

Chile



TERRITORY

Chile has an unusual shape; it is a very long and narrow country. From north to south, it stretches from desert to glaciers, by way of cliffs, valleys, lakes, forests, islands and canals. From east to west, it is squeezed between the Andes mountain range, with altitudes above 6,000 meters, and the Pacific Ocean, whose cold and restless waters reach a depth 8,000 meters in some places.

Chile's north is one of the most arid regions in the world. In some parts of the Atacama Desert it never rains, but at night the *camanchaca* is formed; a heavy coastal fog that obscures vision at 50 paces and dissipates in the morning with the heat of the sun.

The central zone is fertile and bountiful, watered with rivers originating in the snow-capped summits of the Andes. This is the heart of the Chilean countryside, its products, traditions and folklore. The capital, Santiago, is also in the central zone, along with the principal cities, the major industries and the most important financial institutions.

Chile is situated in the extreme southwest of South America, with Peru to the north, the South Pole to the south, Bolivia and Argentina to the east, and the Pacific Ocean to the west.

Placed over a map of Europe, it would extend from Madrid to Moscow.

Its average width is 150 kilometers; it is 360 kilometers across at its widest point and just 15 kilometers at its narrowest.

The official language is Spanish.

Chile's climate is moderate and temperate. Summer is from December to March, with an average temperature of 25°C.

Winter lasts from June to August, with an average temperature of 12°C.

The time zone in winter is GMT -4 hours; in summer it is GMT -3 hours.

Visitors from most countries require only a current passport and a tourist entrance card, which is valid for 90 days. No inoculations are necessary.

In the middle of the Pacific Ocean, 3,760 kilometers offshore, lies Easter Island, called "Te Pito O Te Henua" ("The Navel of the World") in the local language. The island was discovered by Jacob van Roggeveen of Holland on April 6, 1722, which was Easter Sunday; thus its name. No one has succeeded in explaining how the island's people moved the famous moais: stone giants up to 23 meters in height and 80 tons in weight.

Chile is the only country where the sun rises simultaneously over the world's most arid desert and ice that is thousands of years old.

DID YOU KNOW

- The name Chile may be derived from the word *chilli*, meaning "where the land ends" in the language of the Aymara, one of Chile's indigenous peoples.
- There are more than 2,000 volcanos in Chile, around 50 of them active. On some of them, high-quality ski slopes have been constructed.



Cueca, National Dance



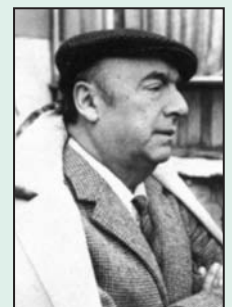
Chilean grapes



Copihue National Flower



*Gabriela Mistral
Nobel Prizewinner 1945*



*Pablo Neruda
Nobel Prizewinner 1971*



La Moneda, Presidential Palace