

Best of Chile and Argentina January 2025

Visiting Santiago, Rosario Valley, Valparaíso, Viña del Mar,
Casablanca Valley, Puerto Montt, Puerto Varas, Frutillar,
Torres del Paine National Park in Patagonia, El Calafate,
Ushuaia and Buenos Aires

FRIDAY ARRIVAL DAY - SANTIAGO, CHILE (-) **JAN 10**

Today is set aside as an arrival day for our guests. Each guest will be met at the airport by TrailFinders' representative and transferred downtown to the hotel. The tour leader will be available at the hotel throughout the day to assist with the various check-ins.

For any guests who have arrived a day earlier, breakfast is available at the hotel.

For those who are arriving today, welcome to Chile!

Squeezed between the Andes Mountains and the Pacific Ocean, this unique ribbon of a country is 4,300 kilometres long and only a maximum of 180 kilometres wide. For many people, Chile is still an unknown place, but visitors are often surprised by its extremely rich, original and varied geographic features. Chile contains the driest desert of the world, abundant forests, huge and beautiful mountains, striking fjords and an abundance of glaciers.

Currently, Chile is one of the most developed and modern countries in South America. Strong European influence can be seen everywhere, and the culture and history make the country a very attractive destination.

The city of "Santiago de Chile" is situated inland and has the magnificent Andes mountains as its backdrop. It is one of the best places to begin a tour of Latin America. Although it is a metropolis of six million inhabitants, it has the atmosphere of a smaller, manageable European city with very few skyscrapers.

Our hotel is located right downtown in the beautiful and modern Providencia area of Santiago.

Late this afternoon, around the time of happy hour, please join the tour leader in the hotel courtyard for complimentary drinks and a quick 'Orientation to Chile and Argentina'. This session will cover important items related to the entire trip including personal health, security, money matters, daily activities, day packs, food and beverages, transportation and more. We highly recommend that everyone attend this session.

Free for dinner at whatever time suits you best. Your tour leader will have suggestions for various types of restaurants near the hotel.

Overnight at the Hotel Le Reve Boutique.

SATURDAY SANTIAGO (B, D) **JAN 11**

Breakfast at the hotel.

Today we spend a full day touring the most interesting parts of Santiago.

While the exact itinerary and order of events will be decided by our guide, we will likely begin by driving south through the downtown area, passing the Club Hípico, a beautiful horseracing track located in the oldest residential area of the city. Then we proceed alongside the Parque O'Higgins and the Cousiño Palace, built between 1870 and 1878 for the wealthy Cousiño family.

From here we will head along the famous Alameda, Santiago's colourful main avenue, towards the heart of the city. On the way we'll see the Chilean University, the San Francisco Church and Santa Lucia Hill, site of Santiago's beginning in 1541.

We will visit the Pre-Columbian Museum which houses a collection of ceramics, ancient textiles and relics. Here we'll learn more about Chilean history.

We'll also visit the Plaza de Armas and the cathedral.

Around lunch time today, we'll visit the famous Central Market, the main market for fresh fish, seafood and other Chilean products.

The Central Market is in an interesting building which dates back to the end of the 19th century. It is made of metal and was built in London and brought by ship to Chile.

We can all grab a quick lunch here since there are many small cafes serving a variety of Chilean favourites.

Afterwards, we continue the tour, crossing the Mapocho River to reach the bohemian Bellavista district on the way to the San Cristóbal Hill. From one of the hill's lookouts, we will have an unobstructed view of Santiago and the Andes Mountains.

To round off the day, we may pass through the modern residential areas of the city with their unique architectures.

We then return to bustling Providencia and to our hotel. Here, you may have some free time to get organized before happy hour and our group dinner at a local restaurant.

Overnight at the Hotel Le Reve Boutique.

**SUNDAY
JAN 12** **SANTIAGO - ROSARIO VALLEY - VALPARAISO (B, L)**

Breakfast at the hotel.

In the morning, we leave Santiago and head westward into the Rosario Valley where we stop at Matetic Vineyards. This unique family winery is situated in a glorious setting on a stretch of land blessed with a promising climate and favourable soils. In contrast to huge wineries in other areas, the family Matetic specializes in cultivating wines in accordance with organic production principles.

Upon arrival, we'll tour the winery and then have a wonderful lunch at their restaurant.

From here, we move on to the World Heritage port city of Valparaiso.

