driven to your hotel in Chile's buzzy sensible capital. In the afternoon your guide introduces you to the city with a visit to Santa Lucia Hill and the historic centre around Plaza de Armas.

Day 2 Free in Santiago. Galleries, design shops, foodie treats.

Torres del Paine expedition lodge

Day 3 BLD You are collected and driven to the airport for your flight to Punta Arenas or Puerto Natales in the far south. You are met and driven to your chosen expedition lodge in the area. Settle in and plan your next day's activities with the staff. Relax in the spa before dinner.

Day 4-6 AI Three days of expeditions from your lodge's range of options. All offer several grades of hikes and horse riding. Some offer biking, high ascents, kayaking and wildlife or photography. Family options are available too.

Central Valley winery

Day 7 B Travel back to Puerto Natales or Punta Arenas for your return flight to Santiago. From Santiago you are driven to a top range winery in the Casablanca Valley to relax after the exertions of Patagonia.

Day 8 B Relax at the winery, with a wine tour and wine tasting.

Atacama expedition lodge

Day 9 BD Fly to Calama where you are met and driven to your chosen lodge at San Pedro. Settle in, discuss the active options and set out for a mid/late afternoon expedition. Spa. Dinner.

Day 10-12 AI Three days of expeditions of your choosing from your lodge's range. Several grades of hiking, horse riding and overland trips by 4WD are widely offered. Biking, high ascents, hot springs, star-gazing, full moon hikes, bird watching, and other special interest trips are offered by individual lodges. There are family options too.

Valparaíso

Day 13 B There may be time for a morning expedition before your return flight to Santiago, where you are met. A private driver takes you to Valparaíso for a two night stay.

Day 14 B Your local guide takes you for a morning's walking tour of the city, up funicular lifts, strolling lanes, with views and street art.

Day 15 B Morning in Valparaíso. You are collected by a private driver and driven to Santiago airport in time for your overnight flight home.

Extensions

If you have more time there are lots of options: our experts will advise. Other expedition lodges include:

- Explora Rapa Nui on Easter Island
- Tierra Chiloe on Chiloe Island
- Awasi Iguazú at Iguazú Falls



Expedition lodge collections

High quality outdoor-focussed lodges in superb settings run on a luxury full-service all-inclusive basis with amazing opportunities for active experiences each day, supported by skilled and experienced guides. There is no need to plan: just turn up. At the end of each day you dine well and sleep soundly. A time to relax, revive, energise, engage, and explore. Ready to relaunch on your return.

Explora

Explora brought the concept of expedition lodges to Chile—and extended it to Peru and Argentina. Abiding themes are a strong sense of place, lots of activity matched to each guest, healthy food superbly prepared, a good night's sleep. 'Exploration' excursions are shared in small numbers and led by superb guides.



Explora Atacama

Just outside San Pedro. Farm-chic rooms looking out to the landscape, set around a large yard with stunning architectural main lodge building with excellent restaurant. Large gardens hold four elegant swimming pools. The lodge has its own stables, observatory and hot springs in the hills. Over 40 'explorations' with good guides cover easy and moderate half and full day walks, tough high mountain ascents, riding, biking, and overland vehicle trips, each with up to 8 participants.



Explora Patagonia

Best setting in the park with stunning views of the Cuernos across Lake Pehoe and a superb all-round experience. Architecturally brilliant use of changing levels and volumes. Spacious bedrooms and cool, relaxed, discreet social areas. Fine restaurant. Excellent staff and service. Walkway to separate spa with saunas, indoor pool and outdoor hot tubs with fine views down Rio Paine. More than 40 'explorations' with hikes from easy to tough, riding (own stables), biking, and overland vehicle trips.



Explora Rapa Nui

Commanding location 8km outside Hanga Roa on Easter Island looking to the ocean from Te Miro One. Set low in the land the architecture responds to the island's contours and the Rapanui culture. 30 comfortable minimalist rooms with stylish decor, large windows to take advantage of views. Excellent restaurant. The range of excursions is extensive, keeping guests busy, as physically active as they choose, and showcasing the very best of the island.

Tierra

Tierra is a cool younger rival, with 3 lodges all in Chile, all with strong contemporary architecture, and just as superbly run: lots of active choices, great food, high comfort in the rooms. Expeditions, with lots of options, are shared and led by superb guides.



Tierra Atacama

A top expedition lodge behind high adobe walls just outside San Pedro. Tierra's mantra of cutting-edge contemporary architecture in local materials is to the fore, within landscaped gardens with views to mighty Licancabur volcano. 32 rooms with private terraces, most have great views. Good restaurant and bar, outdoor fire for asados. Spa and wellness has indoor and outdoor pools, therapies, yoga platform. Lots of excursions, including several exclusive to the lodge. Excellent staff.



Tierra Patagonia

Visually superb in its romantic location looking across Lake Sarmiento to the Torres del Paine massif. Stunning aerofoil-inspired architecture, with a single curvaceous space for bar, restaurant, and social areas. Rooms have views to the massif from near full-height full-width windows. The spa has steam room, heated indoor pool with hydro massage, open air hot tub and relaxation zones. Super food: healthy and refined. Full range of active excursions with lively guides. Just outside the park.



Tierra Chiloe

An architecturally dramatic lodge with superb interior spaces set in Chile's wild landscape with views to islands in the Gulf of Ancud. All rooms have giant windows with fabulous views, contemporary wood panelling and local craft work. Expeditions by land and sea include hiking, biking, kayaking, riding, and visits to local villages and markets. The restaurant highlights seafood and Chilotan specialities. The oysters are superb. The spacious spa and wellness area has indoor and outdoor pools.

Awasi

Awasi offers privacy and exclusivity. Each room is assigned a private guide with 4WD vehicle, allowing guests to explore at their own pace, visiting where they want and in their own time. Awasi is a Relais & Chateau member and they pride themselves on their gastronomy.



Awasi Atacama

Awasi Atacama lies secluded behind ancient walls across a quiet lane in San Pedro. There are just 10 suites using typical local materials that keep interiors cool by day and warm by night. Each has a private shaded terrace and the option of an alfresco shower. Communal spaces have a generous relaxed home-from-home feel with plenty of seating areas and an inviting small swimming pool. As for all Awasi properties, the restaurant is extremely good, the service and staff a delight.



Awasi Patagonia

Awasi Patagonia lies to the east of Torres del Paine NP in its own private reserve, with views across Lake Sarmiento to the massif. The lodge building and 14 spacious villas are predominantly from local timber. Cabins, raised on low stilts, are widely spaced among lenga woods with views of the peaks, the lake or the steppe from their private terraces and hot tubs. The restaurant is exclusively for guests, many ingredients are from the Awasi garden. The lodge does notable puma conservation work.



