



S W  O P

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A short guide to Chile

For visitors to Torres del Paine

Dear traveller...

We are so excited about your upcoming trip to Patagonia with Swoop and our partners.

On our numerous travels through Patagonia over many years, the Swoop team has gathered all sorts of great tips for travellers. We've put together this guide to share them with you – recommendations about our favourite cafés and restaurants, information to help you get around Patagonia, and a handful of insider tips for each of the places you may visit when you head to Torres del Paine.

This is by no means a full-blown travel guide, but it should give you the pointers you need to have a more authentic experience.

We look forward to hearing your stories and tips when you return.

Best wishes,



Harriet

PATAGONIA SPECIALIST

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Things to learn about Chile before you go



Who was Bernardo O'Higgins?

You're more than likely to see at least one street named O'Higgins while exploring Chile, and most likely many more. Why the tribute? Well, Bernardo O'Higgins is considered to be the liberator of Chile from Spanish rule in the early 1800s. In 1817, he led forces with the Argentine general José de San Martín and defeated the Spanish by an impressive crossing of the Andes in a surprise attack.

Although the citizens of Santiago elected San Martín as the new leader of Chile, he stepped down and O'Higgins took his place. He was the first 'supreme director' of the newly independent country and organised a new working government during the course of the six years he was in power.

How do I drink *mate*?

Drinking *mate* (pronounced 'mah-tay') is commonplace in Chile and is a great way to meet people and start the day after a night drinking pisco sours! *Mate* is prepared by filling a cup (traditionally a calabash gourd) with dried leaves of yerba, then covering the leaves with hot water and drinking it through a straw called a *bombilla*. Metal *bombillas* let you check the water isn't so hot that it'll burn your tongue.

There is etiquette around sharing *mate*. The *mate* is prepared by the *cebador*, who drinks the first brew. He/she then hands the cup to his/her right – that person drinks the whole cup and then gives it back to the *cebador* to refill. If you say *gracias*, it implies that you've had enough *mate* and you won't be given another cup in the next round!

What is *pisco*?

A bar staple and a national favourite, Chileans claim that *pisco* – an alcohol made from distilled grapes – was born in their country. However, Peruvians strongly disagree and claim it as their own. The confusion dates way back to the 1500s, when both Peru and Chile were under Spanish viceroyalty rule and the border between the two countries did not exist. Chileans believe that an ancient population, the Aymaras, made *pisco* in Valle De Elquir (later named Pisco Elqui) on Chilean land. Peruvians, on the other hand, cite the port city of Pisco (dating to pre-Hispanic rule) to defend their claim.

Whatever the truth may be, a pisco sour (*pisco* with lime/lemon juice, syrup, ice, egg white and bitters) is definitely something to try, or even a *piscola* (*pisco* and Coca cola). Just watch out for the consequences the next morning!



What's with all the estancias in Patagonia?

As you travel through the vast pampas of Patagonia, you'll see fences weaving through the landscape, a jumble of barbed wire and wood. These mark the boundaries of the numerous estancias – or ranches – that dot the landscape.

Many date back to the 1800s, when Europeans claimed broad swaths of the challenging land to raise sheep and cattle.

The estancias are nothing without their ranchers, who care for the sheep, horses and cows. In the Argentine pampas they are known as *gauchos*, but in Chile, they are *baqueanos*. Neither of these terms should be confused with *huaso*, which refers to ranchers outside of the Magallanes region of Chile.

What Chilean slang should I know?

The national language of Chile is Spanish, but Chilean Spanish is quite different from the European version.

For example, Chileans often conjugate the *tú* form differently, so that *estás* becomes *estai* e.g. *¿Cómo estás?* becomes *¿Cómo estái?*, and *hablas* becomes *hablai*.

Here are a few of our favourite Chilenismos – phrases that you only hear in Chile.

al tiro – right now

pololo/polola – boyfriend/girlfriend (*novio/novia* refers to a fiancé/fiancée)

palta – avocado

po – similar to *pues*, it's a filler word that's often added onto *sí* or *no* for emphasis: *Sí po!*

huevon/huevona – this can be an extremely insulting word in the right context, or it can be a way to greet a close friend

cachai? – do you understand? did you get that?

bakán – cool, awesome

fome – boring

¿Qué onda? – What's up?

Swoop says

Men meet each other with a firm handshake and women greet both men and women with a kiss on the right cheek.



How to get to Patagonia

Patagonia is a remote region, roughly 1,500km south of the nearest capital cities, Santiago and Buenos Aires, one of which will be your point of arrival if travelling internationally. There are over a dozen smaller airports throughout Patagonia, but flights to and from them don't cross country borders.

	TO ARGENTINA	TO CHILE
UK	You can fly direct from London Heathrow to Buenos Aires. Indirect flights, via Madrid, the USA or Brazil are usually cheaper, but are longer and add a risk around connections.	You can fly direct from London Heathrow to Santiago. You can also fly via Madrid.
USA	There are flights to Buenos Aires from a number of major airports in the USA (JFK, Miami, Dallas, Atlanta), either direct or with a stop.	There are flights to Santiago from a number of major airports in the USA (JFK, LAX, Miami, Dallas, Atlanta), direct or with a stop.
CANADA	There are direct flights to Buenos Aires from Toronto, but from elsewhere in Canada, you'll either need to travel to Toronto or take a flight which stops in the USA.	There are direct flights to Santiago from Toronto, but from elsewhere in Canada, you'll either need to travel to Toronto or take a flight which stops in the USA.
AUSTRALIA	There are no direct flights to Buenos Aires. Fly from Sydney to Santiago and then take a connecting flight to Buenos Aires.	There are direct flights four times a week from Sydney to Santiago. Alternatively fly to Auckland, NZ, and to Santiago from there.
NEW ZEALAND	There are no direct flights to Buenos Aires. Fly from Auckland to Santiago then take a connecting flight to Buenos Aires.	You can fly direct to Santiago from Auckland.

