



Trip Preparation Reading

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I. ABOUT CHILE

Chile stretches 2,689 miles (4,329 kms); it is approximately the same length as the United States is wide. Within these 2,689 miles you can cross deserts, fertile climates, lakes, glaciers and arctic regions. At no point is Chile wider than 220 miles. The country is a total of 292,260 sq mi (756,950 sq km). In 2009 the population was estimated to be 16,601,707 with a growth rate of 0.8%. The life expectancy is 77.3. The most densely populated city is Santiago, but the country on average has a population density of 21 people per sq km.

USEFUL FACTS

Large cities in Chile include:

Viña del Mar, Valparaiso, Talcahuano, Temuco, and Concepcion

The monetary unit in Chile is the Chilean Peso (CLP)

Electricity: 220 Volts

Language: Spanish

TIPS FOR ENTERING SANTIAGO AIRPORT (SCL)

Most people flying into Chile enter through Santiago. In the airport, depending on your nationality, you will have to pay a reciprocal fee. People from USA pay \$131.00 USD, Canadians \$125.00 USD, Australia \$90 USD, Mexico \$23 USD, all other countries are exempt from the entrance fee.

After paying the fee you will proceed to get your passport stamped. The boarder control worker will ask you for the paper you filled out while in the airplane. They will stamp the paper, along with your passport, and return one of the four sheets -save this! This sheet of paper is important, they will ask for it again when you leave the country and if you do not have it there will be a lot of hassles and an annoying fine.

After getting your passport stamped and obtaining the ever so important pink paper you will pass through customs. Here you should be careful; Chilean customs are very strict.

Most of Chile has been untouched from many of the diseases that the rest of South America has suffered from. They are very particular about what foods, plants, and fruits you bring into their country. Be sure to declare anything that you are in doubt about. They won't do anything if you declare the products you are unsure about, but if they find something you didn't declare and they are not permitted to cross the border they can fine you.

After getting your luggage perhaps you will need to arrange a taxi or a transfer be sure and arrange it before you leave the area of baggage claim. A certified taxi is blue and from the airport to town should be no more than 15,000CLP.

Puerto Natales

Puerto Natales is the capital of the Ultima Esperanza (Last Hope) province in Region 12 of Magellan and Antarctica Chile. With an intricate geography it is the point of entry to visit the famous Torres del Paine National Park, a province with a lot of natural beauty and diversity.

Ultima Esperanza was established in 1557 when the Spanish Captain Juan Ladrilleros discovered an intricate waterway leading to what is now known as Puerto Natales. Three hundred-thirty years later Captain Eberhard from the German Navy colonized and explored Ultima Esperanza. Eberhard started a small town in 1892 that today is called Puerto Natales.

The city was founded in 1911 and numbered 15,116 inhabitants. It was mostly colonized by Chileans originating from an island called Chiloé; they worked mostly on cattle ranches and exported the livestock to German and British colonies. These ranchers with their perseverance made Patagonia one of the principal producers and exporters of cattle in the world until the 1970s. Today, tourism, cattle ranches, and artesian fishing are the principal economic activities.

Punta Arenas

Punta Arenas is the capital of the Magellan region and of Chilean Antarctica. Punta Arenas was originally called Punta Arenosa, which translates literally to Sandy Point. The name was given to this small town by a couple that founded it during a British expedition led by John Bryon during the 17th century. It is and always has been the principal commercial center for services, communications, and culture in the southern part of the South American continent.

It was established on December 18th, 1848, when the governor of the Magellan territory, Coronal Jose de los Santos Mardones, founded the city. It was originally located 60 km north of Fort Bulnes, which was the first Chilean settlement in Patagonia.

II. ABOUT ARGENTINA

Argentina is 1,056,636 sq miles (2,736,690 sq km). It is the second largest country in South America, in both size and population. Northern Argentina is swampy and wooded; the center of Argentina is covered in fertile pampas and areas rich in agriculture and livestock. Southern Argentina is cool with arid steppes. In 2009 the population was estimated to be 40,913,584 with a growth rate of 1.0%. The life expectancy is 76.5. The most densely populated city is Buenos Aires, but the country on average has a population density of 38 people per sq km.

USEFUL FACTS

Large cities in Argentina include: Cordoba, Rosario, Mendoza, and Mar del Plata.

