



Chile

A ribbon of land more than 4,300 km long, from the driest desert on Earth to the glaciers of Patagonia, with the moai of Easter Island far out in the Pacific.

AT A GLANCE

Facts to know

CAPITAL

Santiago

POPULATION

About 18.5 million (2024 national census)

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Spanish in practice: no law names an official language, but the constitution and all official documents are written in Spanish. Indigenous languages such as Mapudungun, Aymara and Rapa Nui are recognised in the areas where they are spoken

CURRENCY

Chilean peso (CLP)

AREA

About 756,000 km², not counting the part of Antarctica that Chile claims

GOVERNMENT

Republic with an elected president and a two-chamber National Congress, divided into 16 regions

HIGHEST MOUNTAIN

Ojos del Salado, about 6,893 m, on the border with Argentina: the highest volcano on Earth

LONGEST RIVER

The Loa, about 440 km, which flows through the Atacama Desert

NEIGHBOURS

Peru, Bolivia and Argentina. The border with Argentina, about 5,300 km, is the longest in South America

DRIVES ON THE

Right

CALLING CODE

+56

A 45-minute trip to Chile

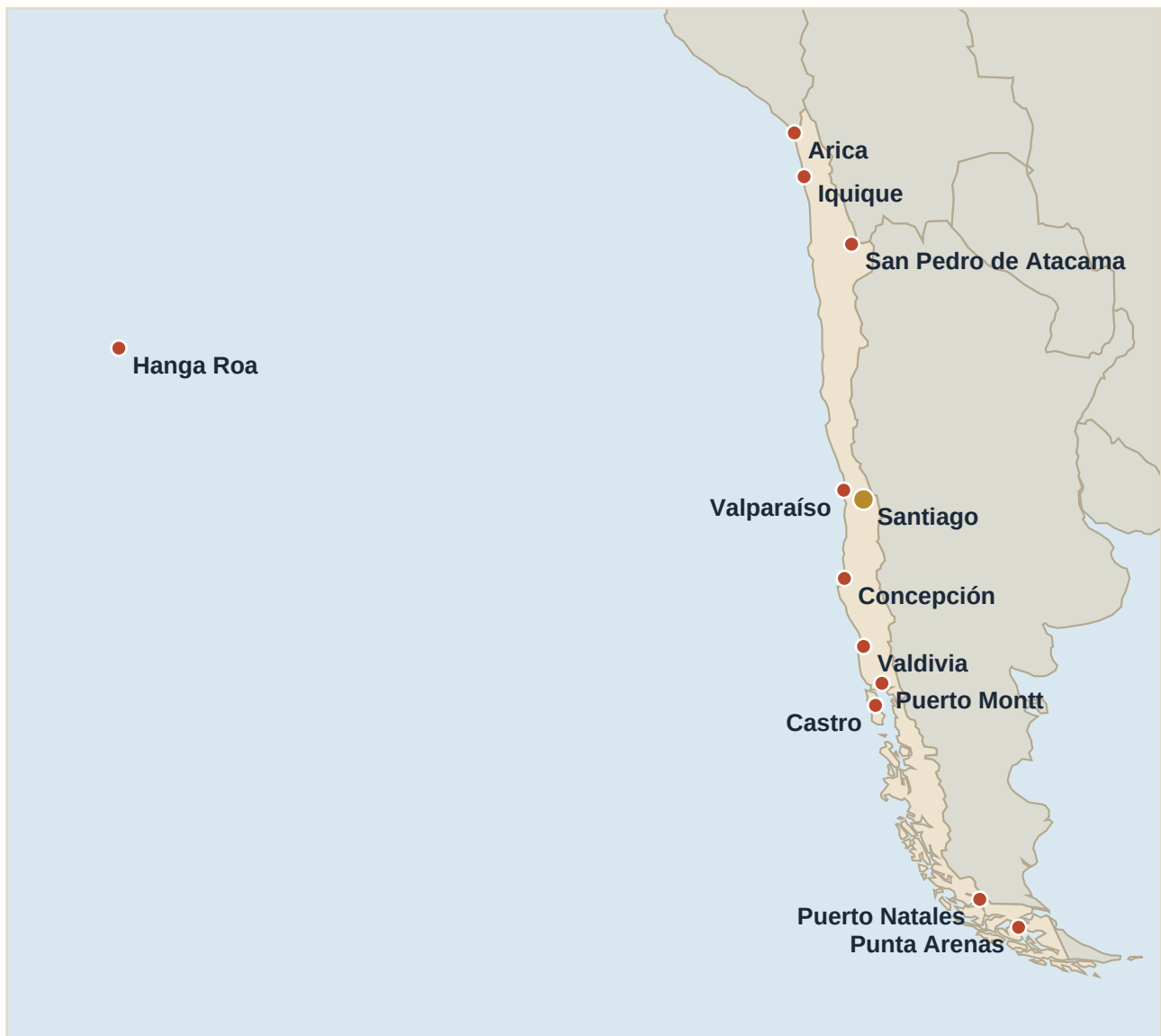
Everything you need is in this pack. No preparation beyond printing. Adapt the timing to your group.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 0 to 5 min | Welcome. Show the map page and find Chile together. Ask: who has been there, or knows someone from there? |
| 5 to 15 min | Read the facts at a glance, then three moments from the story: 7000 BC: The Chinchorro culture begins; 1879: The War of the Pacific begins; 2010: The 33 miners are rescued. |
| 15 to 25 min | At the table: talk about Empanada de pino and Pastel de choclo. Idea: bring a small taste (bread, cheese, fruit, tea) if your kitchen can help. |
| 25 to 30 min | Say it like a local: practise "Buenos días" (Good morning, hello), "Buenas tardes" (Good afternoon), "Buenas noches" (Good evening, good night). Everyone says them together. |
| 30 to 40 min | Quiz: read the questions aloud, or play the big-screen version at https://preview.worldstroll.com/countries/chile/group . No scores needed. |
| 40 to 45 min | Talk about it (questions page), then stamp or sign everyone's passport page. |