Built upon dozens of steep hillsides overlooking the Pacific Ocean, the city boasts a labyrinth of streets and cobblestone alleyways embodying a rich architectural and cultural legacy. Immortalized in the words of Pablo Neruda, Chile's most famous poet, as the city that 'goes to Paradise' ("Va al paraíso"), it is one of Chile's most charismatic and historic ports with its charming funiculars, colourful hillside houses and creative graffiti.

Here, we check in to our hotel which is perfectly situated for independent exploring on foot.

Free for dinner.

Overnight at the Hotel Palacio Astoreca.

**MONDAY
JAN 13** **VALPARAISO – VINA DEL MAR - CASABLANCA VALLEY - SANTIAGO (B, L)**

Breakfast at the hotel.

This morning, we'll explore additional parts of Valparaiso.

We'll pass by the main square where we can view the honored monument of the Naval Battle of Iquique fought in 1879 and visit a few of the local historical buildings. We'll also have an opportunity to ride on one of the typical funiculars to go up to the top of the hill, overlooking the port of Valparaiso from which we can see the beautiful bay and the downtown district.

From here we continue to Viña del Mar, one of Chile's most fashionable beach resorts. The town, part of the greater Valparaiso area, was founded in 1874 as a weekend retreat and garden residence for the wealthy elite from Valparaíso and Santiago and it has remained a top beach destination ever since. The sight of "Viña's" attractive homes, manicured lawns and golden beaches dotted with colourful surfboards is a contrast to the ramshackle streets of Valparaíso.

Here, we'll pass by the city's landmark, the Flower Clock ("Reloj de Flores") as well as the casino as we head towards the famous beaches of Salinas, Reñaca, Los Lilenes and Concón. The street winds along the rocky pacific coast where waves break on stormy days. At the beach of Concón, one of the most beautiful and popular areas, fishermen offer their fish and seafood for sale. Summer houses and restaurants line the street all along the coast.

From here, we will begin our drive back to Santiago and on the way we'll stop for lunch at the beautiful Casona Veramonte.

Upon arrival in Santiago, we check into our hotel. Welcome back!

Free for dinner.

Overnight at the Hotel Le Reve Boutique.

**TUESDAY
JAN 14 SANTIAGO – PUERTO MONTT – PUERTO VARAS (B, L)**

Breakfast at the hotel.

Today, we leave Santiago and head to the airport to catch our flight to Puerto Montt.

Flight LA 263 departs at 9:34 and arrives at 11:22.

The city is situated on the gulf of Reloncaví and is an important fishing port and popular starting point for ships travelling in the archipelago to the south.

The city was founded by German settlers in 1852 and their influence still exists in the style of the wooden houses. Puerto Montt and the surrounding area is known as "Chilean Switzerland", with its blue-green shining lakes, untouched rain forests, snowy volcanoes and crystal-clear waterfalls.

After arriving in Puerto Montt, our guide will take us on a short tour of the town. We'll pass along Costanera Avenue and continue to the observation point for a view of the city and Reloncavi Bay, Tenglo Island and the channels. We'll also pass through the town center and the main square and will visit Angelmó, the traditional fish and seafood market. While walking through the market we can enjoy an informal snack of empanadas or other local items.

We then drive north to the town of Puerto Varas and check in for a two-night stay.

Free for dinner.

Overnight at the Hotel Cumbres Puerto Varas.

**WEDNESDAY
JAN 15 PUERTO VARAS – FRUTILLAR – PUERTO VARAS (B)**

Breakfast at the hotel.

Our day begins with a drive along the Llanquihue Lake to the village of Frutillar. Here, we'll see historical German settlements where houses and beautiful gardens have been built similar to those of the German Black Forest region. We'll pass by the Lutheran and Catholic Churches and possibly visit the Edmundo Winkler forest reserve.

We also visit the wonderful outdoor Colonial Settler's Museum with its exhibits on the history of the first settlers in the region.

Free for lunch. There are many small restaurants and cafes in the town.

After lunch, we head back towards Puerto Varas enjoying views of the lake and the volcanoes Osorno, Calbuco and Puntagudo in the background.

Free for dinner.

Overnight at the Hotel Cumbres Puerto Varas.

**THURSDAY
JAN 16 PUERTO VARAS – PUERTO NATALES - TORRES DEL PAINE, PATAGONIA (B, D)**

Breakfast at the hotel.

This morning, we drive to the Puerto Montt airport and board our flight south to Puerto Natales.

Flight H2 421 departs at 11:22 and arrives at 13:25.

Upon arrival, we meet our transfer team who will take us on a drive into the famous Torres del Paine National Park, where we will check in to the Hotel Las Torres Patagonia, our home for the next three nights.

