

Chile Natural (12 days/11 nights)

This journey takes us to Chile's natural wonders in Patagonia, the Lake District, and the unique Atacama Desert, with a special focus on inspiring encounters with locals. We will be part of the traditions of the indigenous people of Chile, and get to know the lives of fifth generation German immigrants as well as Patagonian sheep breeders.

Wherever possible, the tour includes service providers that place importance on environmental protection and consideration of the local population.

DAY 01: SANTIAGO

Upon arrival at Santiago airport, a transfer takes you to your hotel to drop off luggage and meet your fellow travelers. We then embark on a city tour to catch a glimpse of Chile's metropolitan capital, visiting Santa Lucia Hill, the Buenas Artes National Museum, the central market with its colorful hustle and bustle, the Plaza de Armas, the presidential palace "La Moneda", the church San Francisco and the district Lastarria.

Overnight stay: Hotel Loreto in Santiago de Chile

DAY 02: SANTIAGO - CALAMA - SAN PEDRO DE ATACAMA (B)

After breakfast, a transfer takes us back to the airport in order to board a northbound flight to the mining city of Calama in the Atacama Desert. Upon arrival, we make our way directly to the charming oasis town of San Pedro de Atacama. During leisure time in the afternoon, you have the opportunity to explore its bustling streets at your own pace.

Overnight stay: Hotel Casa de Don Tomas in San Pedro de Atacama

DAY 03: ATACAMA SALT FLATS & MOON VALLEY (B)

After an invigorating breakfast, we visit the Atacama Salt Flats and Chaxa Lagoon. On our way, we stop in the indigenous village of Toconao, where we visit the plaza and church. We then reach the Salar de Atacama, Chile's largest salt flat, which originated millions of years ago by the upheaval of the Andes and the Domeyko cordillera. The octagonal salt crusts in the middle of the world's driest desert are truly an impressive sight. Here we can also observe three different species of flamingos, which feed on salt brine.

In the afternoon we visit the Moon Valley. It is located about 18 km (11 mi) west of San Pedro de Atacama and part of the nature reserve Los Flamencos, which is co-administered by indigenous communities. This unreal place, one of the most spectacular in the Atacama Desert, owes its name to the unique geological formations that resemble a lunar landscape. We explore this beautiful landscape and visit the strange creatures that nature has created from salt and clay.

Overnight stay: Hotel Casa de Don Tomas in San Pedro de Atacama

DAY 04: TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS OF THE INDIGENOUS ATACAMEÑO PEOPLE (B, L)

On the outskirts of San Pedro de Atacama, there are several small villages of Atacameño indigenous communities (in their language they are called the Lick-Antay). These villages are also referred to as Ayllus – meaning an organized structure of neighborhood assistance based on the land rights of common ancestors, which emphasizes the importance of community cooperation. Today we visit the municipality Ayllu de Coyo, where we get to know two Atacameño families and let them guide us along their traditional paths. They show us the local irrigation system, animal husbandry and the production of their typical handicrafts. Nowadays the sale of these handcrafted goods is hampered by the increased supply of foreign goods (mostly from Bolivia and Peru) on local markets.

In the afternoon a unique experience awaits us: the traditional caravan of the Atacameño people. This walk with llamas allows us to relive this centuries-old way of transport in the desert, while our guide tells us a lot about this symbolic Andean animal.

Overnight stay: Hotel Casa de Don Tomas in San Pedro de Atacama

DAY 05: SAN PEDRO DE ATACAMA (B)

This day is at leisure, allowing you to relax or visit other attractions in the area. We recommend a visit to the geysers of El Tatio.

Overnight stay: Hotel Casa de Don Tomas in San Pedro de Atacama

DAY 06: SAN PEDRO DE ATACAMA - CALAMA - PUERTO VARAS (B)

After breakfast, a transfer takes us back to Calama Airport, from where we fly via Santiago to Puerto Montt in the Chilean lake region, more than 2000 km (1200 mi) further south. From here, we continue our journey to the "City of Roses" Puerto Varas. Beautifully situated on the shores of Llanquihue Lake, this touristic town is booming in recent years.