Awasi Iguazu

The first Awasi outside Chile, Awasi Iguazú is 20min from the falls on the Argentine side by the banks of the Iguazú river. The 14 villas are spread out through the forest, with a jungle environment creating natural privacy between them. Each has an outdoor terrace and plunge pool. Interiors feature Guarani textiles and decorations. As with all the Awasi lodges, Iguazú assigns a private guide and vehicle to each reservation and therefore offers the most tailor-made experience in the Iguazú area.

Independent expedition lodges

These independent lodges also follow the expedition lodge concept. Look for them on the 'Where to stay' pages for each region:

Atacama and the North

Alto Atacama

See p9

Far south

Remota Patagonia Camp EcoCamp The Singular

See p23



Natural Chile

Many of Chile's wild places are easily accessible. There is a lot to see, in a huge range of dramatic landscapes and lots of different ecosystems from dry desert to Valdivian rainforest.

There are some lovely places to stay too.

Here are just a few ideas. Get in touch with us for more.



10 DAYS / 9 NIGHTS
Suggested design for a tailor-made holiday

Wildlife of the Far South

Pumas, king penguins, guanacos, rheas, condors, eagles, flamingos, black-necked swans ... Everyone's wish list of Patagonian wildlife.

Santiago

Day 1 Arrive in Santiago, with a short walk with your guide to get to know the neighbourhood near your hotel.

Patagonian steppe

Day 2 B Back to the airport to fly to Punta Arenas in the far south. You are met and driven across the Patagonian steppe (3.5h) on your way to spend 2 nights in Puerto Natales on Last Hope Sound.

Soon into the journey you may spot Chilean flamingo at Laguna del Toro, then look for Darwin's (these days 'lesser') rhea striding quickly across the landscape at your approach. Family groups of female guanaco and their young nibble away at the hummocks of steppe grasses guarded by their dominant male, and you should see a selection of roadside and soaring raptors.

Bernardo O'Higgins NP

Day 3 BL A wonderful boat trip in Bernardo O'Higgins NP to the head of Last Hope Sound and the Balmaceda Glacier, descending from the immense Southern Ice Field. You may see eagles, osprey and condor, along with Black-necked swans, gulls, grebes, geese, ducks and cormorants. Close to the glacier there are icebergs in brilliant turquoise and the captain should find one of the sound's small groups of South American sealion.

You dock and follow a trail of about 1km through *lenga* nothofagus beech woods, *coihue* and native mahonia to a small lake at the snout of Serrano glacier. Lunch is served at a traditional sheep estancia beside the Sound, with time to walk in the very birdy countryside nearby with superb views when the skies are clear.

Torres del Paine NP

Day 4 BLD Today you meet your private guide/driver for the next 4 days in and around Torres del Paine NP. On one of these days you are joined by a specialist puma tracker.

Weather and recent sightings may influence which parts of the park you visit. The north east is favoured by large groups of guanaco and is dubbed 'the pumas' larder' by some. It usually offers the best chance of seeing puma, sometimes impressively close. Pumas are secretive and solitary, but present around the massif in good numbers. Best chances for sightings are in early spring (September-October) when they are moving to higher areas as the snow recedes, or in early autumn (late March-April) when females bring cubs down before bad weather closes in.

You should also find Patagonian hog-nosed skunk, hairy armadillo, *huemul* deer, grey fox on the steppe and the larger red fox in nothofagus forest. Chilean flamingo are seen in several lakes and Andean Condor is just one of the park's 15 raptors.

Day 5-6 BLD Wildlife experiences in or around Torres del Paine NP.

Punta Arenas

Day 7 BL A full day with your guide in or around the park and on your way back to Punta Arenas. You might call in at Shackleton's Bar this evening.

Tierra del Fuego

Day 8 BL You join a guided shared tour, catching a ferry across the Strait of Magellan to the main island of Tierra del Fuego, arriving at the small town of Porvenir. You visit its museum which focuses on the native peoples of Tierra del Fuego, see box on p21.

After lunch you travel by minibus to the shore of Bahía Inutil where a small but growing colony of King Penguins has taken up residence year-round—one of the very few places they are reliably seen outside Antarctica and the subantarctic islands. The adults are majestic: up to 1m tall, with strong orange markings on beak and cheek setting off the pure black of their heads, pure white chests and sleek grey backs. What their young lack in style they make up for in ways only their parents can truly appreciate.

The colony is protected by a special reserve, whose staff provide a short briefing before you approach on foot to a wooden screen at a reasonably close distance. From a path to the shore you can see individual Kings making their way to the water. After a 45min timed visit, you drive over the steppe to catch a car ferry across the narrowest part of the Magellan Strait to Punta Delgada. From here the minibus makes a long journey back to Punta Arenas. You arrive in time for a late dinner and bed after a memorable day.

Magdalena Islands

Day 9 B Between November and March Magellanic penguins assemble in huge numbers to breed on the Magdalena Islands which lie 2h by boat from Punta Arenas. The colony is protected by a grandly-named reserve, the 'Monumento Nacional Los Pingüinos'.

You join a boat at the dock and land on the islands amid up to 40,000 breeding pairs. The penguins spend much of their year at sea but return to these islands with their life partners to hollow out nesting burrows and raise their young. It is an intense scene at many levels: sight, sound and smell. You can visit the lighthouse museum before the return. While sailing look for Commerson's dolphin, kelp gull, cormorants, skuas and terns.

On your return you collect your luggage and are taken to the airport for your flight to Santiago where you spend the night.

Very occasionally, primarily for weather or tides, the penguin colony boat does not sail; you are refunded, with free time in Punta Arenas.

Santiago

Day 10 B From Santiago we could arrange additional days for you to visit Valparaíso or stay at a winery. If not, you are taken to the airport for your international flight home.

Chile ★ NATURAL CHILE



12 DAYS / 11 NIGHTS
Suggested design for a tailor-made holiday

Life in Chile

Step into Chile's natural worlds and ways of life. Walk in forests of monkey puzzle and myrtle. Sample and support rich indigenous Mapuche culture. Experience European traditions adapted to life in Chile. Spend time on the special island of Chiloé, for wildlife, birds, nature and wonderful seafood.

Santiago

Day 1 You are met on the arrival of your international flight and transferred to your hotel.

Day 2 B A free day for sightseeing, museums and galleries. Bearing in mind some of the places you visit on your trip we can thoroughly recommend the Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino.

Temuco

Day 3 B This morning you are collected from your hotel for the short flight to the university city of Temuco, capital of Chile's Araucanía region and heartland of the indigenous Mapuche people, whose culture is long threatened though 13% of the nation identifies as Mapuche.