You will need

- This printed pack (one per table, or one each)
- Pens for the quiz
- Optional: a world map or globe, a small tasting, music from the country

Chile and its cities



- Santiago (Santiago Metropolitan Region): La Moneda Palace and the Plaza de Armas, San Cristóbal Hill and its statue of the Virgin Mary, The foothills of the Andes on its eastern edge
- Arica (Arica and Parinacota): The Morro de Arica headland, Chinchorro mummies, A summer beach destination for Chileans
- Iquique (Tarapacá): A free trade zone for shopping, The ghost saltpetre towns of Humberstone and Santa Laura, Summer beach holidays
- San Pedro de Atacama (Antofagasta): Its whitewashed adobe church, Stargazing in very clear, dry air, The Gustavo Le Paige archaeological museum
- Valparaíso (Valparaíso): A historic quarter listed by UNESCO, The ascensores that climb the hills, One of Pablo Neruda's three houses
- Concepción (Biobío): The University of Concepción, Industry and a busy student life, Its

people are called penquistas

- Valdivia (Los Ríos): The Valdivian forts built by the Spanish, Beer brewing, The Austral University of Chile
- Puerto Montt (Los Lagos): Salmon farming, Ferries to the south through the fjords, The gateway to the Chiloé islands
- Castro (Los Lagos (Chiloé Island)): The palafitos, houses on stilts, The wooden Church of San Francisco, Chiloé food such as curanto
- Punta Arenas (Magallanes and Chilean Antarctica): The Strait of Magellan, Its role as a gateway to Antarctica, A free port
- Puerto Natales (Magallanes and Chilean Antarctica): Trips to Torres del Paine, The end of the ferry route from Puerto Montt through the fjords, Its setting on the Última Esperanza Sound
- Hanga Roa (Valparaíso (Easter Island)): The moai statues, Rapa Nui culture and language, Its small harbour

A short history of Chile

Chile's story runs from fishing people who mummified their dead thousands of years before the Egyptians, through the Spanish conquest and centuries of Mapuche resistance, to independence in 1818. The 19th century brought expansion to the north and south. The 20th century brought a long democratic tradition, a military coup in 1973 and a dictatorship that lasted until 1990. Since 1990 Chile has been a democracy.

7000 BC **The Chinchorro culture begins**

From about 7000 BC, fishing people lived along the desert coast of what is now northern Chile and southern Peru, with their heartland around Arica. They are famous for mummifying their dead, and their mummies are much older than those of ancient Egypt. Their settlements and mummies became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2021.

1520 **Magellan sails through the strait**

While trying to sail around the world, Ferdinand Magellan found the passage at the southern tip of the continent that now bears his name, the Strait of Magellan. He was the first European to set foot on what is now Chile.