Overnight stay: Hotel Cabaña del Lago in Puerto Varas

DAY 07: NATIONAL PARK VICENTE PEREZ ROSALES & GERMAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE LAKE REGION (B, L)

After breakfast, we enjoy a scenic ride along Llanquihue Lake to Vicente Pérez Rosales National Park. Here we visit the famous rapids of Petrohué river, one of the wildest in Chile. Roaring loudly, it rushes through its uneven bed, surrounded by breathtaking scenery. We then continue to nearby All Saints Lake, ("Todos Los Santos") located at the foot of Osorno Volcano. With its emerald green water surface, many visitors consider it the most beautiful lake in Chile. After a walk along the lava beach, we move on to the small village of Las Cascadas. Here we meet a German immigrant family that has maintained its customs and language skills for five generations. We indulge in a typical rural lunch and discover the eventful history of this family and the German immigrants in the 19th century.

In the afternoon, we continue our exploration of the area and reach the charming lakeside village of Frutillar, offering spectacular views of the volcanoes. Here we enjoy the relaxed atmosphere emanating from its traditional painted houses, lively gardens, tea rooms and the modern Teatro del Lago. The open-air museum of German immigration allows us to learn even more about the area's colonization.

Overnight stay: Hotel Cabaña del Lago in Puerto Varas

DAY 08: THE INDIGENOUS HUILICHE IN SAN JUAN DE LA COSTA (B, L)

Today we travel to the homeland of the Huilliche indigenous people, the southern brother tribe of the Mapuche natives. In the coastal area of San Juan de la Costa, we learn about their local traditions while enjoying beautifully pristine coastal landscape. After lunch with a local family, we hike through the ancient native Valdivian rainforest, which has been preserved in good conditions. Here we meet the family of Lonko (tribal leader) Carlos Paillamanque and learn more about the cosmovision and way of life of the Huilliche and Mapuche. In the afternoon we make our way back to Puerto Varas.

Overnight stay: Hotel Cabaña del Lago in Puerto Varas

DAY 09: PUERTO VARAS - PUNTA ARENAS (B)

In the morning, a transfer takes us to the airport in Puerto Montt. After a two-and-a-half-hour flight, we land in Punta Arenas, one of the most southern (and at the same time windiest) cities in the world. The afternoon at leisure is a good opportunity for exploring the city's main points of interest.

Overnight stay: Hotel Isla Rey Jorge in Punta Arenas

DAY 10: PUNTA ARENAS - TORRES DEL PAINE NATIONAL PARK (B)

Today we embark on a journey into the Patagonian heartland. Our route takes us through the typical pampa landscape of the Magallanes region, past huge Patagonian estancias (sheep farms). In the afternoon, we reach the stunning Torres del Paine National Park, without a doubt an absolute highlight of every Chile vacation. It is here, where the vastness of the Patagonian steppe meets the steep peaks of the South Cordillera, that nature shows its most breathtaking side.

Overnight stay: Hotel Las Torres Patagonia in Torres del Paine National Park

DAY 11: TORRES DEL PAINE - PUERTO NATALES (B)

Today we dedicate ourselves to exploring Torres del Paine National Park, one of America's most impressive natural attractions. 2000-meter-high peaks rise out of the vast steppe abruptly; huge glaciers, deep blue lakes and wind-blown, gnarled southern beeches determine the picture. Thundering rivers flow into the valley as waterfalls. This primeval wilderness is a unique refuge for rare animals such as guanacos, Andean foxes, flamingos and condors, the kings of the skies. On a short hiking trail, we reach the viewpoint at Grey Lake, where we have a wonderful view of the eponymous glacier. Our tour finishes in Puerto Natales, where we spend the night.

Please note: As an alternative, it is possible to do a challenging hike on your own to the Paine Towers base (the "Torres"). Guided hikes can be organized at additional cost.

Overnight stay: Hotel Aguaterro in Puerto Natales

DAY 12: PUERTO NATALES - PUNTA ARENAS (B)

After breakfast we are taken to the airport in Punta Arenas, where we say goodbye to our fellow travelers. From here, it is possible to take a flight back home (via Santiago) or continue the vacation with a follow-up program.