With a guide, you hear something of Mapuche traditions, and you learn about their crafts, weaving, art, music, medicinal use of plants and games such as the exciting hockey-like *palin*. A few words of greeting in their Mapudungun language will be met with great delight.

Pablo Neruda grew up in Temuco. His father worked on the railways, and Neruda's abiding love of trains is celebrated in the *Museo Nacional Ferrovial Pablo Neruda de Temuco* which you visit (unless today is a Monday). It has a great collection of 12 steam locos and 9 carriages that once played their part in Chilean life. Sadly the railway is no longer in use.

Araucanía's Araucarias

Day 4 B This morning you are transferred to the resort town of Pucón on the shore of Lake Villarrica for 2 nights. In the afternoon your local guide takes you walking in the forests on the lower flank of Villarrica Volcano among many of Patagonia's typical trees, the



lenga, coigue, roble, nothofagus, alerce and others, with lovely birds and the chance of other wildlife.

Day 5 BL This morning your guide takes you towards Volcán Lanin to an area of thousand year old araucaria trees. These evergreen 'monkey puzzle' conifers with their umbrella-like, reptilian foliage have lived here since the Jurassic. They became endangered due to logging but are now protected in a cluster of national reserves near Villarrica and Pucón. You walk in the freshness of nature from an unimaginably ancient time.

Southern Lake District

Day 6 BL Travel south to Puerto Varas on the shore of Lake Llanquihue. Temperatures are cooler and the climate wetter in this southern section of the Lake District, notable for its Valdivian rainforest. Stop on the way for lunch at Puerto Octay and to visit the German-influenced town of Frutillar.

We can try to book tickets for this evening at its busy lakeside concert hall, which opened in 2010 beside the lake with views across to the perfect cone of snow-capped Osorno volcano. Stay 2 nights in Puerto Varas. It is a 30 minute taxi ride to Frutillar if you are spending your evening at a concert there.

Day 7 BL You visit the Valdivian forest of the Alerce Andina reserve. Stretch your legs as much as you wish on its forest trails, some beneath mighty *Fitzroya cupressoides* which can live over 3000 years. The reserve is home to rarely-seen pumas, tiny *pudu* (the planet's second smallest deer), and lesser grison or *quique*—a widespread mustelid. This is a good opportunity to look for endemic woodland birds. If birds are your thing (let us know) your guide might drive you to the Gulf of Reloncaví for coastal birds—and perhaps even Peale's dolphin too.

Chiloé Island

Day 8 BL This morning you drive past Puerto Montt to take the ferry from Parga across the narrow Chacao Channel to Chiloé Island where you stay for 4 nights.

The crossing takes just 40min. Pods of black and white Commerson's dolphin patrol the channel. You should see sea lion, and an array of sea birds—perhaps even the very rare Pincoya Storm-petrel.

On Chiloé you will experience its unique way of life, its vivid folklore and myths, its cuisine sourced from the sea, and its special architecture—notable in wooden churches and palafito houses.

Chiloé's unusual habitats, some very pristine, support a very special fauna, such as Darwin's fox, kodkod or *güiña* (a tiny spotted cat), the endangered Southern river otter and the rare marine otter. The birdlife is exceptional.

You stop at Caulín Bay and mud flats where locals harvest oysters and seaweed on the mudflat. If you see a Red Knot here it will have migrated from northern Canada.

You take a 30min boat ride around Punihiul Islet, home between October and March of the only known mixed colony of Humboldt and Magellanic penguins, and where the rare marine otter can be seen. Pygmy blue whales come together around Metalqui Island between December and March, and you could also join a 3-4h boat trip to see them at reasonable extra cost.

Tonight you stay in the north of the island.

Day 9 B BL Today you explore by boat along the peaceful Chepu River, an unusual tidal river created in 1960 by an earthquake which sank the land by 2m and created a sunken forest. It is home to Southern river otter which is adapted to life in salt or freshwater.

Reaching the Pacific shore you walk along a remote, pristine beach—a world away from the world.

You travel across Chiloé, stopping to see some of its wooden churches, to arrive in Castro on the Gulf of Ancud where you stay the night.

Day 10 BLD The western and southern parts of Chiloé are well covered in pristine forests with a thick understory of native *quila* bamboo, ferns, mosses, lianas and epiphytes.

You visit the Tepuhueico reserve on the west coast where there are some beautiful walking trails and the best chance of seeing the endemic Darwin's fox and perhaps the diminutive kodkod. Amid Magellanic fuchsia and evergreen hazel there is an enchanting stand of *arrayan* myrtles, their twisting trunks papered with peeling bark of reddish gold rising to the sky—a cathedral in the forest. You stay the night at Tepuhueico's comfortable hotel.

Birdwatchers will be kept especially busy here.

Day 11 BL You are able to spend much of today with your naturalist guide exploring the wonderful Tepuhueico reserve. You return to Castro in the late afternoon for a final night on Chiloé.

Santiago

Day 12 B You are transferred to Chiloé's airport for a flight to Santiago.

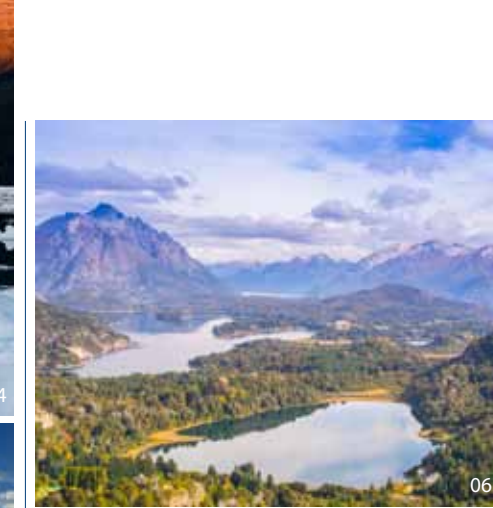
If you have more time, you could join an expedition cruise from Puerto Montt through the Gulf of Ancud to the Glacier San Rafael (p49), or fly to the far south of Patagonia to Torres del Paine or cruise through the Tierra del Fuego archipelago to Cape Horn (p48).





Fjord & lake cruising

One of the best ways to experience the drama of Patagonia's landscapes is from the sea.



16 days / 15 nights
Suggested design for a tailor-made holiday

Far South, Tierra del Fuego and Cape Horn

Deep down at the tip of South America, the Chilean section of Tierra del Fuego extends west in great complexity. The main part of Tierra del Fuego connects with the mountains of the Cordillera Darwin, permanently iced, with slopes plunging deep into the sea in scores of fjords and bays, many bearing massive glaciers. Successions of mountainous islands to the west and south shelter long sea channels and create excellent conditions for adventurous expedition cruising in tolerably calm waters.