Travelling around Chile

By bus

The buses in Patagonia are surprisingly comfortable and have come a long way in recent years.

Travelling by bus is a good budget option for getting around Chile, providing wonderful views of the passing scenery. Generally speaking, buses are safe and comfortable.

Overnight services offer a catering service of dinner, breakfast and drinks.

There are four different styles of seats available:

- **clásico** – traditional seat, reclines up to 130°, like an airline seat
- **semi-cama** – more space between rows, seat reclines up to 140°, foot rest, blanket and pillow provided, hostess service
- **cama** – like semi-cama but seat reclines up to 155° and softer seat
- **premium/(super)deluxe** – like cama but seat reclines up to 170° and wider seat

By boat

Naviera Austral offer ferry services from Puerto Montt on various routes through the fjords. They operate two basic boats, which have rows of semi-reclining seats.

There is a simple cafeteria serving drinks and snacks. The boats are slow but it is a wonderful way to travel if you have the time.

Navimag operate a ferry service between Puerto Montt and Puerto Natales (see more details in Getting to Puerto Natales).

The journey of 4 days 3 nights is mostly calm, although there is one stretch of open water crossing that can be very choppy.

You can book a private or shared cabin and meals are included in the ticket price.

By plane

The distances in Chile are vast, and flying is often the best option for travelling around.

The two main operators for internal flights are Sky Airline and LATAM Airlines (also known as LAN).

Always give yourself much more time than you think you need for transfers and connections.

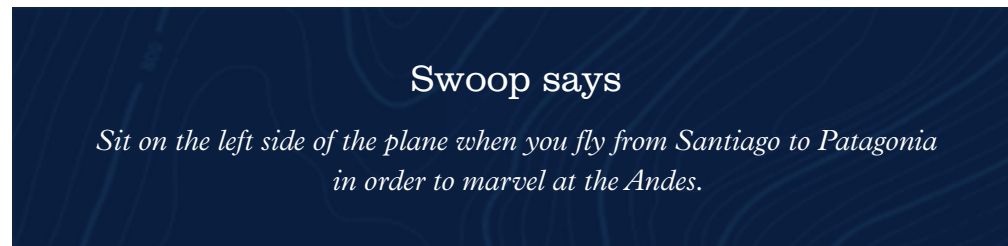
At Santiago airport, leave at least three hours between connecting flights.

From Santiago you can fly to Punta Arenas year round. Alternatively, in the summer months you can fly direct to Puerto Natales, although there is only a limited schedule of flights.

By private transfer

Private transfers do save a lot of time and take you to exactly where you want to be, but they can be very expensive.

It's an extra cost, but for some travellers avoiding the hassle is more than worth it.





Getting to Puerto Natales

Puerto Natales is the gateway to Torres del Paine. How you get there largely depends on where you are travelling from.

Crossing the border from Argentina is either time-consuming or very expensive. Travelling from Chile is by far the better option. There are no direct flights from Buenos Aires to Punta Arenas or Puerto Natales – you would have to take a connecting flight via Santiago.

From Santiago

There are direct flights from Santiago to Puerto Natales. Flying into Puerto Natales airport will save you three hours on the road, but scheduled flights are limited and somewhat unreliable.

From Punta Arenas

A much better bet is to fly into Punta Arenas, which has regular flights to and from Santiago – these flights often stop in Puerto Montt.

From Punta Arenas there are regular and reliable buses to Puerto Natales which take approximately 3 hours.

- From the airport we recommend Buses Pacheco.
- From the town centre we recommend Bus-Sur or Buses Fernandez.

From El Calafate

Arriving from Argentina, El Calafate is the main stopover before the park.

- The bus is the cheapest way to cross the border from El Calafate and takes 5–6 hours. Morning departures run every day, afternoon departures Mon, Wed, Fri in high season.
- A private transfer can take you directly to the park (around 7 hours) but it is expensive (around \$750).

From Puerto Montt

Navimag operate a ferry service between Puerto Montt and Puerto Natales. For more details see page 6.

Guide to Santiago

In the last 10 years Santiago has gone from being an uninviting and drab city to a place with great restaurants, museums and a warm, energetic vibe. If you've only got a few days in the city, make the most of your time with our favourite things to do and places to see.



Arriving in Santiago and getting around

Arriving in Santiago

To get from the airport into the city (if you have not previously arranged a private transfer), we recommend taking a shared minibus. There are lots of transport companies operating outside both international and domestic terminals.

- A very reliable company to go for is TransVIP – they run an efficient service with very clean and comfortable minibuses.
- They will have several vehicles available, each going to different parts of the city.
- The cost for one journey is around CLP 11,000 or USD \$15.
- Journeys into the city usually take approximately 30-40 minutes, depending on your final destination.

If you arrive at rush hour (between 7–9am or 5–7pm) traffic can be terrible, and you should expect to add up to another hour onto your journey time. You can also get one of the transport companies to order a taxi for you, and they will confirm the cost of the ride.

Do not get in a taxi soliciting business inside the arrivals hall or outside the airport – it is highly likely that you will be ripped off.

We would not recommend getting a bus from the airport. The proliferation of different routes and companies means they are very chaotic, and it can be challenging working out which bus to take and where to get off in the city.

