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THE ESSENTIAL CHILE TRAVEL GUIDE

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A WORD FROM THE FOUNDERS

SouthAmerica.travel is proud of its energetic Team of travel experts. Our Travel Consultants Partners are based in 7 South American countries, have traveled extensively throughout South America and work “at the source” from their operations headquarters in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru Ecuador, Colombia and the Guyanas.

We are passionate about South America Travel, and we're happy to share with you our favorite Buenos Aires restaurants, our insider's tips for Machu Picchu, or our secret colonial gems of Brazil, and anything else you're eager to know.

The idea to create SouthAmerica.travel first came to Co-Founders Juergen Keller and Bradley Nehring while traveling through Brazil's Amazon Rainforest. The two noticed few international travelers, and those they did meet had struggled to arrange the trip by themselves. Expertise in custom travel planning to Brazil was scarce to nonexistent. This inspired the duo to start their own travel business to fill this void and help travelers plan great trips to Brazil, and later all South America.

With local tour operators throughout SouthAmerica, as well as local telephone numbers in multiple countries worldwide, the SouthAmerica.travel Partners have helped hundreds of thousands of travelers fulfill their unique dream of discovering the marvelous and diverse continent of South America. Where will your dreams take you? Let's start planning now...



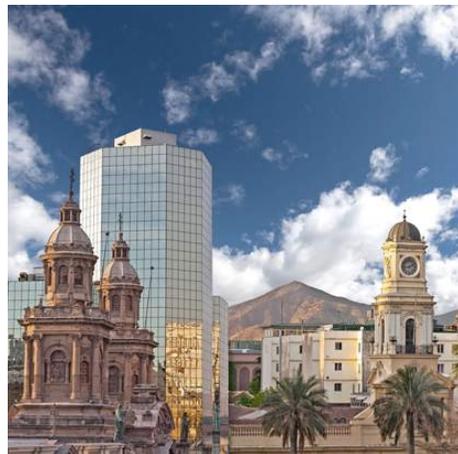
Juergen Keller
Co-Founder



Bradley Nehring
Co-Founder

“Our goal is to create memories that will last our clients a lifetime.”

Juergen Keller



CHILE TRAVEL GUIDE

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ESSENTIAL CHILE TRAVEL TIPS

Chile stretches over 4,270 km (2,653 mi) from north to south,

yet only averages roughly 177 km (110 mi) east to west. The shape of the country gives Chile a wide variety of different climates, landscapes and even cultures. From the Atacama desert in the north, to the southern mountains of Patagonia and the mysterious Easter Island, Chile offers travelers an array of experiences. The capital, Santiago de Chile, is the perfect starting point for any Chile or South America adventure. This European-style city combines ultra-modern skyscrapers with colonial facades and Gothic churches. From Santiago, sip exquisite wines in the Maipo Valley, escape to remote Chiloe Island, or cruise through the picturesque Chilean and Argentine Lake District. Chile's options are endless.

Best Times to Visit Chile

Since Chile straddles a wide range of latitudes, anytime is a good time to visit. The Atacama Desert in the north and the Central Valley, home of Chile's best wine, are great to visit year-round. In Southern Chile's Patagonia region, spring and summer, from October to April, are the best times to visit. Overall, the busiest time of the year to travel in Chile is from December to March during the Chilean summer.

Read More: [Best Times to Travel to South America](#)

Chile Travel Visa & Passport Information

Most travelers, including citizens of the United States, Australia, Canada, and the European Union, do not need a tourist visa to enter Chile. Citizens of India need to apply for a tourist visa at their nearest consulate. All travelers will receive a tourist card valid up to 90 days; keep this card with your passport at all times. A reciprocity fee is charged to citizens of Australia, Canada, and Mexico if arriving at Santiago's international airport. We recommend that you check with your local consulate for the latest information as this can change quickly. **Finally, please note you must have 6 months validity on your passport to enter Chile.**

Read more: [Chile Travel Info & Visa Info](#)

Recommended Foods & Drinks

Fish and other seafood are available along the coast of Chile. In Patagonia, we recommend trying their delicious Patagonian lamb, as it is a favorite among the locals. As for drinks, Chile and Peru both claim the Pisco Sour as their national cocktail, so it is worth trying in both countries. A Pisco Sour is a sour drink, made of Pisco, lemon juice, and simple syrup. If you're looking for something less sour, opt for some Carménère or Sauvignon Blanc wine. Both the red and white varietals from Chile are spectacular.



