



September 16, 2009

Chile Out

Insider's Guide to Chile



Time for another sporadic but awesome Insider's Guide. Off we go to Chile, from the Atacama Desert in the north down to Puntas Arenas waaaay down in Patagonia. It's hot springs and ice glaciers, volcanoes and vineyards. At the steering wheel: los expertos at luxury travel boutique [Blue Parallel](#). Vamos.

Nature Calls

Day 1-3: Arrive in Santiago then fly to Calama to start your journey in the Atacama Desert — the most amazing landscape in South America. Home base is the new [Alto Atacama](#), located in the middle of a canyon. To-do list: Valley of the Moon at sunset, Tatio Geysers, stunning Salar de Tara salt flats. Plus majestic volcanoes, multicolored lagoons, hot springs, and tiny pre-Hispanic settlements. Hola, cute little vicuñas and flamingos!

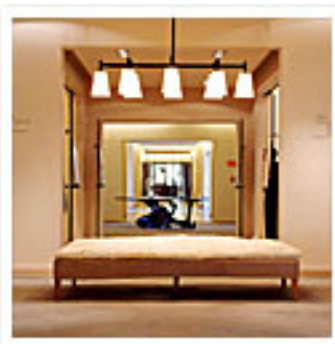


Wine Break

Days 4-5: Fly back through Santiago en route to [Casa Lapostolle](#) in the [Colchagua Valley](#) (a.k.a. wine lover heaven), surrounded by lush vines and hillsides. Ride horses with a *huaso* (Chilean cowboy) and drink to your *corazón's* content on a whirlwind tour of the region's best vineyards: [Viña Casa Silva](#), [Viu Manent](#), and [MontGras](#).

Water Sports

Day 6-8: Fly to Temuco and check into [Villarrica Park Lake Hotel](#) in Pucón. What ho in the distance? Why, the perfectly snow-capped cone of the active Villarrica Volcano. Mountain biking just doesn't get any better. On your second day, head to [Eco Huerquehue park](#) to kayak on Lake Tinquilco and soak in the hot tub. Now you're ready to climb the volcano. Start really early (as in 4 a.m. to avoid crowds) and prepare for insane vistas. Recovery awaits at [Termas Geometricas](#), the hot springs formed by mountain streams.



Culture Shot

Day 9: Road trip through lake country to Puerto Varas, a pretty lakeside town known for its flowers and breathtaking views of surrounding volcanoes. Stop for lunch in dairy farm town Osorno and pop into [Museo Historico Municipal](#) to learn about the indigenous Mapuche and the colonizing Germans. The journey continues past pristine Lake Llanquihue with towering Volcano Osorno in the background. Crash at [Meliá Patagonia](#) on a hill overlooking Puerto Varas bay.

Beauty Is in the Eye

Days 10-13: Fly to Punta Arenas and visit [Torres del Paine National Park](#), an UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in Chilean Patagonia. The park, which is the size of Luxembourg, is renowned for the structure of its mountains, glaciers, and lakes and for the variety of flora and fauna. The most beautiful park in the world? Sure! (Sick of hearing this yet?) But Patagonia is immense and simply breathtaking. [Explora Lodge](#), on the shores of Lago Pehoe, is pretty damn sweet, too.



Days 14-15: Drive across the Andes into Argentina and check into [Estancia Alta Vista](#), a turn-of-the-century inn surrounded by a sheep farm. Afternoon activities: horseback riding and ice trekking on the Perito Moreno Glacier.

Re-Entry Isn't a Bitch

Day 16: The best way to get back north is to fly to Buenos Aires (bonus: tango and steak break!) then take a short flight to Santiago.

Nitty Gritty

The easiest way to get around South America is on local airlines like [Macair Jet](#), as connections are often routed so you wind up taking one step back for every two forward. Or fly [LAN](#) (which codeshares with mile-friendly American Airlines). The best time to go is their summer: November through March.

For a custom itinerary on any budget, contact Emmanuel Burgio or Ida Gardiner at info@blueparallel.com.

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