Swoop says

Keep your passport and large sums of cash in your hotel safe or room if you plan to travel by public transport in Santiago. It is much safer there than in your pocket.

Subway

The subway is a good option to get around the city. You will need a *Bip!* card, which you can buy at any of the subway stations. The initial cost of the card is CLP\$1500. The minimum top up is CLP\$1000; a single journey is approx. CLP\$680.

Trains and platforms are labelled with the end destination, rather than the direction of travel. Avoid rush hour!

Bus

You can also use *Bip!* cards to travel on city buses, most of which do not accept cash. There are two main bus terminals in Santiago, located about four blocks apart.

- Terminal Alameda (international bus station, by Universidad de Santiago metro stop)
- Terminal San Borja (for local and domestic buses)

The bus stations are very busy. Keep a very close eye on your belongings – thieves and pickpockets do operate here.

For long distance bus journeys, to avoid complicated conversations in Spanish at the bus station, buy your tickets online ahead of travel here.

If you plan to visit Valparaíso from Santiago, there are very frequent buses (up to 10 services an hour). The journey takes around 1hr 45mins.

Taxi

Yellow and black taxis in Santiago are generally safe and efficient. The taxis all run on a meter which starts at about CLP\$ 500 – a short trip in the city will cost you about CLP\$ 3,000. It's normal to round up your fare to leave as a tip.

Uber also operate in the city.

Insider tips for Santiago

Get your bearings on a Tour 4 Tips

It can be hard to get your bearings when you arrive in a big city and we love the authenticity of Tours 4 Tips for helping you hit the ground running.

This is a budget tour – meet your Wally (guide dressed in a red and white stripey t-shirt) outside the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes for an introduction to their city with plenty of local insight, then tip your guide whatever you think the tour is worth. They are great fun! Tours 4 Tips also run tours in Valparaíso. Alternatively Bicicleta Verde run guided bicycle tours around Santiago.

Enjoy panoramic views

Admire how Santiago really is nestled within a bowl of mountains. To reach Cerro San Cristobal, take the funicular from Bellavista (Pio Nono street) or the cable car from Providencia (Pedro de Valdivia Norte street). Alternatively, visit the Costanera Centre – the highest building in Latin America at 300 metres – and take the lift to the top.

Shop like a local

Soak up the exciting, bustling market vibes at La Vega. The market is packed with people and incredible food in equal measure; be prepared for the crowds and protect your personal belongings, especially in the mornings.

Sample fresh foods arriving from the desert in the north and the lush green valleys of the lake district – the experience is an adventure in every sense.



Try *mote con huesillo*

This typical drink is sold by street vendors on hot summer days. Served ice cold, made with peach nectar, a dried whole peach (*huesillo*) and cooked husk wheat (*mote*). Watch out for the stone in the peach!

There is a great little kiosk just below the top of the Cerro Santa Lucia which serves it fresh – we recommend taking in the view with this sweet refreshment to hand.

Find the best coffee in Santiago

In a city with an abundance of chain cafes and Nescafe, really good coffee can be hard to find.

Here are our top picks for your caffeine fix: **Metissage** (Av Vitacura 3187, Vitacura), **Fix Café** (Av. Apoquindo 3411, Las Condes), **Xoco por ti** (Av. Italia 1439, Providencia) and **Castillo Forestal** (Parque Forestal, in front of the Museo de Bellas Artes).

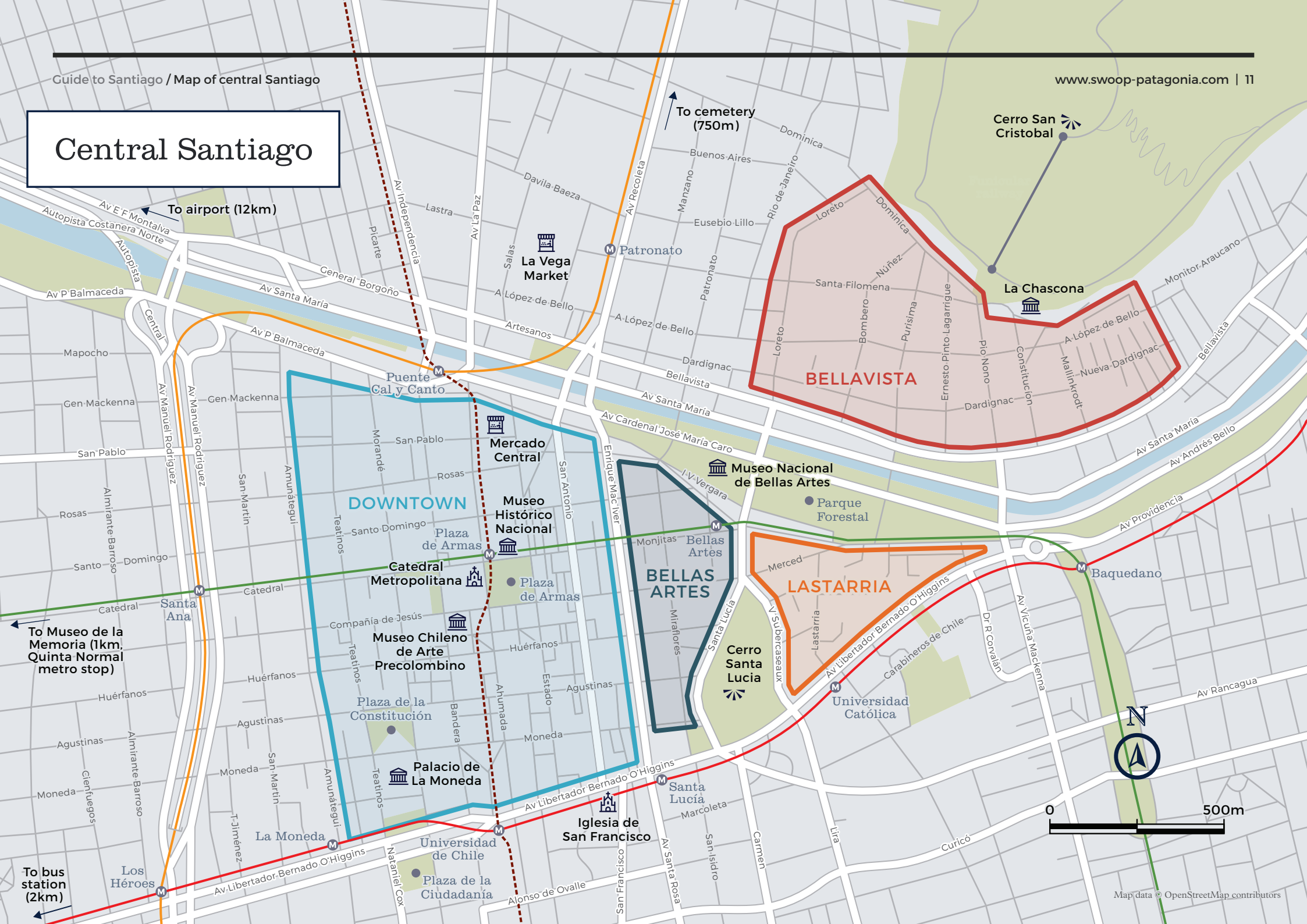
Immerse yourself in street art

While Valparaíso is often cited for its amazing street art, Santiago's street art scene is bursting with creativity, talent and colour.

You can see some of the best street art in Santiago at Barrio Bellavista.

Expect a fascinating variety of murals, painted both in resistance to the military dictatorship as well as during the New Art Revolution. Visiting during daylight hours is a must!

Central Santiago



To airport (12km)

To cemetery (750m)

To Museo de la Memoria (1km, Quinta Normal metro stop)

To bus station (2km)

Cerro San Cristobal

La Chascona

BELLAVISTA

DOWNTOWN

BELLAS ARTES

LASTARRIA



Restaurants and hotels in Santiago



To airport & Santiago Airport Holiday Inn (13km)

To Borogo (2km)

Puente Cal y Canto

Plaza de Armas

To bus station (3km)

Cerro San Cristobal

The Aubrey

Castillo Rojo

Galindo

The Singular

Luciano K

Como Agua para Chocolate

Liguria

Bocanáz

Cumbres

Lastarria Boutique

Su Merced

Aquí Está Coco

Baco

Park Plaza

Meridiano Sur

Pedro de Valdivia

Bellas Artes

Plaza de Armas

Palacio La Moneda

Universidad de Chile

Universidad Católica

Curicó

Baquadano

Av Rancagua

Parque Bustamante



	Budget		No frills
	Midrange		Boutique
	Something special		Upmarket
	Something special		Something special

Where to eat and stay in Santiago

Our restaurant recommendations

BUDGET

Galindo (Bellavista) A place sure to serve up large portions of authentic Chilean food. Packed with locals, inexpensive and in a fun neighbourhood for a drink afterwards.

MIDRANGE

Bocanáriz (Lastarria) This is the place to experience the very best in Chilean wine – their selection is unrivalled. The food is delicious too. A great addition to this quirky neighbourhood.

Liguria (Lastarria) Excellent quality food, a buzzing atmosphere, and a traditional Chilean menu. Take your dictionary! Four locations but the Lastarria option is probably most convenient to your hotel. Try the house pisco sours!

Como Agua para Chocolate (Bellavista) Delicious fish and meat dishes, great wine selection, wonderful decor and atmosphere. Staff generally speak very good English.

Baco (Providencia) Fantastic wine, a range of tapas style food and great steaks.

SOMETHING SPECIAL

Borago (Vitacura) One of Santiago's most famous restaurants. They have tasting menus from 5–18 courses with an innovative twist on traditional Chilean cuisine – all are wine paired.

Aquí Está Coco (Providencia) For 40 years, owner/chef Coco has been serving up delicious fish and seafood dishes. The restaurant is split between different dining rooms, each with their own name. The wine list is also really impressive!



A guide to Santiago's neighbourhoods

Here's our lowdown on the best neighbourhoods to stay in for every type of traveller.

Barrio Lastarria This old, historic neighbourhood, which is little more than a few streets, has the feel of a village but is located in the hustle and bustle of central Santiago. It has great restaurants and cafes, artistic independent shops and is within walking distance of the Plaza de Armas, Museo de Bellas Artes and the neighbourhood of Bellavista. On a Saturday and Sunday it also has a fun little antiques market.

Barrio Bellavista Nestled under the Cerro San Cristobal, Bellavista is a neighbourhood of contrasts – student bars selling cheap beer in litre bottles sit next door to fine dining restaurants. Known as Santiago's bohemian quarter, the area is full of artist studios, avant-garde galleries, and bars and clubs providing live music.

Barrio Providencia / Las Condes Providencia is the first residential neighbourhood that you reach outside of the city centre. It has plenty of bars, restaurants, cafes and is on the metro line 1 (the red line), just a short trip into central Santiago. Providencia is safer and calmer than the city centre and is a short taxi ride away from the neighbourhoods of Bellavista and the more affluent Las Condes and Vitacura.

Swoop says

Look out for menu del día signs at lunch time; this will be a cheap and wholesome 2 or 3 course meal.

Guide to Valparaíso

Valparaíso – or Valpo, as it is affectionately known by locals – is a major port. It is a little rough around the edges and has long been one of Chile's poorer cities. So, why visit, you might be wondering?

For its eclectic mix of UNESCO protected architecture, multi-coloured houses, turn-of-the-century funiculars that still transport people up to the surrounding hills, world-class street art and delicious fresh seafood.

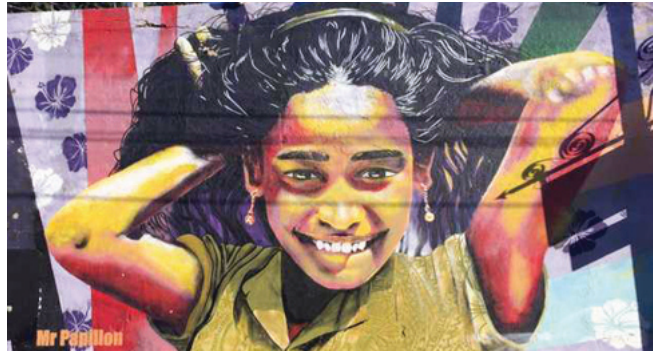
Just two hours from Santiago, this lively and bustling historic port city is totally unique: colourful, culturally fascinating, and an engineering marvel of houses cascading down hillsides, all set with the glistening Pacific Ocean as its backdrop.



Insider tips for Valparaíso

Discover the city's street art

You can't miss Valpo's graffiti and street art or murals – it's everywhere, from small tags to whole sides of buildings. Many of Chile's most famous street artists were born and raised in Valpo. If you fancy a city tour with a difference, there are graffiti and street art tours available – some even give you the option to try your hand at your own mural. Try Valpo Street Art Tours and tip the guide what you think the tour is worth.



Visit the house of Pablo Neruda

For many, the main reason to visit Valpo and the surrounding countryside is for the opportunity to visit the homes of Pablo Neruda, the winner of the 1971 Nobel Prize for Literature. He was a prominent political character in Chile, eccentric in his style of living and the author of some truly beautiful poetry. Many of his poems talk of Chile and Valparaíso. There is something quite special about reading a poem describing the port city, whilst looking out over it from the very desk at which the poem was written.



Ride trolley buses and funiculars

Exploring Valpo's maze of alleyways is great fun. Ride on the oldest trolleybuses in service in the world and the city's 16 somewhat-shaky-but-safe funiculars – try the Artillería for great views of the city and El Peral, Reina Victoria & La Concepción) for the best access to and from Cerro Alegre and Cerro Concepción. Tours for Tips offer a guided tour.



Learn to cook Chilean style

Valpo has undergone a food explosion in the last ten years, with new restaurants popping up all over the place serving incredible food – the seafood is particularly good. Learn to prepare Chilean classics such as pisco sours, empanadas and spicy *pebre* sauce for yourself in a cookery class – you'll be taking some Chilean culture home with you!

Visit a Casablanca Valley vineyard

As you drive from Santiago towards Valparaíso, the last valley you pass through before making your final descent to the port is the Casablanca Valley, famous for its white wines and Pinot Noir. There are plenty of vineyards you could visit en route or even use Valpo as a base to spend the day visiting a number of the premium wineries in the area. You will need to book a tour to visit any of the vineyards and we recommend booking through Uncorked Wine Tours.

Hike in La Campana National Park

Get out of the bustle and go hiking in the 8,000 hectare La Campana national park. It is one of the only places you can still find the Chilean palm and it also boasts the highest mountains in the Coastal mountain range. The Chilean Palm doesn't flower until it is at least 60 years old and can live for 1,000 years. There are numerous hiking trails, but the most famous is the trail to the summit of Cerro Campana.

Where to eat and drink

Valparaíso has no shortage of seafood restaurants, quirky little local restaurants, or rooftop terraces for sitting out on sipping pisco sours. Most of the best restaurants are located on Cerro Alegre and Cerro Concepción, which are also a safe bet for walking around at night. However, we would only recommend visiting restaurants in the downtown centre or in the harbour at lunch time.

CAFÉ

Amor Porteño The best ice-cream in town! A range of unusual flavours such as gin and lemon, or vegan chocolate. Also good for a teatime treat of hot chocolate and cake.

MIDRANGE

Fauna Restaurant On the roof of the hotel with the same name, this café/restaurant is a great lunch option, or go for a drink as the sun sets over the bay.

Bote Salvavidas Translated as ‘The Lifeboat’, this restaurant is right in the harbour. With a balcony that hovers over the water, enjoy front row seats of the boats coming and going, or spot numerous sea birds (pelicans, terns, boobies). Good fresh fish and seafood. NB only visit this area at lunchtime.

Taulat With more of a pub/bar feel, this quirky tapas bar is a great snack option. The rooftop bar is a great location to sip a pisco sour as you watch the lights of Valpo come on at night.

SOMETHING SPECIAL

Apice Cocina de Mar Arguably some of the best fish and seafood in Valpo with an interesting modern twist.

Café Turri Great fish and seafood but slightly more traditional than Apice. Wonderful views over the harbour and ocean from the outside terrace.

Restaurant La Concepción Right next door to Turri, also a great option for fish, seafood and local meat dishes. Housed in a restored original building with plenty of character.

Swoop says

The majority of Valparaíso hotels will classify their rooms according to the view – if you are set on a sea view, make sure you choose the category of your room with care or ask specifically about the view.



Guide to Punta Arenas

On the surface, Punta Arenas is a large, uninspiring port town and we'd always recommend spending spare time in Puerto Natales rather than Punta Arenas. However, if you do end up with an afternoon to spare in Punta Arenas, it is worth delving into the city's fascinating history.

Punta Arenas was originally founded as a fort, spent a few decades as a penal colony and then boomed as a major port during the late 19th century, when the Magellanes region became one of the main sheep-rearing regions in the world. When the Panama canal was built, Punta Arenas was no longer located on a major shipping route and its importance as a port diminished.

You can walk around the main sights and viewpoints of the city in half a day. With a full day, you might like to venture beyond the city and take an organised excursion with a group to see birds, penguins or go kayaking.



Insider tips for Punta Arenas

Enjoy the architecture around Plaza Muñoz Gamero

When Punta Arenas was thriving, the Europeans that had settled there started to live it up – evidence of this can be found in the vast and elaborate mansions around Plaza Muñoz Gamero. These include the government buildings and cathedral. To see inside one of these mansions and learn about this area, visit the free Centro Cultural Braun-Menéndez. For some good luck on your trip, rub or kiss the toe of the statue of the indigenous Ona man at Magellan's feet in the centre of the Plaza!



Meet the only king penguin colony outside the sub-Antarctic islands

In 2010 a colony of king penguins established itself in Bahía Inútil ('Useless Bay') in Tierra del Fuego and continues to grow. It is a very long day trip but a unique experience. To get there take a short flight or ferry from Punta Arenas to Porvenir and then drive 2.5 hours to the King Penguin Park. We'd recommend joining a tour from Punta Arenas.

Discover the role of Punta Arenas in Antarctic exploration at the Shackleton Bar

Located in the basement of the Hotel Jose Nogueira, this speakeasy-style bar has the best selection of wines and spirits. An array of photos lines the walls, telling the tale of Shackleton's exploration and rescue in Antarctica.



Learn about the natural and human history of Patagonia

The Museo Regional Salesiano Maggiorino Borgatello is considered one of the most complete on the natural and human history of Patagonia. Its four storeys house a collection of stuffed animals, a history of the indigenous inhabitants of the region, displays on missionary history and exhibitions on Antarctica and its explorations.

Take in the view from Mirador Cerro de la Cruz

For stunning panoramic views of the city, the Straits of Magellan, and the island of Tierra del Fuego in the distance, climb to the viewpoint on Mirador Cerro de la Cruz. Just a ten-minute walk from the town's central Plaza Muñoz Gamero, this is one of the most iconic places in the city, particularly beautiful at night.



Stroll around one of the world's most beautiful cemeteries

It might sound strange to visit a graveyard on your holiday, but Punta Arenas Cemetery dates back to the 1840s and is internationally famous for its magnificent mausoleums, beautiful European architecture and perfectly-shaped pine trees. What we love are the diversity of British, German, Spanish and Croatian names that adorn the monuments, telling volumes about the origins of the area's settlers.

Where to eat and drink

CAFÉ

Chocolatta Having explored the old city, reward yourself in this chic and cosy chocolate shop, which serves coffee, hot chocolate and churros. The sandwiches are also excellent.

Lomito's If you're craving a burger, then head to Lomito's. Try a classic Chilean *completo* (a hot dog laden with avocado and chopped tomato) or tuck into a burger the size of your head – you may need to cut it in half!

MIDRANGE

El Fogon del Lalo Popular restaurant specialising in meat – think huge, juicy steaks! Watch the meat being prepared on the barbecue at the back of the restaurant. Great, friendly service and a good wine list.

La Yegua Loca Located in one of our favourite hotels, this is a beautiful restaurant with views over the city. Traditional Patagonian cuisine, a mix of old recipes with a gourmet touch.

La Marmita A relaxed, down-to-earth, family-run restaurant serving seasonal regional cuisine of Magallanes and Chile. Lovely atmosphere and friendly staff. This place is very popular so reserve a table beforehand.

Mesita Grande Sister to the restaurant with the same name in Puerto Natales. Make friends with fellow diners on the communal tables (there are some smaller tables too). Wide range of pizza options, as well as pasta and salads.

La Luna Colourful restaurant with a lively atmosphere. Becoming a bit touristy, but in spite of that it's worth a visit for the fresh seafood and extensive wine list. Crab is a particular highlight. King crab is a specialty of the region and La Luna is a great place to try *chupe de centolla* especially if you need a protein boost after all that trekking.

SOMETHING SPECIAL

Damiana Elena Run by a local chef and located in a residential area in a house that blends European elegance with Chilean quirks and decor. Head here for haute cuisine – delicious meat, seafood and pasta. Make sure you reserve as it gets very busy.

Sotito's Where locals go for an upmarket meal and where cruise ships recommend their clients to enjoy its classic upmarket atmosphere. Serves a mix of local and international dishes – we'd recommend the seafood, especially regional king crab dishes.



Guide to Puerto Natales

Situated on the Last Hope Sound, Puerto Natales is a sprawling mishmash of wood, corrugated and tin houses, built by pioneers who came to the area 100 years ago to work in the sheep industry. Now it is best known as the gateway to Torres del Paine and thrives off supporting

visitors to the national park. Those hikers and adventurers are served well by numerous hiking and camping shops and a variety of hotels and restaurants. Spend a day here preparing for your trek in Torres del Paine, or stop for a laundry day after you've finished

your adventures. There's plenty to explore in this sleepy little town, from delving into its history and culture, to grazing your way around the main square or horseback riding into the hills.



Insider tips for Puerto Natales

Is it a hotel? Is it a refrigeration plant? Is it a museum?

Located right on the water about a 10-minute taxi ride out of town, the Singular is a luxury hotel that was once a cold storage warehouse and also houses a museum full of machinery from the industrial revolution. The museum offers a great insight into Puerto Natales' past. Finish your visit with a calafate sour at the elegant and cosy bar.



Stock up with snacks at Unimarc

If you're going trekking in Torres del Paine, stock up on snacks in Puerto Natales. Our favourite trek snacks are Sahne Nuss chocolate bars (although Golden Nuss are more cost effective), frutas secas (dried fruit and nuts) and Costa Frac cookies.



You may also want to pick up some avocados or chorizo to spice up the plain refugio lunches too. And don't forget to pack a good cheap box wine – we like Gato Negro, 'the most dangerous cat on the pampas'.



Take a stroll along the seafront

A walk along the boardwalk will give you some incredible views overlooking the water; plan your walk around sunset and you'll get breathtaking sights.

To make a day of it, hire a bike and continue north out of town. You'll find a gravel stretch of road, where locals tend to run or bike. Be prepared for strong coastal gusts of wind – many a hat has been lost here!



Get a cultural fix at Galpón Cultural Centre

This revamped 1920s building now houses a gallery and a small café and occasionally hosts film festivals or other cultural events. Stop in for a quick look at the local art being displayed and browse the small gift store for luxurious local items.

Come face to face with a giant ground sloth

Located 18 miles from Puerto Natales, made famous by Bruce Chatwin's *In Patagonia*, the Cueva del Milodón is where, in 1896, Captain Eberhard discovered the remains of a giant ground sloth. The natural monument is now home to a giant replica of the prehistoric creature.

There is a small-but-excellent museum providing information about the cave and Eberhard's discovery. The neighbouring cave contains some of the earliest human evidence in the region, dating to around 11,000 years ago.

Grab a taxi from town or, if you are a cyclist, hire a bike for a 35-mile cycle ride.

Eat handmade ice cream

If you're an ice cream fan, you need to check out Aluén. They serve handmade ice cream and often have unique, local flavours, such as sorbet made from the calafate berry, or sesame and chia ice cream. It's definitely worth it, even when it's cold and windy out!

Where to eat and drink

CAFÉ

Kau Located right on the water, boasting beautiful views of the Last Hope Sound. All the locals know that Kau serves the best coffee in town.

Amerindia Café Cute café serving up gigantic sandwiches and indulgent cakes. Look out for their specials board for Chilean specialties like *pastel de choclo*.

BUDGET

Picada Carlitos or **Pizza Sandwich Masay** A picada serves traditional Chilean dishes with huge portions and budget prices. This is NOT fine dining. Expect huge burgers, mountains of chips (often with a steak, onions and eggs on top) and plenty of grease.

Basecamp Pub Host of the informative 3 o'clock talks about trekking in Torres del Paine, a hub for backpackers and adventurers. They serve up pizza and beer on communal tables – a great place to meet people.

MIDRANGE

Baguales Pub Puerto Natales' first microbrewery. Feast on a hearty meal in a social atmosphere – strike up a conversation with fellow travellers over a pint.

Mesita Grande Bump elbows with your neighbour on long communal tables. A wide range of pizza, pasta and salads. The apple crumble is also amazing and is cooked in the pizza oven!

El Living After a couple of weeks in Patagonia you can crave vegetables and El Living is the place to find them. Super relaxed and friendly, with a beautiful outdoor space in the back for sunny days. Caters to vegan, wheat-free, dairy-free and gluten-free diets.

Cangrejo Rojo Simple and clean, with a maritime-themed decor to match their menu, which includes scallops, loin of lamb, pastas and salads. Also a good place to go for coffee and homemade cake.

SOMETHING SPECIAL





The Singular An architecturally-unique setting steeped in history. Call ahead to make a reservation.

La Aldea Cosy and welcoming, with extremely friendly service. Seasonal local produce with a Mediterranean/Moroccan influence.

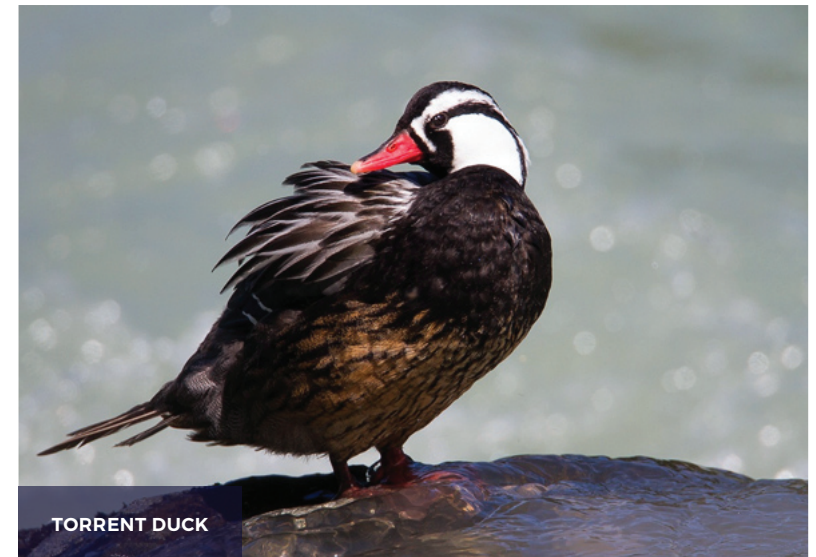
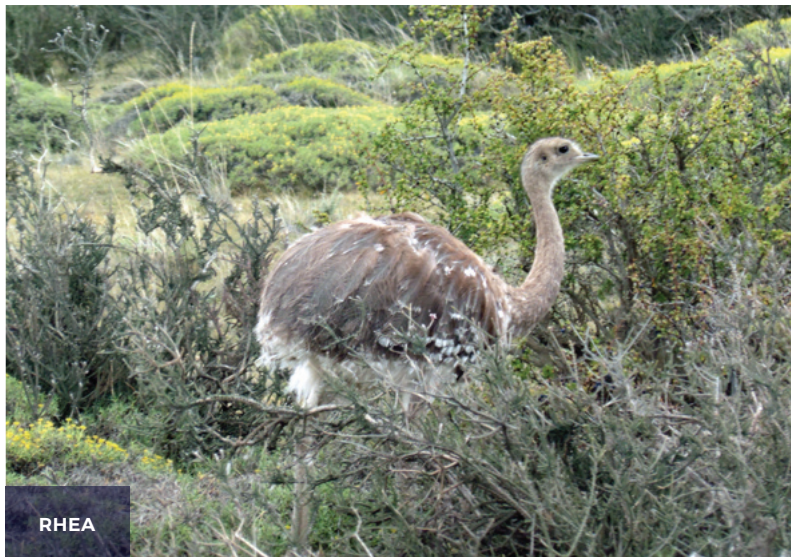
Santolla Creatively constructed inside stacked shipping containers. A paradise for seafood lovers – think king crab, ceviche, scallops and conger eel. Pair with a Calafate sour for a memorable meal!

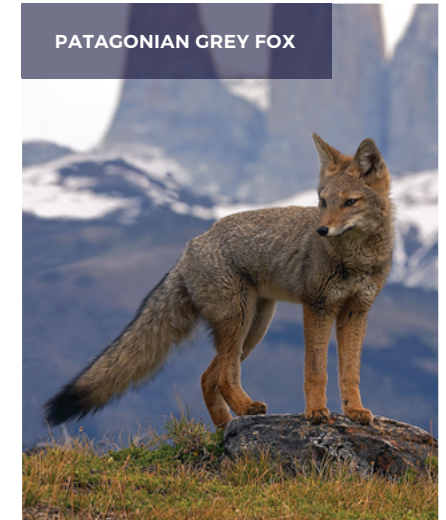
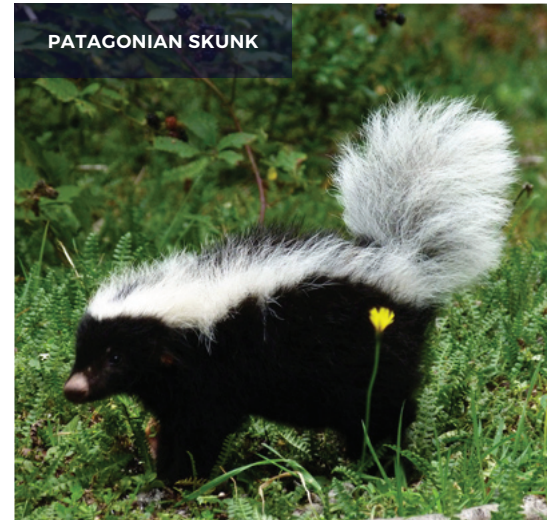


Puerto Natales

-  Café
-  Midrange
-  Something special
-  Hotel

Flora and fauna of Torres del Paine





Tips from our customers

“Bring layers, as the weather changes very quickly by kilometre and hour. You can leave extra gear or things you no longer want with the trekking company – they can find various ways to reuse gear you might consider ‘worn-out.’” **Tracie**

“In Torres Del Paine, I wished I just had a Nalgene or similar water bottle. There was no need to carry lots of water, and it would have been easier to fill in streams.” **Lauren**

“Do not move too quickly – you will not want to miss the unique plants and insects endemic to the region.” **Jason and Sarah**

Swoop says

Many of the hotels in Punta Arenas are located right on the central square near to the main street full of restaurants. The smaller, more characterful hotels tend to be a little further out, but offer a peaceful refuge from the hustle and bustle and a more unique experience.

“I wish I had brought a microfiber quick dry towel for the trip!” **Ted**

“Travel light – you’ll thank yourself after a long hike with a full pack! The packing list provided by Swoop is useful and I took travel wash. Most places accept cards and USD, but keep some local currency with you for taxis and markets.” **Ruby Birk**

“Be prepared to do some strenuous hiking to see the most stunning scenery. Find out about the fascinating history of Patagonia and its people.” **Mike and Edwina**

“Trekking poles are recommended for the W Trek.” **Jon**

“Be flexible. Enjoy the small stuff. Talk to fellow travellers. Be ready for long car rides and bumpy roads.” **Betty**

“There is wi-fi at the lodges, but for a fee, and no good access to charging electronic devices, so perhaps a solar charger or something of that sort would be handy.” **Erica**

“I wish I’d made time to brush up my limited and rusty Spanish before the trip.” **Stephen**

“If you’re going to hike, make sure your hiking shoes are comfortable and waterproof.” **Sarah**

“If you’re camping, bring a good sleeping bag and mat. The only day I used the walking poles was the first day for the Towers. And expect the trails to be muddy!” **Becca**

Swoop says

Beware – ATMs around Puerto Natales often run out of cash! Be prepared to try a few, and maybe get cash out beforehand in another city.