MAP OF CHILE

Pacific Ocean



THE HIGHLIGHTS OF CHILE

Santiago de Chile

Santiago is the capital of Chile and happens to be the perfect starting point for any tourists visiting Chile's beautiful deserts, mountains or coastline.

People typically think of Santiago as a sparkling clean, modern city, and that holds true in the eastern neighborhoods of Providencia, Las Condes or Vitacura. However, the city was founded in 1541 and in many parts of Santiago you can still see and feel the age of the city with its old architecture, vibrant neighborhoods and picturesque cafes.

On a clear day visit San Cristobal Hill. This is a beautiful park overlooking the city, with a 22-meter high Virgin Mary statue. Another famous park is Santa Lucia Hill, in the middle of the city. Stroll past the urban park as you make your way towards the Plaza de Armas; Chile's main square that is surrounded by beautiful government buildings. Other highlights include the Presidential Palace, La Moneda, Santiago Metropolitan Cathedral and the lively street markets.





Valparaíso

Valparaíso is a charming port city about 100 km (70 mi) northwest of Santiago. In its glory days, it was a commercial shipping port, nicknamed the "Jewel of the Pacific," until the construction of the Panama Canal. Nowadays this UNESCO World Heritage Site attracts tourists with its bohemian flair, beautiful street murals, and colorful houses. Take a funicular, a hillside cable car, up the hills and stop for a coffee in a quaint and quirky coffee shop, visit Chilean poet Pablo Neruda's house and sample some of the local specialty, *sopa marina*. Valparaíso is a perfect day trip from Santiago.

Viña del Mar

Viña del Mar, just a 17-minute drive north of Valparaíso, is known as the Garden City. The coastal town has much to offer with its manicured boulevards, tropical palm trees, romantic parks and beautiful beaches. While you're in the city, visit the Quinta Vergara Park, home to the Quinta Vergara Amphitheater, the early-20th-century Vergara Palace and the Artequin Museum.

Read more: [Travel Guide to Valparaíso, Chile](#)



Insiders Tip

Do as the locals do in Valparaíso and opt to take one of the 26 funicular railway cars running vertically up the hills. These are extremely well maintained considering most were built in the late 1800's!

THE WINE REGIONS OF CHILE

Travel 45-minutes outside of Santiago and you will find yourself in the Chilean Wine region. Visit world-class wineries and learn about the wine-making process along with the history of the region. For wine enthusiasts, combine Chile and Argentina's wine regions with a quick flight from Santiago over the Andes to Mendoza. For an even more scenic route, you can also take a bus over the Andes.

Colchagua Valley

Located just 180 km (100 mi) south of Santiago, the Colchagua Valley is famous for its Cabernet, Carménère, Syrah and Malbec wines. The Colchagua Valley has fertile land, ideal for producing red varieties. Most of the wineries were established during the 19th century with vines brought from France.

Casablanca Valley

The Casablanca Valley is best known for its white wines including Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, and Pinot Noir. The low temperatures combined with the shelter of the valley and the sea breeze creates an ideal environment for white grapes, which thrive in a cooler climate.

View our: [Chile Wine Tours](#)

Insiders Tip

If you are a wine enthusiast, contemplate staying at one of our recommended wine lodges. Consider the Entre Cielos (as pictured below) or the Cavas Wine Lodge in Mendoza or Viña Vik Wine Lodge near Santiago.



Aconcagua Valley

The Aconcagua Valley is located just 65 km (40 mi) north of Santiago. Here you will see Mount Aconcagua, the highest mountain in the Americas sitting at 6,956 m (22,828 ft). Initially, people thought the Aconcagua Valley was not equipped for growing wine grapes due to the warm and dry climate, but has proven to produce spectacular red varieties that include Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Carménère. You can visit some beautiful vineyards along the Aconcagua River, at the foot of the Andes Mountains



Maipo Valley

The Maipo Valley, the Bordeaux of South America, is perfect for travelers who want to learn the history of Chilean wine, which dates back to the 16th century when the Spanish brought the first grape stocks to Chile. Consequently, this is the oldest and most diverse wine region in Chile, most recognized for its Cabernet Sauvignon and Bordeaux blends. The Maipo Valley is home to some of the country's most prestigious wineries, such as Concha y Toro and Vina Almaviva. Enjoy the green landscape and imposing mountain range surrounding the valley.