This is a world of extreme wildlife experiences, with the prospect of multitudes of seabirds, condors soaring from the mountains, seals and sealions, penguins, whales and dolphins in their seasons.

Just beyond the shelter of the islands lies Cape Horn itself, a 'must-get-there' target for many world travellers.

Just two very experienced specialist cruise

lines sail this region.

Australis provides short cruises to Cape Horn from Punta Arenas in Chile and Ushuaia in Argentina. Their routes explore the fjords of Tierra del Fuego on either side of the Cordillera Darwin and along the Beagle Channel, extending right down to Cape Horn to land at the furthest point of the Americas if sea conditions permit.

Skorpions explores the dramatic fjords and glaciers (Calvo, El Brujo, Amalia and others) north via the Sarmiento Channel. Cruises embark at Puerto Natales and so connect neatly with a visit to Torres del Paine.

With both you see the raw nature of these places from the comfort of ships designed and equipped for these waters, with comfortable en-suite cabins, good food, and spacious observation decks. You set off from your mother ship in small boats for historic sites

from the time of Darwin or the early explorers, to see penguin rookeries, to walk beside glaciers or view them from the water as they calve icebergs into the ocean.

These short, well-priced cruises can be a good alternative to the major undertaking of a cruise to Antarctica.

Visit our website to find out more and contact our specialists for the details of sailings and special offers currently available.



Skorpions III

Chilean built in 1995, remodelled in 2012. Tough, comfortable and well-liked. Her tiered decks give good outdoor space, and there are two comfortable bar lounges and an ample dining room with panoramic views. Her 3 night cruises venture north from Puerto Natales, combining very well with Torres del Paine to explore spectacular very little visited areas including up to 15 glaciers and with plenty of outdoor and onshore experiences up to soft-hiking grade. See 'Lakes and Fjords' opposite.

P90 L230 K14 C34

Lake District, Chiloé & Aysén

The stunning Andean lakes of the Chilean Lake District give gorgeous views below snow-capped volcanoes plus the thrill of crossing through the Andes themselves on the special lake-hopping route to Bariloche in Argentina—see 'Lakes and Fjords' on this page and 'Andean Circle' on page 33.

Puerto Montt, tucked beside a sheltered bay connects by road with the Lake District and its port serves the remote Aysén region.

Sailing from Puerto Montt with Skorpions, you cruise sheltered wide waters beside Chiloé Island through scattered archipelagos to Moraleda Channel and into the hidden world of Aysén.

This is a realm of low mountains swathed in deep forest, rugged 2000m peaks swathed in snow, romantic views into mysterious fjords and a web of sea channels in an impossibly complex maze of wild islands.

These waters are rich in marine life, feeding grounds for seabirds in huge numbers, penguins, sealions, and rare sea otters. Whales and dolphins visit.

The whole region is given over entirely to nature, apart from a very few isolated fishing villages, where hardy seafaring families make their living from a rich harvest of fish and lobster. A very long way inland the Carretera Austral winds a very spectacular route south, but here the isolation is complete: the sea is the only way in or out.

The Moraleda Channel comes to an end before a narrow fjord leads into a lagoon below the magnificent Glacier San Rafael, fed by the Northern Patagonia Ice Field and Mt San Valentín (4058m). The glacier's broad snout calves jagged icebergs into the lagoon, locked away from the world.



Skorpions II

Skorpions II is a tough, comfortable expedition vessel with plenty of space on board. Cabins are practical and comfortable, with en suite bathrooms. The restaurant is good, and there are very good observation decks. She makes 5 night cruises from Puerto Montt along Chiloé and into Aysén through to the remote Glacier San Rafael, with at least one expedition each day ashore or in small boats. Popular with Chileans. If you are considering a trip into the Lake District or Chiloé this is a superb experience to add. See 'Lakes and Fjords' opposite.

P130 L229 K12 C34



Stella Australis and Ventus Australis

Stella Australis and Ventus Australis, her closely similar new sister ship, each accommodate up to 210 guests in their 100 very comfortable cabins. All cabins have a simple clean design and are available in twin or double bed configuration, each with window and a well-equipped en suite bathroom. The ships have plenty of communal lounges with large windows to enjoy the views whilst cruising. There is also a Sky Lounge where guests can get more involved with lectures on topics such as the glaciology, ethnology and wildlife of the region.

The two ships sail between Punta Arenas and Ushuaia on 3 and 4 night cruises through the fjords and channels of Tierra del Fuego and the Cape Horn archipelago. 'Patagonia Explorer' on page 30 features these cruises.

Lakes and Fjords

Explore areas unreachable by road. Cross the Andes by boat from Argentina into Chile's Lake District and cruise Patagonia's fjords: sheltered, comfortable and awesome.

Buenos Aires

Day 1 Fly to Buenos Aires in Argentina for a three night stay.

Day 2 B Your local guide takes you for an introductory tour of the city, with the afternoon free to explore by yourself.

Day 3 B Free in Buenos Aires.

Argentine Lake District

Day 4 B Fly to Bariloche in the Argentine Lake District. Your hotel is set by the shore of Lake Nahuel Huapi.

Day 5 B Your guide in this region takes you on the stunning 'Seven Lakes' road to San Martin de los Andes. Return to Bariloche late.

Day 6 B Catch the chair lift (not Mondays) to a mountain top (1050m) with stunning views across Lake Nahuel Huapi, then join a boat across the lake to Victoria Island and Bosque de Arrayanes to walk in myrtle woods.

Lake Crossing to Chile

Day 7 B By special bus to Puerto Pañuelo to board a catamaran across Lake Nahuel Huapi to the dock at Puerto Blest where a bus is waiting to drive you the few kilometres to Puerto Alegre on Lake Frías. Another boat is waiting to take you across the lake, with vivid emerald water against a backdrop of huge volcanoes. Dock and take the waiting bus over the border into Chile and stop for lunch at Peulla, an eco-village in stunning countryside. Continue and board your third boat to cross the beautiful Lake Todos los Santos below snow-capped Osorno and Tronador volcanoes. Disembark at Petrohué, pause at the beautiful Petrohué Falls, and continue by bus skirting Lake Llanquihue to Puerto Varas. Arrive, all being well, in time for dinner. We loved this trip—and so will you!

Chilean Lakes and Chiloé

Day 8 B Your local guide collects you for a morning's tour in the area, including a visit to Frutillar. The afternoon is free.

Day 9 B Your guide takes you by ferry to Chiloé Island, where you visit Dalcahue, Castro, Gamboa, and the church at Nercón, one of the finest of the many wooden churches that dot the island.

