Tour Code
**CL1**

ADVENTURESABROAD

# ESSENTIAL CHILE

## featuring the Atacama, Patagonia & Easter Island

**21 days**

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### Day 1 Arrive in Santiago, Chile

Welcome to Santiago de Chile, where the towering Andes create a dramatic backdrop to South America's most sophisticated capital. Founded in 1541 by Spanish conquistador Pedro de Valdivia, this vibrant metropolis of seven million souls pulses with energy at the foot of snow-capped peaks. Transfer to your hotel and prepare to discover a country that stretches like a ribbon along the Pacific, where ancient cultures, colonial heritage, and modern innovation converge.

This evening, we gather with fellow travellers for our first dinner together, sharing anticipation for the extraordinary journey ahead through Chile's most diverse and spectacular landscapes.

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 adjustments may be required up to the time of departure.

Overnight in Santiago

Included Meal(s): Dinner

### Day 2 Santiago: Vina del Mar & Valparaiso

This morning we journey to central Chile's Pacific coast, where the colonial jewel of Valparaíso clings to precipitous hillsides like a painter's palette splashed against the sea. Our route winds through the coastal plain past Casablanca Valley, Chile's fastest-growing wine region, where vineyards carpet rolling hills beneath endless sky.

Valparaíso—'Paradise Valley'—once reigned as South America's most vital Pacific port, linking Atlantic and Pacific through the treacherous Strait of Magellan. Built upon dozens of steep hillsides overlooking infinite ocean, this UNESCO World Heritage Site embodies a labyrinth of cobblestone streets and architectural treasures constructed between 1880 and 1940. We discover the heart of the historic quarter, riding the legendary funiculars that climb like mechanical angels—31 stations once perched across the city's dramatic terrain.

We ascend aboard Ascensor Artillería, built in 1898, offering spectacular coastal panoramas, then experience the Cordillera funicular from 1887, the steepest and second-oldest 'elevator' still carrying passengers skyward.

Along the coast, we explore Viña del Mar, the celebrated 'Garden City,' before returning to Santiago through landscapes that transition from Pacific shores to Andean foothills.

Overnight in Santiago

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

### Day 3 Santiago & the Maipo Valley

We venture south into the enchanting Maipo Valley, often called the 'Bordeaux of South America,' where terroir and tradition create liquid poetry. This scenic region unfolds like a living tapestry—rolling hills adorned with geometric vineyards, the majestic Andes rising in the distance, and the life-giving Maipo River threading through valleys that have nurtured vines for centuries.

During our exploration, we visit a distinguished winery for an intimate tour and tasting, discovering how climate, soil, and passion combine to create wines that rival the world's finest. The landscape reveals itself as a harmonious blend of cultivated fields, fruit orchards, and native forests, creating an environment where natural beauty and human craftsmanship dance together.

We then proceed to Santiago's Plaza de Armas, the beating heart of the city since 1541. As the midpoint of the original Spanish settlement, this square began as a military training ground—hence its martial name—but evolved into the epicentre of Santiago's social and commercial life, surrounded by some of the nation's most accomplished architecture.

Overnight in Santiago

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 4 Santiago - Fly to Puerto Natales - Torres del Paine

This morning we transfer to the airport for our flight to Puerto Natales, gateway to one of Earth's last frontiers. From this charming port town alongside Ultima Esperanza Sound, we journey to the legendary Mylodon Cave, where in 1895 settler Eberhard Hermann discovered the preserved fur of a massive extinct sloth, revealing secrets of Patagonia's prehistoric past.

We then continue to the southern tip of the Andes and Torres del Paine National Park, arguably South America's most spectacular wilderness sanctuary. Here, granite towers soar 2,000 metres (6,560 feet) above the Patagonian landscape like ancient cathedrals piercing endless sky. This 180,000-hectare (450,000-acre) UNESCO World Heritage site encompasses ancient forests, sprawling glaciers, turquoise lakes, roaring rivers, and pristine fjords.