View our: [Chile Wine Tours](#)

Insiders Tip

Combine the Chilean wine region with Mendoza, Argentina's wine region. Mendoza is just on the other side of the Andes, near Aconcagua! Our South America Wine Tour takes you to all the best wine regions in South America.

The Atacama Desert

The Atacama Desert, in northern Chile, is the driest non-polar desert on the planet. Tourists from around the world flock to San Pedro de Atacama to see its incredible moon-like valleys, stargazing, geysers, colorful lagoons filled with flamingos and snow capped mountains.

Nowhere on Earth offers better stargazing than Chile's Atacama desert. The desert has some of the clearest night skies on the planet. Stargazing starts late at night; watch as the vast sky fills with stars and learn to read a sky map to spot the main constellations.

Besides stargazing, there are a wide variety of other excursions in the Atacama Desert. The Moon Valley and Death Valley are among the most popular, with the Tatio Geysers also are a must see. For the best view, arrive to the geysers before dawn. Another favorite is the Cejar Lagoon with its beautiful turquoise waters, lush vegetation and exotic fauna including flamingos, ducks and the Andean coots.

Seamlessly combine the Uyuni Salt Flats, the Atacama Desert and Salta on our Magic Triangle of the Andes tour through beautiful cities and diverse landscapes of Bolivia, Chile and Argentina.

Read More: [Magic Triangle of the Andes Tour](#)



The Lake Crossing

Chile's Lake District is located in south-central Chile, stretching from Puerto Montt and Puerto Varas inland through the Andes Mountains. Wind past gentle mountains, volcanoes, rivers, high alpine lakes, virgin forests, fjords and islets as you cross from Chile into Argentina. Take a catamaran through the Lake District, cruising along emerald green waters of Lago Todos Los Santos, Puerto Peulla, Puerto Blest along Lake Nahuel Huapi past the alpine forests of Vicente Perez Rosales National Park and Mount Tronado for a whirlwind boating tour.



Puerto Varas sits on the shores of Llanquihue Lake, with its intense blue waters and snow-capped peaks of Osorno Volcano in the background. Many of the buildings show evidence of heavy German influence, including the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus with its red roof as pictured above. You can find German chocolates, marmalade and pastries throughout the town, along with beautiful gardens decorating the old wooden houses.

Read more: [Chile & Argentina Lake Crossing](#)



Torres del Paine National Park

Torres del Paine has over 1 million acres of incredible national wilderness, making it the ultimate destination for outdoor enthusiasts. The glacial lakes, snow-capped peaks, guanacos and Andean grey foxes are just a few of the reasons why nature lovers add this classic Patagonia park to their trip. For the luxury and adventure traveler, there are plenty of 4-star and 5-star all inclusive lodges in the park. Some of our favorites include the Explora Lodge, Hotel Las Torres and Patagonia's Eco Camp as pictured to the right.



All of the lodges in the park offer a variety of excursions for all physical levels. Choose between half day or full day excursions, some of which include: hiking excursions, horseback riding, a photo safari through the park or sailing to Glacier Gray. The lodges are a great way to combine adventure and comfort while exploring Chile's most beautiful park.

When is the best time to visit? We recommend traveling during the summer months, from November to March. Some lodges close during the winter months from May to September.

View our favorite: [Patagonia Tours](#)





Patagonia Cruises

Cruise past Patagonia's Fuegian fjords towards the end of the world. Choose from a variety of adventure cruises that depart from Ushuaia, Punta Arenas or Puerto Montt.

The Australis Cruise travels from Ushuaia to Punta Arenas. Enjoy the grandeur, beauty and landscapes, aboard a vessel built with comfort and luxury in mind. Embark on guided excursions to see the Marinelli Glacier, Pia Glacier, and visit a Magellanic Penguin Colony. Journey through the Strait of Magellan to Cape Horn and disembark from the vessel to see the last territory before Antarctica.