1541 **Pedro de Valdivia founds Santiago**

On 12 February 1541 the Spanish conquistador Pedro de Valdivia founded Santiago in the central valley, laying out a grid of streets around a main square, today's Plaza de Armas. Valdivia was captured and killed by the Mapuche in 1553.

1598 **The Battle of Curalaba**

Mapuche warriors led by Pelantaru ambushed and defeated a Spanish force at Curalaba in the south. A great uprising followed and the Spanish lost seven towns. For almost three centuries afterwards, the Mapuche lands of Araucanía stayed independent in practice.

1810 **The first national junta**

On 18 September 1810, while Spain was under Napoleon's control, leading citizens in Santiago formed a governing junta. It was the first step towards independence, and Chile's national day is still celebrated on 18 September.

1817

The Battle of Chacabuco

The Army of the Andes, led by José de San Martín with Bernardo O'Higgins, crossed the mountains from Argentina and defeated the Spanish royalists at Chacabuco on 12 February 1817. O'Higgins became the Supreme Director of Chile.

1818

Chile declares independence

On 12 February 1818, the first anniversary of Chacabuco, Bernardo O'Higgins approved the declaration of independence. The victory at Maipú, near Santiago, on 5 April 1818 secured the independence of central Chile.

1861

The occupation of Araucanía begins

From 1861 to 1883 the Chilean army and settlers moved into the Mapuche lands of Araucanía, and the region was brought under Chilean rule by force and by agreements. The Mapuche lost most of their land, but they kept their language and culture.

1879

The War of the Pacific begins

A dispute over taxes on a Chilean nitrate company in Bolivian territory led to war between Chile and an alliance of Bolivia and Peru. Chile won and gained a large, mineral-rich desert region, including Antofagasta, Iquique and later Arica. Bolivia lost its coast on the Pacific.

1888

Chile annexes Easter Island

On 9 September 1888 the Chilean naval officer Policarpo Toro and the Rapa Nui leader Atamu Tekena signed an agreement that brought Easter Island under Chile. The Rapa Nui people were granted Chilean citizenship in 1966.

1960

The great Valdivia earthquake

On 22 May 1960 the strongest earthquake ever recorded, of about magnitude 9.5, struck southern Chile and devastated the city of Valdivia. Its tsunami crossed the Pacific and struck coasts as far away as Hawaii and Japan.

1970

Salvador Allende is elected president

Salvador Allende of the Socialist Party won the 1970 election with about 36 percent of the vote, the largest share in a three-way race, and was confirmed by Congress. His government nationalised the copper mines and many banks and industries. By 1973 inflation was out of control and

the country was deeply divided.

1973

A military coup ends democracy

On 11 September 1973 the armed forces, led by General Augusto Pinochet, overthrew Allende's government. Allende died inside La Moneda Palace during the attack; it is generally accepted that he took his own life. The military junta suspended all political activity. According to Chile's official truth commissions, more than 3,000 people were killed or disappeared during the dictatorship, and tens of thousands were imprisoned and tortured.

1988

Chileans vote No to Pinochet

On 5 October 1988 Chileans were asked whether Pinochet should rule for another eight years. The No side, with its rainbow logo and the slogan 'Chile, joy is coming', won about 56 percent of the vote.

1990

Democracy returns

After free elections in December 1989, the Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin took office as president on 11 March 1990, ending almost 17 years of military rule.

2010

The 33 miners are rescued

On 5 August 2010 a mine near Copiapó in the Atacama Desert collapsed, trapping 33 men 700 m underground. After 17 days a note came up on a drill: 'We are well in the shelter, the 33'. All 33 were brought to the surface on 13 October 2010, watched live around the world.

What people eat in Chile

Chilean food brings together Spanish cooking, Mapuche ingredients such as potatoes, maize and beans, the fish and shellfish of a very long coast, and the cakes and sausages of 19th-century German settlers. Bread is eaten through the whole day, and Chileans are among the biggest bread eaters in the world. Since colonial times lunch has been a bigger meal than dinner. Later in the day many families have once, a light meal of bread with tea or coffee. Empanadas are the food of the national holidays in September.

Empanada de pino

The whole country

Chile's best-loved pastry: a large baked turnover filled with pino, a mixture of minced beef and onion, with a piece of hard-boiled egg, a black olive and a few raisins. There are also fried empanadas filled with cheese.

Pastel de choclo

Central Chile

A summer corn pie. A layer of pino, the beef and onion filling, with chicken, olives, raisins and slices of hard-boiled egg is covered with a thick topping of fresh sweetcorn blended with basil and baked until golden.

