

Christine Tsai explores South America in search of the perfect Spanish immersion destination

Spanish in the Southern Hemisphere



Chile

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 beaches, and a fertile river valley, there is much to explore.

The country was colonized by Spain 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. Chile also received many immigrants from other European countries. 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.

Students of **ECELA** who study in Santiago — or any of the five ECELA schools spread throughout Argentina, Chile, and Peru — discover the local culture and accent in classes led by credentialed, native Spanish-speaking instructors. A world of opportunities exists outside of the small classroom environment, and ECELA-led excursions take students everywhere: from the mountains to the shores, to the dance floors, the vineyards, and the futbol stadiums to immerse students in the language and the vibrant cultures of Latin America. Students are also encouraged to study at the different ECELA school locations to gain a more complete South American perspective.

The philosophy of **Escuela de Idiomas Violeta Parra** is to teach languages by bringing people together instead of using technology. The school implements this philosophy by providing opportunities for Spanish students to meet Chileans in order for the students to practice their Spanish by speaking directly to people who speak the language. In

addition to the language courses, the school also offers special eco-tourism weekend trips and daytrips.

As a member of the Tandem International Network, which ensures quality standards, the school uses the Tandem Language Method, where students have a set amount of time for language exchange in groups and on an individual basis.

ViaSpanish School, located in the Bellavista district of Santiago, has a Spanish-only policy on school grounds. All classes are held in Spanish and only Spanish is spoken during the entire class. This policy encourages all students, even beginners, to start practicing their skills actively from day one.

Students have a choice of group or individual courses. Class sizes are kept to a maximum of six students. For those students who want to make the most out of their time in Santiago, the school offers combined courses, consisting of group classes in the morning and individual classes in the afternoon. In addition, free weekly extracurricular activities are offered to all students.

In Santiago's Las Condes area, with its architecturally fascinating skyscrapers, is **Woodward Chile**, which is conveniently located near most of the foreign embassies. The school allows students the flexibility of choosing their own class schedule, which is great for diplomats and businessmen with erratic schedules. Classes are limited to six students.

Colombia

Colombia, at the northwestern tip of South America, has the third largest Spanish-speaking population in the world after Mexico and Spain. It is ethnically diverse, and the interaction between descendants of the original native inhabitants, Spanish colonists, African slaves