Wildlife thrives in this untamed realm—guanacos graze across windswept steppes, while foxes, pumas, and countless bird species call these lands home. The park represents nature's grandest amphitheatre, where every vista reveals waterfalls cascading from impossible heights and glaciers that have carved valleys for millennia.

Overnight in Torres del Paine National Park

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 5 Torres del Paine National Park: Full Day of Exploration

Today we immerse ourselves completely in Torres del Paine's breathtaking wilderness, travelling by coach throughout all accessible regions while stopping at viewpoints that redefine spectacular. When weather permits, panoramic vistas unfold endlessly—each turn revealing new masterpieces painted by wind, water, and time.

We walk along gentle trails offering expansive views of mountains, waterfalls, and glaciers that define Patagonian legend. At Grey Glacier, we approach the ancient ice face where centuries of snowfall have compressed into a river of blue-white ice. A short walk brings us to Salto Grande, where the Paine River explodes through granite channels in thunderous celebration.

During our exploration, we witness the Cascada del Río Paine and the ethereal beauty of Lago Pehoe, its turquoise waters reflecting the granite spires like a mirror crafted by gods.

Some believe 'Paine' honours an early settler, while others trace it to an ancient indigenous word meaning 'blue'—perhaps referencing the intense azure of these pristine lakes. Founded in 1959, this remarkable wilderness earned UNESCO recognition in 1978 as a biosphere of international significance.

The glaciers retreat up to 17 metres (56 feet) annually, creating a fascinating study of plant succession as life reclaims bare rock, transforming it gradually into flourishing forest.

Overnight in Torres del Paine National Park

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

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

This morning we bid farewell to Torres del Paine's granite spires and travel across Patagonian steppes to Punta Arenas, where the continental mainland surrenders to the labyrinth of channels and islands that fragment toward Antarctica.

Upon arrival, we visit the Municipal Cemetery, a haunting testament to human dreams and determination in this remote corner of the world.

Beneath immaculately trimmed cypress trees and along tree-lined pathways, we discover the final resting places of pioneers, immigrants, and families from diverse nations who left indelible marks on the colonisation and development of this isolated region.

The weathered headstones tell stories of Europeans, Chileans, and adventurers who ventured to the ends of the Earth seeking fortune, freedom, or simply the chance to build new lives beneath the Southern Cross. Each gravestone represents a human story of courage, loss, triumph, and the eternal human desire to explore beyond known horizons.

Overnight in Punta Arenas

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 7 Punta Arenas - Fly to Puerto Montt - Puerto Varas

This morning we fly to Puerto Montt, trading Patagonian steppes for the verdant landscapes of Chile's enchanting Lake District. We then drive the short distance to Puerto Varas, perfectly positioned at the northern shore of Golfo de Reloncaví, where Germanic influence mingles with Chilean tradition in a setting of spectacular lakes and snow-crowned volcanoes.

Puerto Varas stands as one of southern Chile's most important cities, its streets lined with distinctive wooden architecture that echoes the craftsmanship of German settlers who arrived in the mid-19th century. The surrounding region unfolds as a tapestry of crystal-clear lakes reflecting volcanic peaks, ancient forests harboring centuries-old trees, and emerald pastures where cattle graze beneath the watchful gaze of smoking volcanoes.

This is a landscape sculpted by fire and ice—where volcanic activity and glacial forces have conspired to create one of South America's most photogenic regions, earning it the nickname 'Switzerland of South America' for its alpine beauty and pristine wilderness.

Overnight in Puerto Varas

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 8 Puerto Varas Area: Osorno Volcano / Lago Todos los Santos

Today's adventure takes us along the shores of Lake Llanquihue to witness the extraordinary Petrohué waterfall, where the Rio Petrohué carves through crystallised black volcanic rock in a series of twisting jade-coloured chutes. The water glows emerald due to natural algae, creating an otherworldly spectacle against the backdrop of Osorno Volcano's perfect snow-capped cone.

