

EXPLORE!

Atacama to Paine

14 days

Chile - Trip code TDP



Atacama to Paine

Chile is often known as the 'thin country', being 4,270km long and only 177km wide, thus making it a land of extremes, from glaciers in the south to deserts in the north. Join us as we discover the arid Atacama Desert; a barren landscape peppered with hot springs and spouting geysers. In Torres del Paine National Park we explore arguably one of the world's most beautiful national parks. Along the way we tour the capital Santiago and visit the pretty Lake District region.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Santiago de Chile** - Scenic capital in the shadow of the Andes
- ★ **San Pedro** - Walk in the Valle de la Luna and the Atacama Desert; optional visit to El Tatio Geysers
- ★ **Puerto Varas** - Hike around the Osorno Volcano
- ★ **Torres del Paine National Park** - Walk among the glacial lakes and mountain ranges of one of the most stunning locations on earth

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:**Moderate**

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

GROUP SIZE:**12 - 18**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join tour Santiago de Chile; afternoon city tour

Joining the tour in Santiago today, our intention this afternoon is to take an orientation tour of the city by bus and metro. One of the most scenic cities in South America, Santiago lies in the shadow of the Andes and the old part of the city, around the Alameda, contains a number of fine buildings, statues and gardens, including the impressive Presidential Palace and the monastery of San Francisco. The city is filled with museums to its colonial and pre-Columbian past and in the Bellavista district we can find the unusual house of the famous Chilean poet and Nobel Prize winner Pablo Neruda.



Accommodation: Diego de Velazquez Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Free day in Santiago, optional Valparaiso trip

Today has been left free to explore some more of the city, to wander its streets and parks, and perhaps visit the vineyards that lie on the outskirts of the city. The Maipo Valley is considered by many to be the best wine-growing region in the country. Certainly the oldest, it is renowned for its Cabernet Sauvignon and a tour of the vineyards, lying in the shadow of the magnificent Andes, is the perfect combination of sensory delights. Alternatively there is the option of a trip to the nearby city of Valparaiso, Chile's culture capital. Once a colonial port linking trade with neighbouring Peru, the city suffered numerous raids at the hands of pirates, including Sir Francis Drake. Reaching the height of its prosperity during the 19th century it finally fell into decline with the onset of the steam age and the opening of the Panama Canal. Much of its colonial past has been destroyed by a number of powerful earthquakes over the years, but the city still retains some of the grandeur of its past. Today it is a major port and the surrounding hills, a natural amphitheatre covered in colourful houses and mansions, are a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Accommodation: Diego de Velazquez Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Fly to Calama, drive to San Pedro de Atacama; walk in Valle de la Luna

Flying to Calama this morning we transfer by private bus to the oasis town of San Pedro de Atacama, set high among the spectacular volcanoes of Los Andes Cordillera and our gateway to the dramatic landscapes of the Atacama Desert. On arrival there will be time to relax, and depending on the flight time there may be the opportunity to take an optional visit to the impressive archaeological museum containing the collection of artefacts assembled by Padre Gustave Paige, a Belgian missionary who spent some 25 years here during the later years of the last century. This afternoon we will take a walk among the dunes of the nearby Valle de la Luna (Moon Valley), a nature reserve to the west of the town, where the surreal landscape has been formed by the erosion of the salt mountains. We intend to watch the setting sun cast its golden glow across the spectacular landscape, before returning by bus back to San Pedro.



Accommodation: Iorana Tolache Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - In San Pedro, walk in the Atacama Desert

San Pedro was once the centre of the Atacama culture, before the arrival of the Spanish, and its dusty streets and evocative setting still exude an air of times long past. Over the next two days we have the chance to explore in more depth this remarkable town and its fascinating cultural and natural diversity. Our first day sees us travelling out to Puritama to spend the day walking amongst the desert landscapes of the remarkable Atacama, one of the most barren and dramatic natural features in the entire country. We will walk through a terrain peppered with hot springs, with views back across to San Pedro and the vast expanse of the Salar de Atacama.



Accommodation: Iorana Tolache Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Free day; optional El Tatio Hot Springs or salt flats visit

Our second day in San Pedro has been left free, affording the chance to do some exploring on your own. You may like to take an early morning trip out to the El Tatio Hot Springs, a geothermal field of spouting geysers and steaming fumaroles surrounded by a vista of volcanic mountains. Watching these active geysers erupting in the light of the rising sun is an impressive sight, and it will leave your afternoon free to visit the extensive salt flats of the Salar de Atacama, at 300,000 hectares the third largest area of salt flats on the planet. Rich in minerals the lake is home to flocks of pink flamingos during the winter months and the air is so dry that the views across the Salar have to be seen to be believed.