Cazuela

The whole country

A generous soup of beef or chicken with a big piece of potato, a slice of squash, a piece of corn on the cob, green beans and rice, sprinkled with coriander or parsley. Each diner gets one of every ingredient in a deep plate.

Curanto

Chiloé Archipelago

A feast cooked in a pit in the ground. Stones are heated red hot in a fire, then covered with layers of clams, mussels and giant barnacles, meat, sausages, potatoes and potato dumplings called milcao and chapaleles, and sealed with large nalca leaves and turf.

Porotos granados

Central and southern Chile, countryside cooking

A thick summer stew of fresh cranberry beans, sweetcorn and squash, with onion and basil. It is often made without meat.

Humitas

Central Chile, with roots across the Andes

Fresh sweetcorn ground to a paste with onion, basil and butter, wrapped in corn husks, tied with string and boiled or baked. Chileans eat them with a little sugar or with a fresh tomato salad.

Charquicán

The whole country, with roots in the Andes

A hearty home-style stew of potatoes, pumpkin, corn and onion mashed together with beef, usually topped with a fried egg. It was first made with dried meat called charqui.

Completo

Santiago

The Chilean hot dog, much bigger and more loaded than the American one. The favourite version, the completo italiano, is topped with chopped tomato, mashed avocado and mayonnaise.

Chacarero

Santiago

A hot sandwich of thin slices of steak on a round roll with tomato, green beans, mayonnaise and sometimes green chilli. It is a classic of the fuentes de soda, simple Chilean diners that serve sandwiches and draught beer.

Sopaipillas

Central Chile

Round, flat fried dough, in central Chile made with mashed pumpkin in the dough. They are eaten as a snack with pebre or mustard, or as a dessert soaked in a warm syrup of dark sugar, orange peel and cinnamon, when they are called sopaipillas pasadas.

Pebre

Central Chile

A fresh sauce of chopped tomato, onion, coriander, chilli, oil and vinegar. It is served with bread at the start of a meal and with grilled meat.

Marraqueta

The whole country

Chile's everyday bread: a crusty white roll made of four parts that can be broken apart by hand. It is eaten at every meal and often at breakfast with mashed avocado.

Caldillo de congrio

The Chilean coast

A fish soup made with conger eel, a fish of the Chilean coast, cooked in a broth with onion, garlic, tomato, potatoes and a little cream.

Mote con huesillo

Central Chile

Chile's summer drink, sold from street carts: a cold, sweet nectar made by cooking dried peaches with sugar and cinnamon, served with the peaches and a spoonful of cooked husked wheat, the mote, at the bottom of the glass.

Pisco sour

Chile and Peru, both of which claim it

A cocktail of pisco, a grape brandy, with lemon juice and sugar, shaken with ice. The Chilean version uses Chilean pisco and small limes from Pica, and unlike the Peruvian version it has no egg white and no bitters.

GOOD MANNERS

At the table

- If someone offers you something, say 'Sí, por favor' or 'No, gracias'. A bare 'sí' or 'no' sounds rude.
- When you arrive at or leave a gathering, greet every person there. Men shake hands; with women, a light touch of the right cheeks is usual.
- When you leave the table at a formal meal, it is polite to say 'Con permiso' (excuse me).
- A tip of about 10 percent is customary in restaurants when the service is good, and some restaurants add it to the bill. Leaving no tip at all is seen as rude unless the service was very bad.
- Burping at the table is considered very rude.

Pastel de choclo

A summer corn pie. A layer of pino, the beef and onion filling, with chicken, olives, raisins and slices of hard-boiled egg is covered with a thick topping of fresh sweetcorn blended with basil and baked until golden.

Ingredients

- 500 g minced beef
- 3 onions, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon paprika and 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 2 cooked chicken thighs, meat pulled into pieces (optional)
- 12 black olives and a handful of raisins
- 3 hard-boiled eggs, sliced
- 800 g sweetcorn kernels, fresh or frozen
- A handful of fresh basil leaves
- 250 ml milk and 2 tablespoons butter
- Salt, pepper and 1 tablespoon sugar

Method

1. Fry the onions slowly in a little oil until soft. Add the beef, paprika, cumin, salt and pepper and cook for 15 minutes. This is the pino.
2. Blend the sweetcorn with the basil and milk until you have a thick paste. Cook it in a pan with the butter and a pinch of salt, stirring all the time, for 10 to 15 minutes until it thickens.
3. Heat the oven to 200°C. Spread the pino in a baking dish and scatter over the chicken, olives, raisins and egg.
4. Spread the corn paste over the top and sprinkle with the sugar.
5. Bake for 30 to 40 minutes until the top is golden brown. Let it rest for 10 minutes before serving.