The monetary unit in Argentina is the Argentine Peso (ARS)

Electricity: 220 Volts

Language: Spanish

TIPS FOR ENTERING THE BUENOS AIRES AIRPORT (EZE)

Upon arrival you will have to pass through Immigrations, this might take a while depending on when your flight arrives. You will have to give them the declaration that you filled out in the plane, they will return you a copy -keep this! You will need it when you are departing, if you lose it they will give you all sorts of troubles.

One of the biggest problems about arriving in BA airport is the shortage of luggage carts. They are free, but not easy to find. If you have too much luggage to carry yourself, they will eventually show up with some, but if you are in a hurry you should just try to handle your things alone. Customs is easy to clear through and you should have no problems, they are not strict with what enters their country. If you decide to take a taxi downtown be extremely cautious. You should look for a yellow, official, cab. You will see them when you leave the airport. However the best idea is to pre-book a "remise" - that will pick you up and charge a pre agreed amount. It should cost around 120 ARS.

Airport departure procedures are a bit more complex and frustrating than arrival. Have a meal before you arrive at the airport, there are few options. I suggest arriving two to three hours early. When you arrive you have to stand in line to obtain your boarding pass. Next, you have to wait in line again to pay your airport departure tax. After you have paid the tax, you will need to move again to enter the line for Immigrations. The form for immigrations can be found at the airline check-in desk and you will need to give it to the immigration officer along with the form you were given upon arrival. When you finish this you are free until you have to board. Before you board they will check your hand luggage again and your passport.

El Calafate

El Calafate is located 315 km from Rio Gallegos, the capital of the province of Santa Cruz.

This city has almost 17,000 inhabitants and maintains some colorful characteristics in its architecture and personality. The name El Calafate came from the calafate berry bushes that grew in a densely wooded area nearby.

El Chalten

El Chalten is a town that was created in 1987 as a response to the border disputes with Chile. The disputes were so important that Argentina decided to have a presence on this border. There were pioneers that arrived in the zone much earlier. Andreas Madsen and other families lived as cattle ranchers in the area. Historically it was the place where the colonists that arrived from Europe to Punta Arenas started looking for opportunities in cattle ranching.

The indigenous people that lived in the mountainous zone called the El Chalten Mountains which meant mountain that smokes. Today this mountain is known as Fitz Roy, this place is a mix of magical glaciers, lakes, and granite protrusions. It is a famous place for climbers and tourists that seek out trips in one of the most beautiful places on the planet.

III. History of Patagonia

The word Patagonia is derived from "Patagon". This word came from the book *The Primaleon of Greece*, written around 1512. Patagon was a giant savage creature that the characters of the book found along their travels.

When Ferdinand Magellan left to travel around the world he took with him a chronicler named Antonio Pigaffeta (one of the few survivors from the trip). As Antonio Pigaffeta explored southern South America he referred to an indigenous group, the Tehuelches, as Patagon. The Tehuelches were exceptionally large in comparison with the other native people that Pigaffeta had seen through his extensive travels. Today, the region where Pigaffeta found the "Patagon" is now called Patagonia.

There were more than just the Tehuelches in the southernmost part of South America, despite the harsh climate and difficult life. The Tehuelches (a.k.a. Anonikenk) were nomadic, collecting fresh fruits and hunting guanacos. Another two groups that lived in the area were the Yamans (a.k.a. Yaganes) and Onas (a.k.a. Selknam); these two groups spent most of their time in the fjords traveling in canoes catching fish and sea lions, which was their main food source. These three groups made up the ethnic diversity that historically populated Patagonia.

At the beginning of the 19th century the colonial people in Patagonia had declared independence. By the end of the same century, the government of Chile and Argentina decided to draw their borders into Patagonia. Explorers traveled to Patagonia in order to study the topography and draw official maps. During this same time, immigrants from Europe settled towns in remote places in search of wealthy futures; they began ranches on the ample land in Patagonia; this activity is still maintained as one of the most important industries in the region.

In the middle of 20th century different types of explorers arrived in search of adventures in the extreme south. The impressive granite formations that emerged out of the mountains drew climbers and adventurers to Patagonia. These granite formations are

products of an intrusion of granite between sedimentary rocks 12 million years ago. Later the granite chilled and was covered with ice, which in its recession was molded into singular and erratic formations. Today we call the formations that the explorers found "Torres del Paine" and "Los Glaciares" National Parks.