Southern Patagonia cruise

Day 10 BD Either take a Skorpions cruise from Puerto Montt to the remote Glacier San Rafael (a very good option) or, as suggested here, fly south to Punta Arenas and overnight in Puerto Natales.

Day 11 BLD Join a bus tour in Torres del Paine NP before later boarding your Skorpions cruise in channels and fjords below the Southern Ice Field. Up to fifteen glaciers are visited or seen.

Day 12-13 BLD Aboard your cruise.

Santiago

Day 14 B Disembark at Puerto Natales after breakfast, then by bus to Punta Arenas. Fly to Santiago to stay at a hotel in the city.

Day 15 B A morning's private tour with a local guide to introduce you to Santiago. The afternoon is free to explore by yourself.

Day 16 B Morning free, before you are taken to the airport for your overnight flight back to the UK.



Antarctica & the South Atlantic

The ultimate adventure

02

Antarctica is one of the last remaining wildernesses on Earth. It offers a powerful sense of isolation and wonder in the immense space of sea that mirrors sky and ice and mountains, and a deep sense of oneness with a natural world set apart from man. A continent that belongs to no-one, with an awe-inspiring beauty and incredible 'Frozen Planet' wildlife experiences that make a visit here, designed with care, a traveller's necessity. Antarctica reflects the stuff of legendary expeditions and heroic explorers, and a frontier for scientific research that is vital for our understanding of the planet. Guidelines under the Antarctic Treaty aim to encourage visitor access and limit its impact. Controls cover routes that approved ships can sail in these waters, where visitors can land, and guidelines to minimise disturbance to wildlife.

THE ANTARCTIC PENINSULA

The spectacular, mountainous arm of land that reaches out towards the tip of South America from the vast Antarctic continent is a pristine wilderness of snow, ice, mountains, and sea. This is the richest part of the Antarctic continent for magnificent landscapes and by far the best region for wildlife, especially for penguins, seals, whales, and seabirds.

The strip of land that forms the Antarctic Peninsula is very narrow—in parts as little as 12 kilometres across. It is extremely rugged and mountainous (its steep peaks are geologically related to the Andes) with stunning glaciers that flow into the seas along the peninsula's intricate coast of bays, islands and channels—perfect for expedition cruising in an ice-strengthened polar ship.

A very limited number of expedition cruise ships provide opportunities to explore this 'world at the end of the world' You will experience periods of crystal clear beauty and serene calm, of threatening skies and blasts of snow, and long polar days.

When you cruise along the Antarctic Peninsula, you can normally expect at least two landings per day at the sites carefully selected by the treaty bodies. See our website for descriptions of the landing sites.

SOUTH SHETLAND ISLANDS

The South Shetlands are the first land you meet as you approach the Antarctic Peninsula.

King George Island is the largest and is home to several research stations. At Deception Island ships may sometimes take a narrow passage into the flooded caldera of an extinct volcano.

The Shetlands' wildlife and dramatic scenery are their major attractions. Vast penguin rookeries and beaches ruled by elephant seals make every day unforgettable.

SOUTH ORKNEY ISLANDS

The windy mountainous South Orkney Islands sit alone in the middle of one of the roughest oceans in the world. The few cruises that brave the seas come upon a dramatic polar landscape.

WEDDELL SEA

Magnificent tabular icebergs float into the Weddell from ice shelves attached to the Antarctic Peninsula and pack ice stretches to the horizon.

Shackleton's 'Endurance' was trapped in the ice here in 1915. The story of the men's survival is one of the greatest in polar exploration.

FALKLAND ISLANDS & SOUTH GEORGIA

Some cruises spend time in the Falklands, or there are flights from Chile or Brize Norton.

South Georgia's intense wildlife experiences, with elephant seals and huge colonies of King Penguins, are only accessible by ship. Many of the ships that sail to Antarctica offer some special cruises that visit South Georgia too.

Our website has full coverage of travel opportunities to both.



03



04

PHOTOS

- 01 Gentoo penguins, Antarctic Peninsula
- 02 Paradise Bay, Antarctic Peninsula
- 03 Going ashore to Esperanza Station, Hope Bay, Antarctic Peninsula
- 04 Leopard seals gathered on an ice floe

Choosing an Antarctic cruise

Polar cruising is hugely rewarding but very expensive. It's best to call us at an early stage to talk things through. Ships and voyages change each season—check our website for the latest updates.

When to go

The main season for expedition cruise voyages to Antarctica ranges from October to April—sometimes a little earlier, sometimes a little later.

It is generally agreed that the best months to take an Antarctic cruise are November to February. Prices tend to be higher in these months.

Where to go

The most interesting and accessible part of Antarctica is the Antarctic Peninsula. Almost all tourist visits to Antarctica go here, almost all are 'expedition cruises' with guests setting out from the ship for shore landings and other activities on and around the Peninsula and its many islands.

Ships offer different voyages at different times of year. At the start of the Antarctic season some are sailing down from the Arctic and offer cruises from Peru or Brazil as they journey south. Cruises that include the Falklands

The shortest cruises are 10 nights which gives a good amount of time in Antarctica. It is well worth spending longer if you can.

It makes sense to take the opportunity to visit other parts of Chile or Argentina, especially if you choose one of the shorter cruises. Our specialists can help.

or South Georgia also tend to be early in the season when conditions close to the Antarctica Peninsula can be affected by sea ice.

Most voyages to the Peninsula will also visit the South Shetland Islands, not just because they are en route, but also because their slightly milder conditions encourage a wide variety of wildlife in large numbers.

After the height of the Antarctic summer when the ice has receded there are longer cruises that sail further south along the Antarctic Peninsula, or into the Weddell Sea.

Visitor sites

A system of visitor sites supports the goals of encouraging visitor access and limiting impact. Detailed guidance is given for each site and voyages are carefully planned and coordinated so that ships do not coincide.

There are a hundred sites around the Antarctic Peninsula alone, from sailing channels to landing sites, and research stations to glaciers. Ships pick the visitor sites they plan to visit on their voyages to cover the range of experiences they aim to offer.

Choosing which sites most interest you, and working out which ships visit them, is a daunting task.

Your best solution is to call us (sorry, we keep saying this). We can talk through what you are looking for and the choices that might work best for you. We provide a lot

of information on our website. Check our blogs for news and features, and sign up to our newsletter for the latest updates.

An obvious word of caution, though. Safety comes first. Weather, ice conditions, and other nautical risks can, and do, intervene to upset ships' carefully planned voyages. Great efforts are made, and coordination continues at sea. If one ship cannot sail an important part of a planned voyage, others will vary their route in its favour so that everyone gets as fair a share as can reasonably be achieved. This can mean disappointment if you chose a voyage because of a particular site it planned to visit, for example, even though there was nothing preventing your ship from going there.

