TOUR CODE

CL1

ADVENTURESABROAD

CHILE

featuring the Atacama, Patagonia & Easter Island

21 days

Updated 05/01/2013

Day 1 *Arrive in Santiago, Chile*

Today we arrive Santiago de Chile.

NOTE: This itinerary is based on air schedules that can change without notice. Though this programme should provide a very good sense of how this tour will be accomplished, some adjustment/s may be required up to the time of departure.

Overnight in Santiago. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 *Santiago: Vina del Mar & Valparaiso*

Today we visit Vina del Mar and Valparaiso, founded in the XVI century. Valparaiso (literally in Spanish: Paradise Valley) is one of Chile's most important seaports and an increasingly vital cultural center. The city is located in central Chile, where it is capital of the Region of Valparaiso. Although Santiago is Chile's official capital, Valparaiso houses the National Congress. Built upon dozens of steep hillsides overlooking the Pacific Ocean, Valparaiso boasts a labyrinth of streets and cobblestone alleyways, embodying a rich architectural and cultural legacy. Valparaiso is protected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is often considered to be one of Latin America's most intriguing urban areas.

We also visit La Sebastiana, another of poet Pablo Neruda's homes-turned-museums, and ride one of the city's many elevators, an effective mode of moving about this largely vertical port back at the turn of the century. Ascendor Artilleria, built in 1898, is one of the oldest still in operation and offers a beautiful view of the ocean.

After some time to explore we return to Santiago.

Overnight in Santiago. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 *Santiago - Maipo Valley - Punta Arenas*

Today's excursion takes us south of Santiago to visit the scenic Maipo Valley and one of the area's most important wineries, Concha y Toro. Our visit will start in Don Melchor square, where your guide will invite to enjoy a panoramic view of the Pirque vineyard, while tasting a glass of its world class wine with its unique flavors and bouquet. Glass in hand, you will stroll through the winery's century old vineyard. You will also visit the Pirque's House, the residence of the Concha y Toro family, and where Chile's largest winery was founded a century ago.

At some point today, we will also visit Santiago's Plaza de Armas. As the midpoint of the Spanish settlement of 1541, the square was once a military training ground -- hence its name-- but with time it became the focus of Santiago's social and commercial life with some of the nation's most accomplished architecture.

Later today we drive to Santiago Airport and take our flight south to Punta Arenas in Patagonia. Punta Arenas is located at the foot of the Andes on the western side of the Straits of Magellan facing the island of Tierra del Fuego. This is a

port that attracts commerce and shipping from all over the South Atlantic. Founded in 1848, the city was originally a military garrison and a penal settlement. Port facilities soon became established as a stop over for shipping en route to California during the Gold Rush. The population increased and the town developed as a result of the wool boom of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. During the last quarter of the 19th century, 300 purebred sheep were imported from the Falkland Islands. Such was the success of subsequent breeding that by the turn of the century there were almost two million sheep in the territory. Immigrants from all over western Europe were attracted to the area, bringing with them major developments to fishing and farming.

Overnight in Punta Arenas. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *Punta Arenas - Torres del Paine*

This morning we travel by road into Torres del Paine National Park. The Torres del Paine (Towers of Paine) are spectacular granite pillars which soar almost vertically more than 2000m (6,000 feet) above the Patagonian landscape. The park in which the high peaks sit may be considered the finest national park in all of South America. With turquoise lakes, roaring waterfalls, rivers and creeks, dense forests and sprawling glaciers this is an unequalled destination.

Overnight in Torres del Paine National Park. Hotel Torres or similar. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Torres del Paine National Park*

We spend the entire day in Torres del Paine National Park.

Some say Paine was an early settler. Others say the name comes from an ancient Indian word meaning blue -- hearkening to the intense blue of the area's lakes. Wherever the name comes from or means, this is a spectacular park, comparable to Yellowstone or Yosemite in the US. Founded in 1959, Torres del Paine takes in 180,000 ha (450,000 acres). In 1978 UNESCO gave the park World Heritage status, recognizing it as a biosphere especially worthy of international recognition.

The park is part of the Paine Massif, which lies inside the continent from, or east of, the high central Andean spine. The massif are medium high mountains emerging suddenly from the plains of the Patagonian steppes. The mountains are granite, capped by crumbly sedimentary rock that used to lie on the valley floor. Before the park was acquired by the Chilean government, it belonged to ranchers who overgrazed and also burned down forests to increase pasture area.

The park is still recovering from this devastation, and will be for a while, but it's a chance to see what nature will do, if given a chance. Natural recovery can also be seen, though the glaciers of the park are in quick retreat--up to 17 m (56 ft) a year for the last 90 years, creating a fascinating study of plant succession and soil build-up from bare rock to forest. The flora of the park ranges from grassland to southern beech forests. Many parts of the park were too remote for the cattle ranchers, and exist today in a pristine state.

