

The Contrasts of Chile

Christine Tsai marvels at Chile's variety of destinations

Covering 4,300 km (2,700 miles) of the western coast of South America, Chile is situated between the Andes and the Pacific Ocean. From the Atacama Desert to Cape Horn, Chile has a diverse range of climates and geographies making it the perfect place for the adventurous traveler. With rolling farmland, lush vineyards, world-class ski resorts, sandy white or rocky beaches and a fertile river valley, there is much to explore.

The country was colonized by three Spaniards in the 16th century, so many of Chile's people are mestizos, or descendants from the marriages between Spanish settlers and indigenous groups, such as the Aymara and the Mapuche. The population also consists of many immigrants from other European countries; however, Spanish has remained the official language while some native languages are still spoken.

Although it is only just celebrating 20 years of democracy, it has a thriving economy and a dynamic female President, Michelle Bachelet.

The capital, Santiago, is a sophisticated, cosmopolitan city which is home to more than five million people, and offers a wealth of history and culture with churches dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries and museums fit for any art aficionado. In stark contrast, the southern province of Patagonia, another tourist favorite, offers breathtaking landscapes with islands, mountains, icebergs and glaciers. Shared with Argentina, Patagonia in Chile consists of the areas of Aisen and Magallanes with its famous city of Puenta Arenas, which is located on the Pacific side of the Magellan Strait, and is only accessible by air or through Argentina. It is full of historical attractions, such as the Museo Salesiano de Mayonino Borgatello, showcasing artifacts collected from the region by an order of Italian missionaries, or the Centro Cultural Braun-Menendèz

in the mansion of a successful Puentas Arenas trading family. Spanish language learners can experience high-quality instruction and a rich culture, regardless of where they are in Chile.

Berlitz has six locations in Chile, including one in Santiago. Founded by Maximilian Berlitz, he developed the Berlitz Method to teaching Spanish which requires instructors to use a conversational approach based on listening and speaking. Emphasis is placed on practical vocabulary and grammar in the context of real life situations through reading and writing activities.

Located in the neighborhood of Providencia, a combination of modern, high-rise buildings and quiet, tree-lined residential streets, is **BridgeChile**. Just a five-minute walk from the school is one of the city's most popular night spots, Suecia, where there are more than 50 restaurants and nightclubs all within a five-square-block area.

BridgeChile offers a wide-range of courses for students of any age, including courses for young adults, working professionals, families, and retirees. It is a member of the American-Chilean Chamber of Commerce.

With locations in Santiago, Argentina and Peru, **ECELA** offers group and private Spanish courses, volunteer and internship programs, and a Spanish-Medical course, which combines the Spanish immersion program with medical-specific Spanish and cultural training. ECELA also offers special interest courses and electives such as Spanish composition, literature and culture, as well as business and law-specific Spanish. Because Santiago, is located at the foot of the Andes Mountains, ECELA offers a Spanish and Ski program where students receive two lift tickets per week as well as transportation to the slopes in addition to their classes.