Choosing a ship

The size of the expedition cruise ship you choose will have some important implications for your trip.

Large boats are generally more comfortable to sail in. Sheer size, especially length, helps to reduce the movement of any ship. Some boats have advanced stabilisation systems which help in heavy seas. Generally (but not always) the larger the boat the more passengers it will carry.

There are good arguments in favour of boats that carry fewer passengers. There are tight restrictions about which ships can put passengers ashore and where, and how many passengers can be ashore at the same time.

Some ships carry fewer passengers than would be normal for their size in order that they can visit a greater range of Antarctic visitor sites.

At any site in Antarctica only 100 passengers at most can go ashore at any time. So boats that carry over 100 passengers must operate a shift system. This can greatly slow the whole process, and it will usually mean that each passenger spends less time ashore. They will generally arrange for the other passengers to be doing something else meanwhile, such as a zodiac cruise or kayaking, so the time is by no means wasted.

Getting there

Most ships depart from Ushuaia in Argentina. Some sail from Punta Arenas in Chile.

An obvious influence on sailing from South America to Antarctica is the ocean in between—the Drake Passage. This is a fickle piece of water. It is sometimes almost flat calm, and sometimes very rough indeed. Ships allow two

A few sites are restricted to just 40 or 50 visitors, and some historic expedition huts etc can only cope with a handful of visitors at once.

There are limits on the amount of time that visitors can be ashore at many sites (usually up to 3 hours), and there are places where more than one site can be accessed while the ship waits. It is complicated, which is why a little expert advice can make a big difference.

If you are after a good general experience of Antarctica then rest assured that captains are skilled at managing the different factors for their size of ship so that their guests have a good experience and the treaty guidelines are properly followed. If you have particular interests, to see special wildlife, go ashore at a specific place, or experience a special activity such as camping for a night on the snow then only some ships or some voyages will suit you best.

Not everyone is as fit as they were. Jumping in and out of a zodiac on to a windswept beach might be a challenge. In that case, you would be best in a larger boat that puts less emphasis on going ashore, but offers plenty of awe-inspiring sights and experiences from the ship itself.

days each way for this, but it usually takes a day and a half. You could choose to fly down to join your boat on the Peninsula itself but this is only possible from December to February, it is expensive, and only available for a few boats.

Expedition ships



Ocean Nova SMALL

Ocean Nova specialises in fly-in cruises, from Punta Arenas in Chile to join the ship at King George Island off the Antarctic Peninsula, saving time and the unpredictable seas of the Drake Passage. Comfortable modern expedition vessel, ice-strengthened hull. Built in Denmark in 1992, she was fully refurbished in 2006 with upgrades and improvements each year. She carries up to 72 passengers in her 37 cabins (which include some singles and triples), all are outside cabins with picture windows, en suite, and individual heating control. She has a good observation lounge and bar on the top deck, which give onto an open observation deck. She has 46 staff and crew, and 7 zodiacs.

P72 L239 K12 C46



Ortelius and Plancius SMALL/MID-SIZE

Sister-ships Ortelius and Plancius have a special goal to get you off the ship and into Antarctica as much as possible. Sea routes are short and direct, for maximum time ashore. Activities are tailored to a range of experience and fitness, with special 'base camp' voyages focussed on camping, snowshoeing, kayaking, scuba diving, glacier traverses and mountaineering and much more. Wildlife encounters are an important element also. The ships are run by a Dutch company with strong UK connections. Guests are independent-minded travellers from around the world. Both ships carry up to 116 guests in comfortable practical cabins, with plenty of open-deck space.

P116 L298 K10 C52



Ocean Endeavour MID-SIZE

Newly refurbished, Ocean Endeavour is a well-appointed polar expedition ship with ice-strengthened hull and advanced equipment. She has a wide choice of cabin categories, large common areas, a sundeck and observation area. Her style is contemporary with a focus on light, space and wellness. Interiors are bright and spacious, cuisine is fresh and healthy. Features include a VOYA spa, saunas, salt water pool, gym, yoga and stretching classes, and there is a juice and smoothie bar. She offers polar photography and 'scientists in residence' programmes, and a wide range of adventure activities.

P199 L449 K15 C124



Ushuaia SMALL

Ushuaia is a well-run very practical small polar expedition ship, sailing with up to 88 passengers in her 46 cabins, with some singles and triples. Her voyages include some to the Falklands and South Georgia in the early part of the season, then focussing on the Antarctic Peninsula, with some venturing to the Weddell Sea.

Originally built for the US oceanographic service, Ushuaia is ice-strengthened and rugged. Her full-sized dining room and observation lounge are all on the main deck, with direct access to open deck. She has a very experienced crew, an enviable track record, and is well liked by those who sail with her.

P88 L278 K12 C38



Hebridean Sky SMALL/MID-SIZE

Hebridean Sky underwent a ten million dollar refit in 2016, adding a host of new amenities as well as state of the art stabilisation, fuel efficiency, and upgraded communications to become one of the safest and most comfortable ships in her class. Like her sister 'Island Sky' she is an all-suite ship, all with exterior views, queen or twin beds, convertible sofa and side chair, and independent heating controls.

She has a panoramic top deck observation platform. Her programmes are designed for first-time and returning visitors with plenty to do and watch inside (including live entertainment) and ashore.

P118 L297 C75



RCGS Resolute MID-SIZE

Very classy ship with the latest stabilisation engineering, spacious outer decks that give 360 views. A saltwater plunge pool, relaxation deck, and hot water jacuzzi are located aft of a wellness centre (massage, sauna, steam) and gym. There is a theatre style presentation room, observation lounges and bars forward and aft, multimedia room and mobile lab. Dining room and informal bistro lounge that has immediate access to an upper outer deck. Shore landings take less than 100 guests at any given time, including zodiac cruising, overnight camping, photography. 4 sea kayaking guides. 1AS ice class.

P146 L403 K14



Akademik Ioffe and Akademik Sergey Vavilov SMALL

Sister-ships with very minor differences, they were built in Finland for Russian naval research. Both are unusually long and quiet at sea. They are operated with very high staff:crew ratios. The emphasis is on the Antarctic experience, wildlife and learning: guides typically include specialists in whales, birds, geology, history. Some voyages are joined by special guests, such as recognised artists and photographers. Some voyages extend beyond the Antarctic Circle. Their unusual length helps provide an onboard experience that is stable with lots of deck space. Cabins are a good size, the suites are spacious. There is a sauna with plunge pool.