Torres del Paine is South America's most famous national park, renowned for its geographical diversity and its unique beauty. A stay in the park offers the visitor a large variety of nature excursions through golden grasslands and mountain forests past turquoise lakes, waterfalls, massive glaciers & soaring peaks including the granite towers that give the park its name.

Our hotel is the closest accommodation to these famous towers. It has an excellent restaurant, where guests can enjoy typical regional dishes prepared using fresh produce from the hotel's own organic vegetable garden. As well, it has its own horses, vehicles and guides at the disposal of the guests during their stay. While we are in the park, all meals and excursions are included, along with an open bar!

We will have the offerings of many different excursions including drives to areas where we explore the diverse animal and plant species of this unique region, a bit of local walking and possible horseback riding activities. Each night, our guide will outline the activities for the following day which will depend on forecast weather conditions as well as the physical capabilities and wishes of our guests.

Happy hour, dinner and overnight at Hotel Las Torres Patagonia.

FRIDAY TORRES DEL PAINE NATIONAL PARK (B, L, D)
JAN 17

Breakfast at the hotel.

Today we spend the entire day seeing more of what this amazing park has to offer by visiting its most famous attractions and enjoying some beautiful walks to learn more about the flora and fauna of the mountains and lakes.

Lunch will be included.

We return to the hotel in the late afternoon in time for "open-bar" happy hour.

Dinner and overnight at Hotel Las Torres Patagonia.

SATURDAY TORRES DEL PAINE (B, L, D)
JAN 18

Breakfast at the hotel.

Today we continue even more morning and afternoon excursions which may include drives, horseback riding or walks in other parts of the park.

Lunch will be included.

Once again, we return to the hotel in the late afternoon in time for "open-bar" happy hour.

Dinner and overnight at Hotel Las Torres Patagonia.

SUNDAY TORRES DEL PAINE - EL CALAFATE, ARGENTINA (B)
JAN 19

Breakfast at the hotel.

This morning, we board our transfer vehicles and head for the Chile-Argentina border crossing at Cancha Carrera, about 90 minutes away.

We will have an organized stop at the border where we will clear customs and meet our drivers for the continuation of our journey.

There are washrooms available as well as a small café where you will be able to grab a quick lunch or a snack to take along with you.

Welcome to Argentina!

The name "Argentina" comes from the Latin word "argentum" (silver) and has been used since the first so-called "Conquistador" from Spain came to the "Rio de la Plata" (Silver River).

The country has 40 million inhabitants. Many Spanish, Italians, Germans and French immigrated to Argentina, making it the most European-influenced country of the subcontinent.

When we leave the border area, we will start our four-hour drive to El Calafate, a small town with about 8000 inhabitants located on the shore of Lake Argentino.

El Calafate is the entrance to Southern Patagonia and to Los Glaciares National Park. With easy access to the Perito Moreno glacier, there is no better place to hang our hat for a few nights.

Upon arrival, we check in at the hotel. Your tour leader will likely invite you to a late afternoon happy-hour at one of our favourite bars on the main street.

Free for dinner. There are several good restaurants in town and the tour leader will have a few suggestions for you.

Overnight at the Hotel Xelena.

MONDAY EL CALAFATE - PERITO MORENO GLACIER - EL CALAFATE (B, L)
JAN 20

Breakfast at the hotel.

After breakfast, we drive westward to Los Glaciares National Park, a vast area of mountains, lakes and woods including a large portion of the Andes essentially under ice and snow.

The park's name refers to the glaciers that are born on the ice caps; the largest continental ice extension after Antarctica. There are forty-seven big glaciers, thirteen of which flow westward to the Atlantic. There are also more than two hundred smaller glaciers.

The activities today will include a visit to the amazing Perito Moreno glacier which is 5 km wide and 60 m high above Argentino Lake. The face of the glacier is continually calving, creating an extraordinary show for visitors.

The glacier is one of the few in the world which is still advancing, forming a wall which often cuts off water flow from surrounding rivers. Every four or five years the water pressure is so strong that the face of the glacier breaks into multiple pieces, a truly overwhelming spectacle.

A box lunch is included and can be enjoyed in the park, surrounded by this amazing landscape.

On our way home, we'll visit the Glaciarium Museum, the first museum in South America dedicated to the glaciers and Patagonia ice. The whole complex is a modern interpretation center which offers interactive displays as well as an authentic "Ice Bar", where we will enjoy happy-hour.

Afterwards, we return to El Calafate.