Skorpios Cruises offer two different routes that are designed to combine comfort with adventure and exploration. On their Chonos Route, depart from Puerto Montt and cruise past Northern ice fields past age-old ice formations of Glacier San Rafael, incredible archipelagos, channels and gulfs. Disembark from the ship and explore towns like Castro and the quaint fishing village of Puerto Aguirre. Or take the Kaweskar Route, which departs from Puerto Natales towards Southern Ice Fields. Cruise by 15 different glaciers, disembark from the ship to view the glaciers or go on the expedition vessel to spot Patagonia's flora and fauna.

Read more: [Australis & Skorpios Patagonia Cruises](#)



THE ISLANDS OF CHILE

Easter Island

This mythical island is made famous by its moai statues built by the Rapa Nui people. It is said to be one of the most remote inhabited islands in the world. Disconnect from your everyday life and discover the hidden charms of Easter Island. The island is about 3800 km west of the Chilean coast.

Visit the Ahu Hanga Te Tenga, home to the largest and most impressive moai on the island. Ahu Tongariki, as pictured below, is the largest *ahu* platform on the island featuring 15 moai. Escape to the pristine Ovahe Beach for panoramic views of the Pacific Ocean. Visit the village of Orongo, where the annual Birdman or 'Tangata Manu' ceremony used to take place. This was a traditional competition in which they determined the ruler of Rapa Nui. Each year, when the stationary birds arrived, the competitors would swim to Matu Nui islet to get an egg; the first to swim back with the egg was the winner.

View more: [Easter Island Tours](#)



Insiders Tip

Curious how to get to Easter Island? LAN Airlines is the only airline that has a daily flight from Santiago de Chile and once per week to Tahiti. Fares can be rather expensive from Santiago but it is worth it.





Chiloé Island

When thinking of Chiloé Island, one pictures its wooden churches, colorful houses, the hospitality of the locals, and the myths and legends of witchcraft. This enchanting and magical island attracts tourists from around the world . There are over 150 beautifully crafted colonial-era wooden churches, many of which are now UNESCO World Heritages Sites. One church you cannot skip is the 18th-century Jesuit church, Iglesia Santa María de Loreta, Chiloé's oldest church. Chiloé is also known for its beautiful landscapes, with its green lakes, lagoons, beaches and canals.

We recommend staying at the boutique Tierra Chiloé Lodge, as pictured on the right, which sits along the picturesque waterfront.

Getting there: LAN Airlines offers flights from Santiago to Chiloé making it feasible for travelers with limited time to explore the island. If you're looking for a fun day trip, you can also get there by boat. The best time to visit is during the summer months from November to April.

Read more: [Chiloé Island Tours](#)



TOP CHILE TRAVEL PACKAGES

The South America Wine Tour

10 Days — Mendoza, Santiago, Colonia del Sacramento & Buenos Aires.

www.SouthAmerica.travel/TWT

The South America Wine Tour is perfect for both wine connoisseurs and casual wine enthusiasts. Sample from the finest wines of Chile, Argentina & Uruguay amidst scenic landscapes. Sip exquisite Carménère wine in Santiago's wine region and ascend over the Andes Mountains to the highlands of Mendoza, home to world-famous Malbec. Continue to Colonia del Sacramento, Uruguay, for specialty Tannat. Gaze at the cityscape of Buenos Aires as the ferry whisks you across the Rio de la Plata to end in the "Paris of South America."

[VIEW FULL ITINERARY](#)



The Classic Patagonia Lake District Tour

9 Days — Argentina to Chile. Bariloche, Puerto Montt & Osorno Volcano

www.SouthAmerica.travel/PLD

An unforgettable circular trip around the Lake District through Chile and Argentina's Patagonia region. Visit the first class tourist centers of Bariloche and San Martín de los Andes, the perfect combination of stone and wood buildings with beautiful landscapes. Travel along the beautiful Seven Lakes Route and cross the Andes Mountain Range towards Pucón, with its dense forests and Villarica Volcano.

[VIEW FULL ITINERARY](#)



Atacama Desert and Santiago Tour

8 Days — Santiago, Casablanca Valley & San Pedro de Atacama

www.SouthAmerica.travel/ATA

This Atacama and Santiago Tour is a tour of contrasts combining the wine region near Santiago de Chile and the Atacama Desert in the North. Sip exquisite wine in the Chilean wine region before traveling to San Pedro de Atacama. In the Atacama Desert you will go stargazing under some of the clearest night skies on the planet and explore the Moon Valley, tatio geysers and altiplanic lagoons.