From the village of Petrohué, we board a catamaran for a serene crossing of Lago Todos los Santos—the 'Lake of All Saints'—whose azure waters mirror surrounding peaks in perfect symmetry. Our destination is Puella, a tiny village serving travellers bound for Argentina, where we pause for a break for lunch and discover the nearby Cascada de Los Novios waterfall, a brief walk through native forest.

The lake journey reveals the profound silence of pristine wilderness, broken only by the gentle wake of our vessel and the distant call of waterfowl. Surrounding peaks rise directly from the water's edge, their slopes clothed in temperate rainforest that has remained virtually unchanged since the last ice age.

We return across the lake as afternoon light transforms the volcanic landscape into a canvas of gold and shadow.

Overnight in Puerto Varas

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 9 Puerto Varas - Fly to Balmaceda - Puerto Chacabuco

Early this afternoon, we fly to Balmaceda, a small village nestled against the western Andes, then drive to Puerto Chacabuco through some of Chile's most remote and spectacular wilderness. Our route follows part of the legendary Austral Road, which threads through Llanquihue and Palena provinces into the pristine Aysén region, passing the beautiful city of Coyhaique.

This journey offers a magnificent introduction to the astonishing variety of landscapes found at this southern latitude, where temperate rainforests transition to Patagonian steppes, and glacial valleys carve through granite peaks that have stood sentinel for millions of years.

The Austral Road itself represents one of Chile's greatest engineering achievements—a ribbon of asphalt that connects isolated communities across some of the planet's most challenging terrain. Along our route, we witness the gradual transition from volcanic Lake District scenery to the raw, windswept beauty of northern Patagonia, where condors soar on thermals and pristine rivers cascade from hanging glaciers.

Overnight in Puerto Chacabuco

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 10 Laguna San Rafael & San Rafael Glacier Discovery

Few experiences on Earth match what awaits today — but it demands full commitment: this is a 12-hour catamaran journey, and it is worth every minute.

We depart early, boarding our large catamaran at Puerto Chacabuco for a five-hour passage through a labyrinth of islands, channels, and fjords that opens gradually toward the legendary Laguna San Rafael. Meals are served aboard throughout the day — breakfast and lunch included — and the journey itself is part of the experience, as waterfalls plunge from impossible heights, seabirds wheel overhead, and seals bask on isolated rocks in these virtually untouched waters.

Upon reaching San Rafael Glacier — the dramatic terminus of the Northern Patagonian Ice Field — we board zodiacs for an intimate approach to the ice face. Surrounded by sculpted icebergs glowing blue from compressed oxygen and ancient ice emerging dark green from centuries below the waterline, we witness nature's most powerful artistry at close range. Life jackets and guidance are provided; dress in warm layers with gloves, hat, and rain gear.

The return passage unfolds through the same spectacular scenery, now bathed in the shifting light of afternoon, with an open bar featuring the trip's signature moment: whisky on ice cubes over 20,000 years old. We return to our hotel for dinner.

Please note: this is a full-day commitment — approximately 12 hours from departure to return — with five hours of cruising in each direction. The reward is one of Patagonia's most extraordinary wilderness experiences.

Overnight in Puerto Chacabuco

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

## Day 11 Aiken del Sur Private Park Nature Walk

This morning we journey to Aiken del Sur Private Park, a pristine sanctuary on the shores of Lago Riesco where 14 square kilometres (5.4 square miles) of crystal-clear water reflect surrounding peaks in perfect tranquillity. Here, a 22-metre (72-foot) waterfall cascades through native woodlands where perennial species, annual plants, moss, and liverworts create a living museum of Patagonian flora.