Evening free.

Overnight at the Hotel Xelena.

**TUESDAY
JAN 21**

EL CALAFATE (B)

Breakfast at the hotel.

Today and part of tomorrow will be entirely free for you to explore parts of the town of El Calafate on your own or simply to rest and relax at the hotel while enjoying the view of Lago Argentino, the largest freshwater lake in Argentina.

If you wish to explore, the town offers several attractions that you can explore on foot.

You can take a long walk along the shore of Lago Argentino from the hotel. The views of the turquoise waters against the backdrop of the Andes are stunning.

You can walk into the town center and explore Avenida del Libertador, the main street of El Calafate, which is lined with shops, cafes, restaurants and souvenir stores. It's a great place to experience local culture, buy handicrafts, and enjoy some regional cuisine.

One of our favourite places is Laguna Nimez Reserve – just a short walk from the town center. This nature reserve offers walking trails where you can observe a variety of bird species, including flamingos. It's a peaceful spot for nature enthusiasts.

Centro de Interpretación Histórica is a small museum which provides insights into the history, archaeology and paleontology of the region. It's an informative stop to learn more about Patagonia.

Plaza de los Pioneros is a pleasant town square where you can relax and enjoy the local atmosphere. It's surrounded by some interesting historical buildings.

El Calafate Historical Interpretation Center is a museum which offers a deeper understanding of the region's natural and cultural history, with exhibits on geology, flora, fauna, and the indigenous people of Patagonia.

These, and other sites will give you a good mix of natural beauty, local culture and history, making for a fulfilling day in El Calafate.

You may have a bit of extra free time tomorrow as well.

Overnight at the Hotel Xelena.

**WEDNESDAY
JAN 22**

EL CALAFATE - USHUAIA (B, D)

This morning is free to enjoy a leisurely breakfast at the hotel and to repack and get ready for our afternoon flight southbound to the city of Ushuaia.

You will also have some time to continue exploring a few more of the local sites in Calafate.

Free for lunch.

After lunch, we will head to the local airport to catch our flight to Ushuaia, the capital of Tierra del Fuego and the southernmost city in the world, located on the shores of the Beagle Channel surrounded by Le Martial Mountains, sea, glaciers and forest.

Flight AR 1896 departs at 16:05 and arrives at 17:25.

Upon arrival, we check in to our hotel for a two-night stay.

Today you can relax and enjoy our happy hour in the bar and dinner in the dining room at the hotel.

Overnight at Los Cauquenes Hotel.

THURSDAY
JAN 23 **USHUAIA (B, L)**

Breakfast at the hotel.

This morning, we'll explore the town and surroundings including La Mission neighbourhood, the Brown and Solier, the old houses, the Provincial Legislature and the End of the World Museum, which was built in 1903 as a residence and which has been a museum since 1978. There are several rooms with exhibits covering the Yamana natives, ancient shipwrecks, prisoners and a motley collection of birds.

Around lunchtime, we will enjoy lunch together at a local restaurant.

This afternoon we will concentrate on local birds and will aim at seeing not only cormorants, albatrosses, ducks, skuas, petrels and seagulls but we will also try to stop at a local penguin colony. Exact details of our afternoon adventure will be available later.

These activities may extend into the evening.

Free for a late dinner wherever you wish.

Overnight at the Los Cauquenes Hotel.

FRIDAY
JAN 24 **USHUAIA - BUENOS AIRES (B, D)**

Breakfast at the hotel.

Today we head to the airport early and board our flight to the capital, Buenos Aires.

We'll need to remain flexible due to the potential for weather delays and changes in air schedules.

Flight AR 1873 is scheduled to depart at 08:20 and arrive at 11:50.

Welcome to Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina and the center of the political, economic and intellectual life of the country. It is also the most elegant and busy city in South America.

This cosmopolitan city with great European cultural influence displays a refined taste in its cooking, in its boutiques and in the elegance of its inhabitants.

Even with its modern construction and lifestyle, it has managed to preserve the old traditions.

The atmosphere and the individual personality of each of its neighbourhoods, the cordiality of its people and the wide selection of its cultural and commercial opportunities makes it a very special destination for visitors.

Buenos Aires has almost 13 million inhabitants who enjoy the plentiful nightlife visiting tango bars, discotheques, eternally open bars and restaurants.

Upon arrival, we'll transfer to our hotel, well-located within walking distance of downtown attractions. If the flight is on time, we may arrive at the hotel a bit too early to check in, but we'll see how it goes.