IV. Weather Averages for Puerto Natales

Month	Average Low	Average High	Average Precipitation
January	47°F / 9°C	66°F / 19°C	.19 in / 0.47 cm
February	46°F / 8°C	64°F / 18°C	.31 in / 0.8 cm
March	43°F / 6°C	60°F / 16°C	.48 in / 1.22 cm
April	38°F / 3°C	54°F / 12°C	.41 in / 1.05 cm
May	33°F / 1°C	46°F / 8°C	.88 in / 2.24 cm
June	28°F / -2°C	40°F / 4°C	.72 in / 1.83 cm
July	28°F / -2°C	40°F / 4°C	.65 in / 1.65 cm
August	31°F / -1°C	44°F / 6°C	.55 in / 1.39 cm
September	34°F / 1°C	49°F / 10°C	.4 in / 1.01 cm
October	39°F / 4°C	56°F / 14°C	.34 in / 0.86 cm
November	43°F / 6°C	60°F / 16°C	.23 in / 0.59 cm
December	46°F / 8°C	64°F / 18°C	.44 in / 1.11 cm

For other more specific information on the weather please check with www.accuweather.com

V. Useful knowledge on Money & Tipping

Prices in Puerto Natales, Punta Arenas, and Santiago are in Chilean pesos (CLP), a lot of local agencies have their prices in USD and will also accept USD.

In Argentina they also accept USD in most touristic areas; however it's better to pay in Argentine Pesos (ARS).

I think coming with some USD is appropriate; however there are ATMs in Santiago, Buenos Aires, Punta Arenas, Puerto Natales, and El Calafate. They are all easily accessible and have money. The only difficulty you may have is that on weekends in El Calafate they do not refill the ATMs and sometimes they run out of money. If you are there during a weekday you will have no problem, but if you plan to be in El Calafate over the weekend you might want to exchange some cash before arriving.

I suggest that before visiting El Chalten and Torres del Paine you withdraw money elsewhere, there are no ATMs in these two places and few stores accept credit cards.

Also as a note, dollars should be crisp and new; they should not have writing or appear to be very worn. It is impossible to exchange older bills for ARS or CLP. Also traveler's checks are accepted only by the original owner. It is difficult for local people to exchange them, so please only give cash tips.

Tipping in Chile and Argentina is common. At a restaurant 10% is generally expected. Guides and porters both expect a tip. Dittmar Adventures recommends that each person on the tour leaves 50 to 100 USD per staff member (porter or guide) as a tip. However this can vary depending on the number of days you spend with the person and how you feel about their job. A tip is a great way to show your appreciation and feelings about our staff's work and efforts.

VI. Gear List

Upper body:

- Shirts/Jacket
- Wind proof and water proof jacket, such as Gore Tex or similar
- Fleece or pile coat
- Quick dry long sleeve t-shirt
- Quick dry or cotton short sleeve t-shirt
- Winter hat
- Light gloves

Lower body:

- Quick dry hiking socks
- Quick dry, light weight long underwear bottoms
- Quick dry and breathable windproof pants
- Shorts
- Light trekking boots and/or gym shoes

Other necessary items:

- Pajamas
- Sleeping bag (-5°C for Nov. – Mar. trips, -15°C for April – Oct. trips)
- Toiletries
- Water bottle (1.000cc)
- Sun glasses
- Sunscreen
- Chap Stick with sunscreen
- Insect repellent
- Backpack (big enough for all your personal things)
- Shower Shoes
- Earplugs
- Head lamp and/or flashlight
- Camera

VII. Visitor Visa

All visitors traveling to Chile and Argentina are required to have a valid passport. Both Chile and Argentina do require visitor to obtain a Visitor Visa, however it is very easy to get one. The government will charge you a reciprocal fee that varies depending on your nationality. This visa will allow you to enter the country for 90 days at a time and is valid for the life of your passport.

VIII. Meals

In cities we dine in restaurants and have the pleasure of experiencing a variety of local cuisine. We eat equally well when we are camping trips, which feature an abundance of fresh, delicious food. All water in Patagonia is safe for consumption without filtering or boiling. Of course, we can accommodate special dietary requests (vegetarian, food allergies, etc.). For a list of which meals are included on your trip, please refer to the specific trip itinerary.