The landscape reveals widespread prairies where ancient myrtles and tepa trees intermingle with taro and mallin plants across diverse wetlands. Our exploration begins at the intimate Visitors' Centre, featuring interactive exhibitions about local flora, fauna, and the anthropological history of northern Patagonia's indigenous peoples.

We then embark on an easy 1.5-hour walk along scenic trails complete with catwalks, bridges, and observatory points that reveal the bio-geographical story of each ecosystem. Information stations explain how geological forces and climate have shaped this remarkable environment, while the wonderful scenery of lake, river, and Andean peaks creates an amphitheatre of natural beauty.

The melodic calls of endemic birds like the Chucao and Huet-huet provide nature's soundtrack to our gentle exploration.

At our walk's conclusion, we savour a traditional Patagonian lamb barbecue (vegetarian options available), followed by time to relax or explore additional footpaths.

Overnight in Puerto Chacabuco

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

## Day 12 Balmaceda - Fly to Calama - San Pedro de Atacama

Today we journey north to an entirely different world as we fly to Calama via Santiago, entering the ethereal realm of the Atacama Desert—Earth's most arid landscape. Upon arrival, we transfer to San Pedro de Atacama at 2,300 metres (7,546 feet) elevation, where we transition from Patagonian ice to desert moonscapes.

Northern Chile harbours the planet's driest desert alongside salt flats, hot springs, geysers, and vast mineral deposits including copper that has shaped the region's economy for generations. This remarkable altiplano also nurtures fertile oases inhabited by Chile's indigenous peoples, where both Incan and Spanish influences create a unique cultural tapestry.

Archaeological evidence reveals human existence here spanning over 10,000 years, with civilisations adapting to one of Earth's most challenging environments. No significant precipitation has been recorded since the Spanish colonial period, creating landscapes so otherworldly that NASA uses this region to test Mars exploration equipment.

The transition from Patagonia's ice-carved wilderness to Atacama's ancient desert represents one of our planet's most dramatic geographical contrasts, where we exchange emerald forests and glacier-fed lakes for landscapes painted in ochre, copper, and gold beneath crystalline skies.

Overnight in San Pedro de Atacama

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 13 Atacama Area: Tulor & Pukara de Quitor / Salar de Atacama & Lago Chaxa / Toconao

We begin our first full day in the Atacama with a visit to Tulor, a 2,800-year-old archaeological site revealing the region's earliest habitation evidence. This ancient oasis, once sustained by the San Pedro River, represents one of Atacama's most significant archaeological discoveries. From here we continue to Pukara de Quitor, where Atacameño people constructed this fortress to defend against Spanish conquistador Pedro de Valdivia. Designated a national monument in 1982, the site overlooks the San Pedro River valley in a setting of quiet, austere beauty.

After lunch in San Pedro, we venture to the magnificent Salar de Atacama — our planet's largest salt lake — where waters flowing from Andean peaks become trapped in this endorheic basin, creating ethereal landscapes of crystallised minerals. At Lago Chaxa within the Reserva Nacional de los Flamingos, we often approach flamingos in their natural habitat, observing how these elegant birds filter microscopic organisms from mineral-rich waters. The sight of pink flamingos against white salt formations and azure lagoons creates surreal beauty that challenges earthly expectations.

We then visit colonial Toconao, where volcanic rock serves as both building material and artistic medium. The church (1744) and San Lucas bell tower (1750) showcase local craftsmanship using white volcanic stone, while narrow streets invite quiet exploration of this timeless village.

Overnight in San Pedro de Atacama.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 14 Atacama Area: El Tatio Geysers / Valley of the Moon

Before sunrise, we ascend northeast into the Andes toward El Tatio geysers at 4,400 metres (14,436 feet), arriving as dawn illuminates over 100 geysers, boiling pools, and fumaroles in the southern hemisphere's largest geyser field. Here, superheated water emerges violently as steam in the frozen ground, creating an otherworldly spectacle against snow-capped peaks.