**Ioffe P96 L384 K14 C65
Vavilov P92 L384 K14 C65**



G Expedition MID-SIZE

An intimate active cruising experience for up to 134 passengers in a ship built for adventure, focused on safety, with speed, stability and comfort to the fore. G Expedition has large common areas and observation decks with wide views, the dining room is completely casual and with unreserved seating and gives directly to deck space. Cabins are spacious with en suite facilities and ocean facing windows or portholes, in a range of price points and from queen beds to bunks. The ship's mud room, where you don waterproofs before zodiac trips or kayaking, is heated and close by the sauna for your return.

P134 L344 K17 C82

Worth a mention

Magellan Explorer SMALL

High-spec ship custom built for Antarctic air-cruises, 2hr flight from Punta Arenas to Antarctica. In service from late 2019.

P69 L298 K14 C60

Silver Explorer SMALL/MID-SIZE

Silver Cloud Expedition's smaller older sister, tough and rugged on the outside, high levels of comfort and service inside.

P144 L354 K14 C113

Silver Cloud Expedition MID-SIZE

Large spacious comfortable, just 200 guests in Antarctica, all-suite cabins, 5 dining options, indoor pool, high crew ratio

P200 L514 K18 C208

Ship size

Small ships (fewer than 100 passengers)

Small ships offer the most intense experience of Antarctica. These are 'Category 1' ships allowed to visit any of the permitted sites. They can put all their passengers ashore at any one time at almost all sites, so everyone can have the most time there and go further and do more on each shore visit.

Some are comparatively long and so combine the best of both worlds: the stability and space that comes with physical size, and the onshore experience of a smaller number of passengers.

Small/Mid-size ships (101-120 guests)

These can land passengers at almost any site. At sites limited

P max number of passengers
L length overall in feet
K cruising speed in knots
C number of staff and crew



Island Sky SMALL/MID-SIZE

Island Sky is an all-suite luxury expedition ship with 'touches of elegance throughout'. Comfort and service standards are high, with luxury suites on 5 decks, including a Penthouse top deck where there is a general observation area on the fore deck. There is a small outside deck aft on the Verandah deck, and all round deck access on the Promenade deck below that.

She sails European waters over the summer, arriving in the Antarctic in November. Her Antarctic schedule includes some fly-ins direct from Punta Arenas to King George Island, saving time and the unpredictable seas of the Drake Passage.

P108 L297 K12 C70



Ocean Diamond MID-SIZE

Ocean Diamond is a modern, stable, fast, comfortable super-yacht. She is one of the larger small expedition ships, with up to 189 passengers. She has two stabilisers, ice-strengthened hull, and several eco-friendly features. Her speed saves up to 12 hours on the Drake crossing, giving more time to enjoy Antarctica. She is one of the most comfortable at sea, and offers 101 elegant cabins and suites, all with exterior views.

She has a panoramic observation lounge, club lounge, spacious restaurant, and on-board features such as photography advisers. Her voyages offer numerous expedition options.

P189 L407 K16 C144

National Geographic Orion SMALL/MID-SIZE

Small-mid size ship with a comfortable, casual style, most popular with National Geographic's readership of US travellers.

P102 L337 K15 C85

National Geographic Explorer MID-SIZE

Upper range mid-size sister to NG Orion. Similar US clientele.

P148 L367

MS Fram MID-SIZE

A large expedition ship normally sailing with 318 passengers, but with just 200 in Antarctica. Good comfort at good prices.

P200 L374 K13

to 100 they typically offer alternatives so that all wishing to go ashore can do so.

Mid-size ships (121-200 guests)

Can land passengers at any visitor site. At sites limited to 100 will usually operate a rationing system or shifts.

Large ships (201-500 guests)

At some sites cannot land any passengers at all. At others will operate a shift system if numbers are limited. These limitations do impact guests' on-shore experience, although there may be compensations in onboard comfort and facilities.



When to visit Chile

Chile's extreme length produces a wide range of climates. As a rule of thumb northern and central Chile can be visited at any time of year, while the Lake District and Patagonia are best between October and April.

- 1 Atacama and the north** Atacama Desert, Lauca NP, Arica, El Norte Chico
Atacama is one of the world's driest regions and can be visited year round. Temperatures do not vary much by month, but there is a large daily range of hot days and cold nights. In Lauca winter (May-Sep) brings least rain, with more in summer (Dec-Feb).
- 2 Santiago and Central Chile** Santiago, Valparaíso, Central Valley
Santiago and the Central Valleys have a Mediterranean climate and can be visited year round. In summer months (Dec-Feb) highs of 30°C are usual. Into autumn (Mar-Apr) the wine region enjoys its harvest period with festivals and celebrations of the grape.
- 3 Lakes and fjords** Lake District, Chiloé, Aysén, Carretera Austral
The mild climate of the Lake District is best in their warmer drier summer months (Oct-Apr). Local holidays from Christmas to February can be busy in peak locations. Early summer (Oct-Nov), and late summer (Mar-Apr) offer good weather and few visitors.
- 4 The Far South** Torres del Paine, Punta Arenas, Tierra del Fuego Archipelago
The Chilean spring takes hold in October. Summer arrives in December, January and early February are considered the peak months of summer. Local holidays from Christmas to February bring the most visitors. In spring (Oct-Nov) and autumn (Mar-Apr) the trails are quieter, lodge prices are lower, and though temperatures can be cooler, the chance of strong winds is lower.
- 5 Easter Island**
Easter Island enjoys a temperate climate all year. Summer months are a little busier, peaking with the Tapati festival in February.
- 6 Antarctica**
The main season for Antarctica is from October to April, with peak months from November to February.

Trip Calendar

		summer	autumn	winter	spring								
	page	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
North to South	29	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	•	•	•	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Patagonia Explorer	30	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	•	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Atacama, Patagonia, Easter Is & Uyuni	30	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	•	•	•	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Coast to Coast across Argentina & Chile	32	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	•	•	•	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Andean Circle	33	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	•	•	•	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Deserts, Stars and Cultures	34	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Heartlands and Atacama	34	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
Traditions, Food & Wine	35	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Wine Route of Chile	35	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Chile, Bolivia and Peru	36	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
On the Road in Lake District & Patagonia	38	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	•	•	•	•	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Driving the Carretera Austral	39	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	•	✗	✗	•	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Multi-active Chilean Lakes & Patagonia	40	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	•	•	•	•	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Day Walks in Southern Patagonia	41	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	•	•	•	•	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Torres del Paine 'W' Trek	41	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	•	✗	✗	•	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Los Dientes de Navarino	41	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	•	✗	✗	✗	•	✓	✓✓	✓✓
Chilean Expedition Lodges	43	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	•	•	•	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Wildlife of the Far South	44	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	•	•	•	•	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Life in Chile	45	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	•	•	•	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Birds of the Centre and the South	46	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	•	•	•	•	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
The Birds of Chile	47	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	•	•	•	•	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Lakes and Fjords	49	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	•	•	•	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Fjord and lake cruises	48	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	•	•	•	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Antarctic expedition cruises	51	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	•	✗	✗	✗	✗	•	✓	✓✓	✓✓

✓✓ best months ✓ good months • not recommended ✗ not possible
for each tour detailed location-by-location climate information is shown on our website

Guides, tours and travel

Private guide and driver

A first rate English speaking guide and a driver with a good quality vehicle is the most comfortable way to experience Chile. A good guide hugely enhances the enjoyment and experience of a trip, unlocking the stories behind the sights. Having your own driver helps make best use of your time, with the flexibility to reach special locations and to adjust as you go along.