Accommodation: Iorana Tolache Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Fly to Puerto Montt and transfer to Puerto Varas; walk at Llanquihue Lake

Today we fly to Puerto Montt, the most important port in the south of Chile and, in a very real sense, the spot where the developed or settled population of Chile comes to a full stop. This is the gateway to the wild and rugged regions to the south and from here we drive to Puerto Varas and our hotel, based beside the shores of Lake Llanquihue. With some free time to explore we'll take a stroll on the lake shore, the second largest in Chile and one of the shimmering jewels of Chile's Lake District. Set against the backdrop of snow-capped volcanoes, this is the third largest expanse of natural water on the South American continent and presents us with a quite breathtaking setting.



Accommodation: Park Inn Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Walk around the Osorno Volcano

Our first full day here sees us hiking around the area dominated by the classic volcanic cone of Osorno (2680m), an almost picture-perfect representation of a snowy volcanic peak. Our walk takes us through the lush landscapes of the Valdivian rainforest, the slopes of the mountain sprinkled with Andean birch, providing a haven for chingue (Patagonian skunk), culpeo (Patagonian fox), weasels and puma, whilst the bird populations boast hummingbirds, woodpeckers and kestrel.



Accommodation: Park Inn Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Free day; optional visit to Chiloe Island

Our second day has been left free for optional activities, perhaps try your hand at mountain biking, rafting, or maybe do some more trekking around the area. There is also the chance to take a full day excursion to Chiloe Island, the second largest in South America (after Tierra del Fuego) and a captivating place of verdant beauty and legend, whose people are among the friendliest anywhere in South America. The island's rich colonial heritage has seen its capital, Castro, designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site and its vibrant mix of Catholic beliefs and native mythology, Jesuit churches and traditional stilted houses make it an absolute treasure to explore.



Accommodation: Park Inn Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - Fly to Punta Arenas, drive to Puerto Natales

Before flying to Punta Arenas this afternoon, we spend a final morning in Puerto Varas. Depending on the flight schedules we have the option to visit the German style town of Frutillar, which was the location of the first German colonies in Chile over 150 years ago. This German heritage can still be found in the street names and the tea salons found in the town's cafes. In the afternoon we fly to Punta Arenas and take a public bus to our hotel in Puerto Natales. This is the gateway to the Torres del Paine national park, and from small beginnings as a tiny fishing port it has now blossomed to a hub of adventure, with an atmosphere of excitement as travellers pass through on their way to the mountains. From the edge of the town there are striking views out to the fjords, and looking back inland we see the mountains rising imposingly over us. We will arrive in the evening to Puerto Natales.



Accommodation: Natalino Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 10 - Drive to Torres del Paine National Park via Milodon Cave

Leaving Puerto Natales this morning we travel via the Milodon Cave to Torres del Paine National Park, arguably one of the world's most beautiful national parks, described by Alberto de Agostini as 'one of the most spectacular sights that the human imagination can conceive'. We spend the full day in the park and drive around the circuit with plenty of stops to take in the wild and rugged scenery - this tour isn't a private trip, so we may be joined by other travellers. Torres del Paine is situated amidst a region of ice-capped peaks, silent blue glacial lakes and wild hill country. It is not unusual to see large numbers of guanacos here, as well as black-necked swans, upland geese, pink flamingos and the odd grey fox snooping around the human food areas looking for an easy meal. We may even be fortunate enough to spot condors. One of the highlights of our time here will be the views of the Torres, imposing pinnacles of sharp granite that are surrounded by glacial lakes and craggy ranges, formed millions of years ago. Reaching over 2600 metres these towers are just part of an impressive range, the highest of which is the Cerro Paine Grande, presenting us with one of the most breathtaking mountain vistas on the planet. This is a place to keep an eye out for condors, rheas and guanacos. The itinerary here is kept flexible so we can make the best choices depending on weather conditions as some walks and stops may not be possible due to high winds.



Accommodation: Cabanas del Paine Hotel (or similar)



Standard Guesthouse



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 11 - Optional walks in Torres del Paine National Park

Today we have the day free to explore this wilderness on one of many optional hikes. The most famous of the park's full day hikes is an 18km round trip up to the base of the Torres, with astounding views over the jagged granite peaks of these iconic mountains. There are also a series of easier walks within the parks, including the Mirador Cuernos, which is a 6km easy hike that passes the waters of the 'Salto Grande' (Big Waterfall); another 6km walk to the magnificent icebergs of the glacier-fed Lago Grey; or a 3 hour, mid-level 8km wildlife walk on the Hunters Trail, a hike that crosses the natural habitats of guanaco colonies, with the chance to

spot birds like the Condor and Black Chested Buzzard Eagle. Depending on the winds and the weather some of the trails may be closed, but whichever walk you choose, the wild scenery of the national park is magnificent throughout.



Accommodation: Cabanas del Paine Hotel (or similar)



Standard Guesthouse



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 12 - Return to Puerto Natales

Driving away from the park, we arrive back in Puerto Natales early this afternoon, and have the rest of the day free to relax or perhaps eat out at one of the town's many restaurants.