This ethereal landscape supports unique wildlife adapted to extreme altitude. If fortunate, we photograph vicuñas — wild relatives of llamas

— grazing across high-altitude plains, while the tiny village of Machuca reveals how humans have adapted to life at the roof of the world. Small lagoons shelter indigenous bird species including Andean Geese and Giant Coots.

Returning to San Pedro for a lunch break, we then venture to the legendary Valley of the Moon as afternoon light begins its magical transformation. This lunar landscape within the Salt Mountain Range reveals geological formations sculpted by millions of years of erosion — canyons, caves, and depressions that create alien terrain beneath Earth's sky. From atop sand dunes, unique panoramas unfold across salt mountains toward distant volcanic peaks. We position ourselves on the valley's upper ridge to witness sunset in this extraordinary landscape, where light reflecting off salt crystals creates an eerily beautiful spectacle that inspired the valley's celestial name.

Overnight in San Pedro de Atacama.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 15 Atacama - Fly to Santiago

Today we drive to Calama for our flight returning to Santiago, trading desert moonscapes for metropolitan sophistication. Depending on flight schedules, free time may await either in San Pedro's adobe streets lined with artisan shops and desert-adapted gardens, or in Santiago's cosmopolitan neighbourhoods where Andean peaks frame urban energy.

The transition from Atacama's otherworldly silence to Santiago's vibrant pulse represents Chile's remarkable diversity—a nation where Earth's driest desert and snow-capped volcanoes, ancient indigenous cultures and modern cities, exist within a single extraordinary country that stretches like a geographic miracle along South America's Pacific edge.

Santiago welcomes us back with tree-lined avenues, sophisticated cuisine, and the familiar backdrop of the Andes rising above urban sprawl—a metropolis that serves as the perfect bridge between our desert adventures and the Pacific island paradise that awaits.

Overnight in Santiago

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 16 Santiago - Fly to Easter Island

Today we embark on one of the world's most remote journeys, flying 3,700 kilometres (2,300 miles) west across the Pacific to Easter Island—Rapa Nui—one of Earth's most isolated inhabited places. Upon arrival at Mataveri Airport, we encounter our first moai, those enigmatic stone guardians that have watched over this volcanic triangle for centuries.

Hanga Roa, the island's only town, houses most of the 5,500 residents in a setting that captures authentic South Pacific atmosphere. Here, Polynesian culture thrives in splendid isolation, where the pace of life moves to ancient rhythms beneath endless skies.

Easter Island lies over 3,200 kilometres (1,988 miles) from the nearest population centre, making it among our planet's most isolated inhabited places. This triangular volcanic island in the vast Pacific hosts almost 900 giant stone figures dating back many centuries, revealing their creators as master craftsmen and engineers whose achievements continue to mystify archaeologists and visitors alike.

The early Polynesian settlers called their home 'Te Pito O Te Henua'—'Navel of The World.' Dutch Admiral Roggeveen, arriving on Easter Day 1722, bestowed the European name. Today, the land, people, and language are known as Rapa Nui, maintaining cultural connections to distant Polynesian cousins across the Pacific's vast expanse.

Overnight on Easter Island

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 17 Easter Island: Full Day of Exploration / Rano Kau & Orongo Village

Our exploration begins at Ahu Akivi, restored in the 1960s, featuring seven standing moai—the island's only ceremonial platform where moai

gaze toward the ocean rather than inland. We then visit Puna Pau, a small extinct volcano whose name means 'dry spring,' where soft red volcanic rock was quarried to create pukaos—the distinctive red 'headdresses' adorning some moai.

At Ahu Vinapu, we witness incredible stone walls reminiscent of ancient Incan architecture, their precision sometimes used to support theories of South American contact with early islanders. These massive basalt blocks fit together with breathtaking precision, demonstrating sophisticated engineering skills.