Shared touring

In some key places in Chile we have found good local guided tours that we can book you on to—an efficient and cost effective option. The tours are for full days or half days, are nicely personal, run to very good standards, and conducted in English, sometimes with a second language.

Expedition lodges (p42-43) offer a menu of excursions to choose from each day, generally in small groups with fellow guests.

Selfdrive

Selfdrive is an increasingly popular option for confident adaptable drivers and in some regions, especially the Lake District and southern Patagonia. See our selfdrive trips on p38-39, and p46.

Domestic flights

Flying is the most efficient way to travel between Chile's regions. The network spans Chile entire length, with Santiago at the hub. Flights between north and south, and sometimes within regions, may involve a change of plane in the capital.

Express bus

Chile's network of long distance buses is efficient and the buses are comfortable. Distances are huge, so journey times can be very long. Our 'Deserts, Stars and Cultures' trip on page 34 uses public buses in the north, where flying would mean going all the way back to Santiago to change planes.

PHOTOS

Front cover

Torres del Paine NP

Back cover

Last Hope Sound

Guanaco mother and child (Eric Lynn)

Humpback whale breaching

Rano Raraku, Easter Island

Aymara offering, Atacama

Viscacha jumping

Hillside avenue, Valparaíso

Chile ★ MAKING YOUR BOOKING

Travelling with Geodyssey

We know Chile

Geodyssey's in-depth knowledge of our destinations is legendary. Our Chile specialists have lived in Chile or travelled the length and breadth of the country or both. We return often to research new ideas, check hotels, meet guides and test routes.

Our knowledge is kept up-to-date by working with our destinations every day, by frequent contact with our local partners, and by the feedback our clients send us when they get back.

All that knowledge is put to use when we are designing trips to work really well for each individual customer with their different ideas, tastes and budgets. That's what we enjoy best of all.

Our experts are a helpful bunch, so when you are ready just give them a call and talk things through.

You can do anything

Because we know a lot about Chile we offer lots and lots of choice. Whether it's a relaxing break you are after, a see-it-all touring holiday, something with a wildlife focus, expert bird watching, activities from day walks to serious trekking, and more.

So if you have something special or unusual in mind, there's a very good chance that we already have experience of designing something similar and we have quite probably done it ourselves. Go on, try us.

Keeping things on track

When we make the arrangements for your trip we are constantly checking to head off anything that might go wrong while you are travelling.

Even so, once you are away enjoying yourself, something unexpected might crop up, something might go awry, or there

might be some emergency at home you need to deal with. It's reassuring to know that you have a network of helpful, knowledgeable and resourceful people locally and back in the UK to support you.

We're just a phone call, text or email away when you are planning your trip, preparing to leave, at the airport, or in Chile.

We are trusted by demanding clients

We've been planning trips to Latin America for our clients every day of every week for over twenty-five years. They are a great bunch of people: school teachers, doctors, cabinet ministers, business people, retirees, honeymooners, young professionals in couples and groups, birdwatchers, walkers, wildlife photographers, and many more. They are all demanding in their different ways. At the end of their trip our customers award us very high ratings. 98% rate our specialists as 'Excellent'. So we must be getting things right.

Making your booking

Prices for all our trips are published online. Just follow the link for each holiday, or visit www.geodyssey.co.uk/chile. They are also in the insert included with this brochure.

It is very easy and straightforward to make a booking with us, and there is no commitment until you are ready to go ahead. To start the process, just call us or send us an email. We will talk through your ideas with you and answer any questions you have.

There are several flight options for getting to Chile. You can book your flights independently or through us.

If you are in a rush to book your trip, that's fine. If you prefer to take your time, that's good too.

■ **Booking your holiday 'off-the-peg'** If you like one of our suggested ideas for a tailor-made holiday (or an Active or Natural Chile trip) just as it is in this brochure, we will send you a more detailed description of the trip and the hotels etc, and answer any questions you may have before you book.

■ **Booking a tailor-made holiday** We can design a trip just for you. A good way to start is to pick ideas from the designs in this brochure. Choose from the 'tailor-made' section, or any other. Then call us with your choices and questions. When you are ready we will prepare a full written proposal, which we can modify as often as needed to create your perfect trip. With our tailor-made service you are making sure that

you get the most from your valuable holiday time and your budget.

■ **Booking an expedition cruise** It is important to call our specialists early in your planning. Ships change, voyages fill up, special offers appear, and each boat operator has its own way of doing things. We can help you choose the ship that suits you best and tailor a complete trip in Chile or Argentina to fit your voyage.

When you are ready, sign the booking form that we will have sent you and return it to us with your payment (just a deposit if booking well in advance, or full payment closer to departure). Our specialists will then go ahead and make the arrangements for your trip.

Whichever style of trip you book, if something then turns out differently than expected, for example if a hotel happens not to have availability for your dates, we will work to deal with the problem, for example by suggesting a suitable alternative at similar cost, or by re-sequencing the itinerary. It's all part of the service.

■ **Booking a small group holiday** The dates for our 'Chile Odyssey' and other small group trips are shown in the insert with this brochure and online at www.geodyssey.co.uk/groups. Just call us to talk things through, reserve your place and book your flights.

Your financial protection

We protect ALL our customers

The air holiday packages in this brochure are ATOL protected by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is 5292.

ATOL protection extends primarily to holiday arrangements that include air travel for customers who book and pay in the UK.

Geodyssey also provides equivalent financial protection for customers who do not buy flights from us and for customers who book and pay from outside the UK.

For more information please visit our website at www.geodyssey.co.uk/protection.



Hotel Grades

MID-RANGE A good standard option. Comfortable and pleasant but with few frills and a price to suit the cost-conscious traveller. Guest bedrooms all have private bathrooms as a minimum.

MID-PLUS A slightly higher value hotel, often with more character or a distinctive feature to differentiate it in the higher price category.

UPPER RANGE A notch or two up from the mid-range categories and a really special level of accommodation to stay at.

TOP RANGE At the top end of what is available and a memorable place to stay that in many instances justifies your visit to the area in itself.





GEODYSSEY

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