The animal stars of the park are the Guanacos -- wild South American cameloids, related to the domesticated llama and alpaca -- and the Rheas, an ostrich-like bird. Native peoples hunted both across the plains, using every part for food and shelter. When the Europeans came, the Guanaco were slaughtered to make way for cattle and almost became extinct.

We will travel through the park in our coach stopping at various points of interest and scenic viewpoints. We will also have an opportunity to walk one of the many easy-going trails that afford expansive views of the mountains and glaciers for which Patagonia is famous.

Overnight in Torres del Paine National Park. Hotel Torres or similar. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Torres del Paine National Park - Punta Arenas*

We have some free time this morning for relaxation or a leisurely hike to Paine Cascades for a view of Los Torres.

Later this morning we depart Torres del Paine and travel back to Punta Arenas.

Overnight in Punta Arenas. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 7 *Punta Arenas - Balmaceda - Puerto Chacabuco*

Early this morning we fly to Balmaceda and transfer to Puerto Chacabuco and the Hotel Loberias del Sur. To get there we travel part of the Austral Road which goes through Llanquihue and Palena provinces on the side of the continent, up to Aysen region passing by the beautiful city of Coyhaique. On the ride to the hotel you will have an opportunity to appreciate a small sample of the astonishing landscape at this latitude.

Overnight in Puerto Chacabuco. Hotel Loberias del Sur. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 8 *Laguna San Rafael*

At 8:00 am we will take part in an unforgettable trip on board a large catamaran that will take us through islands, channels, and fiords until we reach the Laguna San Rafael at about 2:00 pm. The main attraction is the peacefulness of this lagoon with a surface of 170 square kilometers--floes and snowdrifts, ice chunks falling constantly and thunderously.

Then, on a zodiac, you will get in closer contact with San Rafael snowdrifts and a number of floes moving around. Upon the end of the excursion you can taste a whisky on the rocks made with cubes more than 20,000 years old! We will stay here for 2-3 hours and then return to Puerto Chacabuco for about 9:00 pm.

For more information on this excursion you can click on www.catamaranesdelsur.cl.

Overnight in Puerto Chacabuco. Hotel Loberias del Sur. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 9 *Aiken del Sur Private Park*

At 9:00 am a bus will take us from the Hotel Loberias del Sur to the recently inaugurated Aiken del Sur Private Park.

The Aiken del Sur Park offers natural beauty on the shores of Lago Riesco. The lake has a surface of 14 sq km, quiet and blue crystal clear waters. There is also a waterfall 22 meters high, native woodlands with perennial species, annual plants, moss and liverworts, widespread prairies where aged myrtles and tepa trees mix together; taro and mallin plants, and swamp lands.

We stop at the Visitors' Center with interactive exhibitions giving information on local flora, fauna and anthropology. There are also paths with catwalks, bridges, observatory points, and resting places that will give information on the bio-geographical history of each place by means of educational stations. There you will enjoy the wonderful sceneries of the lake, river and hills that make up the Andes mountain range in the Patagonia. You will also have the opportunity to hear the singing of local birds such as the Chucao and Hueta.

Here we have a traditional "Patagonian Lamb Barbeque" (vegetarian options available).

After lunch, visitors may rest or walk across the other two easy footpaths in the park.

Overnight in Puerto Chacabuco. Hotel Loberias del Sur. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 10 *Puerto Chacabuco - Balmaceda - Puerto Varas*

This morning we travel back to Balmaceda Airport from where we fly to Puerto Varas, the main gateway to the southern Lake District (we may have to fly to Puerto Montt and drive the short distance to Pto Varas). Puerto Varas is one of southern Chile's most important cities with a spectacular setting at the north end of the Golfo de Reloncavi. Time permitting we will visit the colourful local market.

Overnight in Puerto Varas. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 11 *Puerto Varas Area*

The area around Puerto Varas is a region of spectacular lakes and mountains. We drive along the shore of Lake Llonquihue to the Petrohue waterfall (Salto del Petohue), an amazing series of oddly twisting water chutes. These chutes were formed by a crystallized black volcanic rock that is particularly resistant to erosion. The water at Rio Petrohue is bright green due to the presence of algae. On a clear day this drive is spectacular with the snow-capped peak of the Osorno Volcano looming above us.

From the town of Petrohue we take a boat ride on the azure-blue waters of Lago Todos los Santos to the town of Puella, a small village that serves as a stopping point on the route to Argentina. We will spend a short time here; the Cascada de Los Novios (a waterfall) is a short walk from the village. We return to Puerto Varas.

Overnight in Puerto Varas. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 12 *Puerto Varas - San Pedro de Atacama*

Today we catch our flight to Calama (via Santiago). On arrival we transfer to our hotel in San Pedro de Atacama, elevation 2300 m (7,600 ft). This is the high Atacama Desert, the driest place on earth. No significant precipitation has been reported here since the Spanish colonial period.