After lunch in Hanga Roa's heart, we journey to Rano Kau, the island's southernmost volcano, where an opportunity unfolds to survey most of the island alongside its reed-covered crater lake. From the western slopes, impressive views reveal the rocky islets Motu Nui, Motu Iti, and Motu Kao-Kao floating in Pacific immensity.

Rano Kau's main feature is the rebuilt ceremonial village of Orongo, site of the extraordinary Tangata Manu (birdman) ceremony that annually determined the island's spiritual leader. This sacred site overflows with petroglyphs representing Tangata Manu and the god Make-Make, offering insights into the complex spiritual world that governed Rapa Nui society for centuries.

Overnight on Easter Island

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 18 Easter Island: Full Day of Exploration / Rano Raraku

Today's highlight awaits at spectacular Rano Raraku quarry, Easter Island's most iconic location and the original 'factory' where moai were born from volcanic rock. Here, dozens of gigantic statues cover the inner and outer slopes of this extinct volcano, creating the world's most extraordinary outdoor sculpture gallery.

Among so many statues in situ, we admire them in different production stages—from initial carving in bedrock to upright positions and others lying face-down along their intended roads to ceremonial platforms. This remarkable site reveals the incredible ambition and skill of Rapa Nui's ancient sculptors.

We then proceed to Ahu Tongariki, Easter Island's largest moai site, where 15 moai stand in magnificent formation, including the island's largest erected statue. These giants were toppled during 17th-century tribal warfare, remaining fallen until the devastating 1960 earthquake and tsunami scattered them hundreds of metres inland. Restoration has returned them to their vigilant stance.

Along the south coast, we stop at Ahu Akahanga, featuring four large fallen statues where legend places the tomb of the island's first king. At Vaihu, another ancient site displays ruins that speak of the island's turbulent history.

This afternoon, we cross the island's heart to Papa Vaka on the north coast, an archaeological site characterised by numerous petroglyphs with maritime and fishing motifs that reveal the ocean's central importance to Rapa Nui culture.

Our day concludes at beautiful Anakena beach, where standing moai overlook a white sandy shore lined with coconut palms.

Overnight on Easter Island

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 19 Easter Island: Day at Leisure

Today unfolds at your own pace on this remote Pacific paradise. Perhaps return to Anakena's pristine beach for contemplation beneath swaying palms, embark on a gentle hike across volcanic terrain, or wander Hanga Roa's quiet streets discovering local shops, intimate cafes, and artisan markets where Rapa Nui culture lives in contemporary expressions.

The island's compact size—just 24 kilometres (15 miles) at its longest point—invites unhurried exploration. Consider revisiting favourite moai sites as light changes throughout the day, each moment revealing new perspectives on these ancient mysteries. The archaeological museum offers deeper insights into Polynesian navigation, island ecology, and the remarkable story of human survival in Earth's most isolated inhabited place.

Alternatively, simply absorb the profound peace that comes from standing at the world's edge, where endless Pacific horizon meets volcanic

peaks beneath skies unmarred by light pollution. This is time for personal reflection in a place where ancient mysteries and natural beauty converge in perfect harmony.

Overnight on Easter Island

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 20 Easter Island - Fly to Santiago

Today we travel back across the Pacific to Santiago, carrying memories of moai guardians and pristine landscapes that exist nowhere else on Earth. Depending on flight times, you may enjoy final moments on Easter Island or arrive in Santiago with afternoon hours to explore Chile's sophisticated capital.

If we arrive late in Santiago, we will likely overnight at an airport hotel for convenience.

The journey from Rapa Nui's isolation back to continental Chile represents a transition from timeless mystery to contemporary energy, yet both experiences reveal different facets of Chile's remarkable character—a nation that encompasses Pacific islands, Atacama moonscapes, Patagonian wilderness, and cosmopolitan cities within its extraordinary geography.

Overnight in Santiago.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 21 Departure

Departure from Santiago.

¡Buen Viaje! / Bon Voyage!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast