

Chile: Santiago, Wine Country, Easter Island

10 days

Tour Description

Stretching hundreds of miles north and south along the Pacific Ocean, Chile is a country of great diversity in terrain and geography from desolate moonscapes to glacier-fed fjords, from the northern deserts to fertile wine lands and lush mountains and rainforests. The major cities have a European feel with lively neighborhoods, great shopping for antiques, alpaca sweaters or rare lapis, and fine eateries featuring fresh shellfish and the national drink, Pisco.

About 2300 miles off the coast is the remote Polynesian archipelago featuring the giant Moai sculptures found on Easter Island – one of the most isolated places on Earth. The monolithic statues were carved from compressed volcanic ash, many half-buried which aided in their preservation. Stargazing is also one of the favorite pastimes here due to the reliably clear, dry skies.

Highlights

- ❖ **Museum Chileno de Arte Pre-Columbian – famous for its pre-Columbian art**
- ❖ **View of the city from Cerro San Cristobal – 72 foot statue of the Virgin Mary**
- ❖ **Wine tour and tasting near Vina del Mar and Cachapoal Valley**
- ❖ **Giant Moai statues on Easter Island including the biggest one: Akahanga**
- ❖ **Rano Kao volcano, Cultural Center of Orongo**

Sample Tour Itinerary

Santiago – 2 nights

Day 1: Arrive in Santiago

Upon arrival, you will be met at the airport by our local representative who will escort you to your hotel via private coach. We will start our visit of Santiago with a light snack in Providencia, an area popular with Chilean artists, intellectuals. We'll tour Barrio Bellavista and Plaza de Armas, then prepare to be awed by the Museum Chileno de Arte, one of the finest for Pre-Columbian art in the world. Next, enjoy a seafood lunch, followed by a panoramic view of the city from Cerro San Cristobal, site of the 72-foot Virgin Mary. A welcome dinner is the final touch to the day.

Day 2: Wine Tour in Cachapoal Valley

We'll drive south to the paradise that's home to about a dozen of Chile's most important wineries set against the backdrop of the Andes Mountains. A wine guide in the small town of Requinoa explains the culture, people, fruit plantations and wines of the area. In the morning, visit 2 wineries to see the elaborate processes of different wine production followed by tastings. Enjoy lunch at Casa Porta Winery, followed by a wine lesson from a sommelier.

Vina del Mar – 2 nights

Day 3: Wine Tour and Tasting en route to Vina del Mar

Our tour today takes us west through rich vineyards to the coastal resort town of Vina del Mar. First we'll visit the nearby port city of Valparaiso, a UNESCO site nicknamed the "Jewel of the Pacific" for its labyrinth of twisting cobblestone alleyways. From here we'll head to William Cole Winery for a Chilean BBQ lunch in the vineyards, then to Casas del Bosque Winery for a tasting. Our afternoon ends at the trendy coastal resort town of Vina del Mar.

Day 4: Coastal excursion

Heading north up the coast, the dramatic scenery unfolds as the beautiful beaches frame the Pacific Ocean. The town of Concon provides a great vantage point to take in the expansive views. There are pirate stories about life around Quintero and Horcón; cove is lined with fishermen and craftsmen. A leisurely trip ends back at Vina del Mar where you can relax on the beach.

Santiago – 1 night**Day 5 Return to Santiago**

Our journey takes us back across this narrow country to the city for some free time in Santiago. This evening's dinner is at the famed Astrid y Gaston where the chef uses the finest ingredients with French, Spanish, Peruvian and Japanese influences. The long wine list keeps your sommelier busy showing off his local wines.

Easter Island – 4 nights**Day 6: Flight to Easter Island (Rapa Nui)**

Today we depart on a morning flight to Mataverí Airport where you'll be greeted with flower or shell necklaces. In the afternoon you are free to enjoy the unique surroundings of this outpost in the Pacific Ocean. The islands are known for their world-famous colossal statues known as moai. These monolithic human figures were carved from rock between 1250 and 1500 AD and their construction is considered a remarkable creative and physical feat.

Day 7: Explore the Moai Route

Today we depart for a tour along the Moai Route: visit Vaihu, where the enormous statues have fallen face down; see the ruins of Akahanga, which are in their natural condition and where the first king of the island was buried; see the Rano Raraku volcano at the Basis of Poike, the most spectacular crater in the zone and where the former island-people carved the giant statues from the volcano's quarry. View Ahu Tongariki in Anakena, with 15 moais that were destroyed by a tidal wave in 1960. We will have free time to enjoy the warm sea waters that surround the island and have lunch at a local restaurant before returning to the hotel in the early evening.

Day 8: Volcano excursion

Our half-day tour takes you to Orongo, visiting the Rano Kao volcano, whose deep crater of lush vegetation contains a large fresh water lake covered with totora (a reed common to Lake Titicaca). From there, we will continue onto the Cultural Center of Orongo, situated at the top of the crater at over 300 meters above sea level and where year after year the Bird Man or Tangata Manu ceremony takes place. See more than 100 petroglyphs which represent the Make-Make God and the Manutara seabird amongst others. Next, proceed to Ana Kai Tangata and Ahu Vinapu, where the interesting architectural style is reminiscent of the Inca's handiwork. This is due to the location of the stones and perfection of the cuts. The balance of the day free on our own in this idyllic paradise.

Day 9 Ahu Akivi excursion

Today's half-day excursion takes in the incredible Ahu Akivi, the big platform, which is composed of seven moais, all of them facing the sea. We'll also see the Ana Tepahu caverns, the quarry of Puna Pau, where the top part of the Moais were sculpted and Ahu Tahai. Return to the hotel for an afternoon of relaxation on your own.

Day 10: Departure

After breakfast, catch the flight back to Santiago to connect to your flight home

INCLUSIONS

- Accommodations: Santiago 3 nights, Vina del Mar 2 nights, Easter Island 4 nights
- Continental breakfast daily
- Ground transportation via air conditioned luxury coach
- English speaking assistants and guides
- Admission tickets as outlined in the itinerary