At dusk we drive to the Valley of the Moon to see the sunset in this bizarre lunar landscape formed by erosion of the salt mountains. Light reflecting off the salt crystals is an eerie sight. We return to San Pedro after sunset.

Overnight in San Pedro de Atacama. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 13 *Atacama Area*

This morning we visit San Pedro's Archaealogical Museum, considered one of the best in South America. It is famous for its wonderful collection of pre-Columbian artifacts, particularly the mummies, marvelously preserved in the dry desert air, that pre-date those in Egypt.

In the afternoon we'll drive from San Pedro to the town of Toconao. The church and houses in this picturesque village are built of bricks of white volcanic stone. From Tocanao we continue to the Salar de Atacama, the world's largest salt lake. Rich in minerals, including borax and lithium, it is home to flamingos and many other bird species. At Lago Chaxa, part of the Reserva Nacional de los Flamingos, one often can get quite close to flamingos in their natural habitat.

Overnight in San Pedro de Atacama. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 14 *Atacama Area*

We leave the hotel at 04:00 to see the spectacular geysers of El Tatio, elevation 4400m (14,500 ft), arriving before sunrise. Super-heated water gurgles in the frozen ground and emerges violently as steam in over 100 geysers, boiling pools, and fumaroles. The display is finished by 10:00. We then proceed to the hotspring called Termas de Puritama where we can enjoy a relaxing soak in the warm pools before returning to San Pedro.

In the afternoon we visit Tulor, a 2,800 year old site where evidence of the earliest habitation in the region was found.

Overnight in San Pedro de Atacama. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 15 *Atacama - Santiago*

Today we drive to Calama for our flight to Santiago.

Flight timing permitting, you may choose to visit the Pre-columbian Art Museum, which has one of the most complete collections of ceramics, ancient textiles and relics of the local culture.

Overnight in Santiago. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 16 *Santiago - Easter Island*

Today we fly from Santiago to Easter Island.

We arrive at Mataveri Airport after our flight, where we'll see the first of Easter Island's famous Maoi, or stone statues. We transfer to our hotel in Hanga Roa where the island's entire population of about 2,500 lives. Typically South Pacific in appearance, the pace in the village is slow, as is the traffic (a speed limit of 15 kph is strictly enforced!).

Easter Island is over 3200 km from the nearest population center (Tahiti and Chile), making it one of the most isolated places on Earth. A triangle of volcanic rock in the South Pacific--it is best known for the giant stone monoliths, known as Moai, that dot the coastline. The early settlers called the island "Te Pito O Te Henua" (Navel of The World). Admiral Roggeveen, who came upon the island on Easter Day in 1722, named it Easter Island. Today the land, people and language are all referred to locally as Rapa Nui.

Overnight on Easter Island. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 17 *Easter Island*

We will start our morning tour with a visit to Ahu Vinapu with its incredible stone walls similar to those built by the ancient Incas; the architecture of these walls is sometimes used as an argument to support the theory that the early

islanders came from South America. Afterwards we drive to the southernmost volcano of the island, Rano Kau. From here we will have an opportunity to see most of the island as well as its reed-covered lake. On the west side of the slopes you have an impressive view of the islets Motu Wui, Motu Iti and Motu Kao-Kao. The main feature on Rano Kau is its rebuilt ancient ceremonial village of Orongo. In primitive times it was used for the traditional egg-ceremony, taking place year after year to choose the religious head of the island. The site is full of petroglyphs representing Tangata Manu (birdman) and the god Make-Make.

Balance of the day at leisure.

Overnight on Easter Island. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 18 *Easter Island*

After breakfast we will start a full day tour with a visit to Vaihu, an ancient site in ruins. We then continue towards Ahu Akahanga, a large ahu (platform) with four big fallen statues. According to legends, the tomb of the first king of the island is in this area. From here we will visit the Rano Raraku quarry, classic symbol of the island and original factory of the moais. The gigantic statues cover the inner and outer slopes of the volcano; they can be admired in the different stages of production, from carving in the rock to upright position and lying face down on their intended road to their platforms.

We will then be driven to Ahu Tongariki, formerly the biggest platform on the island, destroyed by a tidal wave in 1960, now reconstructed. Finally we will drive along the north coast to visit Ahu Te Pito Kura (the world's navel). We pass by La Perouse Bay to the beautiful archaeological zone of Anakena where we can spend time on the beautiful white sandy, coconut-palm lined beach that is decidedly Polynesian.

Overnight on Easter Island. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 19 *Easter Island*

Today is free to explore on your own, or return to a beach or ancient site.

Overnight on Easter Island. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 20 *Easter Island - Santiago*

We transfer to the airport for our flight to Santiago. Balance of the day at leisure.

Overnight in Santiago. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 21 *Departure*

Today is free to explore and enjoy Santiago. Departure from Santiago (most flights depart Santiago in the evening).

BUEN VIAJE! Meal plan: Breakfast.