Accommodation: Natalino Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 13 - Return to Punta Arenas, fly to Santiago

This morning we transfer to Punta Arenas, from where we fly back this afternoon to Santiago. On arrival we will transfer to our hotel for the final evening of our journey through this remarkable country.



Accommodation: Diego de Velazquez Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 14 - Tour ends in Santiago

The tour ends in Santiago after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 13



Transport

Bus
Flight



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

2 nights standard guesthouse
11 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

Chile Holidays & Tours

Climate

The best time to visit is spring (Sept-Nov) and autumn (March- April). Between June and September the heat in the northern part of the country is less intense. Remember rain can fall at any time of the year and the weather is changeable in the mountains. Easter Island has a tropical climate so is likely to be quite hot and humid. It can also rain there in the evenings and become chilly.

Time difference to GMT

-4

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Predominantly Roman Catholic.

Language

Spanish, Aymara, Rapanui.

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

Santiago - Vineyard visit US\$61; Valparaíso US\$85 San Pedro - El Tatio Geysers US\$92; Atacama Salt lake with Toconao US\$102 (1-4 pers) US\$90 (5-9 pers) US\$85 (10-14 pers) Puerto Varas - Excursion to Chiloé Island US\$71; Frutillar visit US\$30-\$66 depending on numbers Torres Del Paine - Full day Base Torres US\$135-160 depending on numbers; Half day Mirador Cuernos and Mirador Torres del Paine US\$75-90; Lake Grey and Mirador Cuernos US\$75-90; Hunters Trail \$75

Clothing

Bear in mind that several different climatic zones will be experienced. Lightweight clothing is necessary for mostly warm and humid daytime conditions, though evenings can be cooler. A warm jumper or fleece and a good waterproof jacket will be needed for the colder weather and winds in the far south. It can get extremely cold in the Atacama Desert so bring some warm layers and hat, scarf and gloves.

Footwear

Comfortable walking bootshoes or trainers, and sandals.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of luggage and a daypack.

Equipment

Binoculars, torch, water bottle, insect repellent, suncream (at least factor 15), good quality sunglasses and a lip salve with sun protection and walking poles (if you use them).

Tipping

Explore leader

Tour Leader: At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

You should allow US\$60 for tipping.

Local fees

All passengers arriving with passports from Australia, Canada or the USA will have to pay a 'reciprocity tax' before getting into the immigration area. Australia US\$61, Canada US\$132, USA US\$131.

International Departure Taxes

Citizens of Australia, Canada and the US will have to pay a 'reciprocity tax' to be paid on arrival before arriving into immigration. This currently costs 61USD for Australian citizens, 1532USD for Canadian citizens, 131USD for US citizens.

Country Information

Chile Holidays & Tours

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£13

Dinner price

£20

Beer price

£2.00 - 4.00

Water price

£1.3

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Peso.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Carry all your funds in US cash NOT Sterling. We recommend to take a minimum of US\$400-\$500 of your total spending money in cash for your tour, in mixed denominations. Notes should be in good condition otherwise they might be difficult to exchange.

Where To Exchange

Tour Leader will advise on arrival

ATM Availability

Available in Major towns. Always have some cash as back-up as they are not always reliable

Credit Card Acceptance

Credit cards are useful and can be used in many places, but may be subject to a service charge.

Travellers Cheques

Travellers' Cheques can be awkward or expensive to change

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Flight

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click [here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click [here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

Chile: Visas are not required for UK, New Zealand, Australian, US and Canadian citizens. Please note all passengers arriving with passports from Australia or Canada will have to pay a reciprocity tax before getting into the migration area. The amount to be paid for each passport holder is as follows: Australia \$95, Canada \$132 Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate. USA: An electronic travel authorisation (ESTA) is required by British citizens transiting via the USA. This must be done online (<https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov>) no later than 72 hours prior to travel. You must also have an electronic passport with a digital chip. The UK electronic passports feature a small gold symbol (camera) at the bottom of the front cover. Please note that if you have visited Iraq, Syria, Iran or Sudan since 2011 you cannot travel with an ESTA and instead you will need to apply for a visa from the nearest US Embassy or Consulate. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office. Canada: An electronic travel authorisation (ETA) is required by British citizens transiting via Canada. For more information see the official Canadian government website: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/eta.asp> Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Altitude information

Parts of this trip are undertaken at a high altitude - the realm of thin, cold, dry air. Whilst this is unlikely to be a problem it is wise to be aware of how it may affect you.

Non refundable permits

Chile Holidays & Tours

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue Fever and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. Please note many countries in Central America, South America and the Caribbean require a yellow fever vaccination certificates if travelling from infected areas. A detailed list of these countries can be found on the NaTHNaC website - <http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>. Also on the NaTHNaC site there is a list of Countries (and specific areas within a country) which are at risk of infection and a vaccination is therefore recommended.. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.