[VIEW FULL ITINERARY](#)



Chilean Wines & Lakes

8 Days — Santiago, Puerto Varas & Chile Wine Tour

www.SouthAmerica.travel/CWL

Explore Chile's natural and cultural wonders: Santiago de Chile, the Mediterranean coast, rolling hills, volcanoes, the highest mountain range in the Western Hemisphere, glacial lakes, European traditions and perfect for lovers of excellent wines and incredible food.

[VIEW FULL ITINERARY](#)



Magic Triangle of the Andes

8 Days — La Paz, Uyuni, Atacama & Salta

www.SouthAmerica.travel/MTA

The Triangle of the Andes tour takes you through majestic deserts of South America. Start in Bolivia's largest city, La Paz, and travel to the Uyuni Salt Flats and capture spectacular photos of the endless white landscape. Continue to the Atacama desert; most famous for its stargazing. End in Salta and take in the beauty and vibrant colors of Jujuy and Quebrada de Humahuaca.

[VIEW FULL ITINERARY](#)



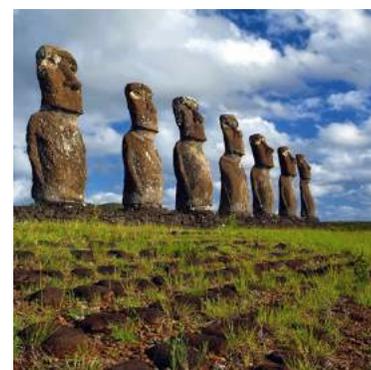
Santiago & Easter Island Tour

8 Days — Santiago de Chile & Easter Island Lodge

www.SouthAmerica.travel/CEI

This Santiago & Easter Island tour offers distinct contrasts between two of Chile's most popular destinations: Santiago and tropical Easter Island. Start in Santiago de Chile, the beautiful capital where the snow-capped Andes overlook the city. Fly to Easter Island in the South Pacific Ocean, closer to Tahiti than to Chile's mainland and discover the mysteries of the island.

[VIEW FULL ITINERARY](#)



Torres del Paine & El Calafate Tour

8 Days — From Santiago de Chile to Buenos Aires via Patagonia

www.SouthAmerica.travel/PTG

This Patagonia & Buenos Aires Tango Tour begins in Puerto Natales, Patagonia. Visit Chile's most beautiful national park, Torres del Paine, sure to leave you speechless. Cross to Argentine's Patagonia region to admire the Perito Moreno glacier, the world's largest advancing glacier. Finish in Buenos Aires with a city tour, Tango Show & an authentic Argentine dinner.

[VIEW FULL ITINERARY](#)



Waters of Patagonia Cruise with Mare Australis

www.SouthAmerica.travel/MAR

17 Days — Ushuaia, Torres del Paine, Santiago & Buenos Aires

Explore Santiago & Valparaíso before flying to Punta Arenas where you can walk on glaciers and waddle with the penguins. From Punta Arenas, board the M/V Stella Australis ship and cruise through the Strait of Magellan along Tierra del Fuego towards Ushuaia passing by Cape Horn. Continue to the sophisticated city of Buenos Aires and enjoy an incredible Tango Show.

[VIEW FULL ITINERARY](#)



The Chile to Bolivia Tour

www.SouthAmerica.travel/BTC

8 Days — La Paz & the Atacama Desert

Stark contrasts: From the Bolivian Capital to the wonders of the Atacama Desert! Start your journey in the large city of La Paz and travel the crystalline Chilean coastal Oasis of Arica to Chile's archaeological capital. Finish in the Atacama Desert for the best stargazing in the world and visit the Atacama Salt Flats, Altiplanic Lagoons and Tatio Geysers.

[VIEW FULL ITINERARY](#)



Patagonia: Skorprios Cruises Across Chilean Fjords

www.SouthAmerica.travel/ACP

6 Days - Northern Ice Field

M/V Skorprios II departs from Puerto Natales, Chile. This 6 day cruise covers 800 miles for a magical encounter with the age-old ice formations of the Glaciar San Rafael, sailing through incredible archipelagos, channels and gulfs. Visit towns like Castro and the fishing village of Puerto Aguirre, which display the natural wonders of a vigorous landscape and wildlife which is best appreciated at Fiordo Quitalco with its hot springs and excursions to its vast island-peppered sea.

[VIEW FULL ITINERARY](#)



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