Tonight, your tour leader will treat you to happy hour and dinner together at the hotel.

Overnight at the Alvear Art Hotel.

SATURDAY
JAN 25 **BUENOS AIRES (B, L)**

Breakfast at the hotel.

We will spend today and tomorrow exploring the magnificent sites within this beautiful city where the Tango was born!

The exact timing and order of visits will be determined by our guide based on traffic patterns and local events.

Today, we plan to visit the amazing Colon Theatre, a famous 1908 Opera House that features the most important artists and musicians from all over the world. This is one of the world's best-known opera houses and the cultural pride of the "porteños" (as the inhabitants of Buenos Aires are called).

We'll take time to examine the interior of this beautiful building. Materials used in its construction were imported from around the globe and especially impressive is the "Salon de Oro" (Hall of Gold), where crystal chandeliers and opulent wall decorations create an elegant atmosphere.

We will stop for lunch at an appropriate time today in the Palermo neighbourhood.

We also plan to proceed to Recoleta today, the quarter of the rich and one of the city's most glamorous spots offering the Municipal Cultural Center and elegant boutiques and sidewalk cafes.

Recoleta is also well-known for its cemetery, the centre of this aristocratic neighbourhood, where famous politicians, explorers, priests, leaders, writers and poets have found their final resting place. The mausoleums reflect the architectural diversity emerging from the different cultural tendencies Argentina incorporated in its formation as a nation. The cemetery is considered to be one of the most impressive monuments in the entire country. We'll take time for a leisurely walk through the cemetery and visit the tomb of Eva Duarte, who became famous as Eva Perón (Evita).

We then return to the hotel.

Free for dinner.

This evening, we will drive to El Viejo Almacen, the most famous location in Buenos Aires for performances of the Tango and Argentinean classical songs. This famous Tango house is a unique spot thanks to its surroundings and authentic style nourished by a popularity built up through the years. Every night its doors open to welcome outstanding personalities and prominent interpreters of the tango.

The Tango tradition started at the end of the last century and developed from a mixture of various rhythms which were originally danced in the poorer quarters of the city. In the beginning, Tango was only danced by men, accompanied by flutes, violins and guitars. The flutes were later replaced by the "bandoneón" (a type of accordion), which gave the Tango its distinctive flavour. Reflecting the nostalgia and melancholy of mostly European immigrants, the tango introduced us to many great musicians.

Overnight at the Alvear Art Hotel or similar.

SUNDAY JAN 26 **BUENOS AIRES (B, L, D)**

Breakfast at the hotel.

Today, we plan to visit the La Boca neighbourhood, home of the La Boca Juniors and the oldest and most colourful neighbourhood in Buenos Aires - a working-class enclave and artist colony. The area was settled and built by Italian immigrants that worked in the surrounding warehouses and meatpacking plants. The most famous street in La Boca is called Caminito (little path) and is the center of activity in the area. The street is commonly included on postcards for its multi-coloured houses. Many artists show off their work along the street.

We will also visit the famous Avenida de Mayo that runs into the Plaza De Mayo, surrounded by the Casa Rosada (Government House), the Metropolitan Cathedral and the Cabildo, the first city hall built during Spanish rule. At the other end of Avenida de Mayo we will also see the Congress building.

From the plaza, we will enter the Metropolitan Cathedral, an imposing Neo-classical structure and Argentina's main catholic church. The mausoleum of General San Martin (a national hero) is located inside the cathedral. Pope Francis used to celebrate religious services in this cathedral when he was Cardinal of Buenos Aires.

From here, we head for the famous Café Tortoni, the oldest literati café in the city where we'll have lunch.

Then we continue on to San Telmo, a historical neighbourhood and the oldest district of Buenos Aires. Here, we can enjoy the antiques market and the lively Sunday atmosphere of street musicians and tango.

Afterwards we return to the hotel.

Tonight, we'll have a complementary happy hour and our farewell dinner together in the vibrant Puerto Madero neighbourhood.

Overnight at the Alvear Art Hotel or similar.

MONDAY JAN 27 **BUENOS AIRES – DEPARTURE (B)**

Breakfast at the hotel.

Part of this morning is entirely free to allow guests to prepare for the trip home or on to their next destination.

Some may wish to do some last-minute shopping. Others may prefer to explore parts of town on their own or visit museums or galleries. Some may simply opt to relax at the hotel.

At an appropriate time, transfers will be provided to the airport for the flight home.

If you are proceeding on an optional add-on to Iguazu Falls, your transfer will be at a different time today.

End of itinerary