Porotos granados

A thick summer stew of fresh cranberry beans, sweetcorn and squash, with onion and basil. It is often made without meat.

Ingredients

- 500 g fresh shelled beans (or 2 tins of borlotti beans, drained)
- 400 g pumpkin or butternut squash, peeled and diced
- 300 g sweetcorn kernels
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- A handful of fresh basil leaves, torn
- 1 litre vegetable stock
- Olive oil and salt

Method

1. Fry the onion in a little oil with the paprika until soft.
2. Add the fresh beans and the stock and simmer for about 25 minutes until the beans are nearly tender. If you use tinned beans, add them with the squash.
3. Add the squash and cook for 15 minutes until it starts to fall apart and thickens the stew.
4. Stir in the corn and cook for 5 more minutes. Season with salt.
5. Take off the heat, stir in the basil and serve hot, with a tomato and onion salad on the side.

Pebre

A fresh sauce of chopped tomato, onion, coriander, chilli, oil and vinegar. It is served with bread at the start of a meal and with grilled meat.

Ingredients

- 3 ripe tomatoes, finely diced
- 1 small onion, very finely chopped
- A large bunch of fresh coriander, finely chopped
- 1 or 2 fresh green or red chillies, seeds removed, finely chopped
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 3 tablespoons sunflower or olive oil
- Salt

Method

1. Rinse the chopped onion in cold water and drain it well. This makes it milder.
2. Mix the tomato, onion, coriander, chilli and garlic in a bowl.
3. Add the vinegar, oil and a good pinch of salt and stir.
4. Leave for 20 minutes so the flavours blend. Serve with fresh bread or grilled meat. Eat it the same day.

Mote con huesillo

Chile's summer drink, sold from street carts: a cold, sweet nectar made by cooking dried peaches with sugar and cinnamon, served with the peaches and a spoonful of cooked husked wheat, the mote, at the bottom of the glass.

Ingredients

- 12 dried peaches (or dried apricots)
- 200 g sugar
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 2 litres water
- 200 g husked wheat (or pearl barley)

Method

1. The night before, wash the dried peaches and soak them in the water.
2. Put the peaches and their water in a pan with the sugar and cinnamon and simmer for about 30 minutes, until the peaches are soft and the liquid is a light syrup. Let it cool, then chill it.
3. Cook the wheat in plenty of water until tender, about 30 to 40 minutes. Drain and cool it.
4. Put 2 or 3 tablespoons of wheat in each tall glass, add two peaches and fill with the cold syrup. Serve with a spoon.

Pisco sour

A cocktail of pisco, a grape brandy, with lemon juice and sugar, shaken with ice. The Chilean version uses Chilean pisco and small limes from Pica, and unlike the Peruvian version it has no egg white and no bitters.

Ingredients

- 120 ml pisco
- 40 ml fresh lemon or lime juice
- 2 to 3 tablespoons icing sugar, to taste
- A handful of ice cubes

Method

1. Put the pisco, the juice and the sugar in a cocktail shaker or a blender.
2. Add the ice and shake hard, or blend, for about 20 seconds until frothy and very cold.
3. Strain into two small glasses and serve at once. For a drink without alcohol, use sparkling water in place of the pisco.

Useful phrases

Buenos días

BWEH-nohs DEE-ahs · Good morning, hello

Buenas tardes

BWEH-nahs TAR-dehs · Good afternoon

Buenas noches

BWEH-nahs NOH-chehs · Good evening, good night

Mucho gusto

MOO-choh GOOS-toh · Nice to meet you

Por favor

POHR fah-BOHR · Please

Gracias

GRAH-syahs · Thank you

De nada

DEH NAH-dah · You're welcome

Sí, por favor

SEE, POHR fah-BOHR · Yes, please

No, gracias

NOH, GRAH-syahs · No, thank you

Con permiso

kohn pehr-MEE-soh · Excuse me, with your permission

Disculpe

dees-KOOL-peh · Excuse me

Lo siento

LOH SYEHN-toh · I'm sorry

¿Habla usted inglés?

AH-blah oos-TEHD een-GLEHS · Do you speak English?

No entiendo

NOH ehn-TYEHN-doh · I don't understand

¿Cuánto cuesta?

KWAHN-toh KWEHS-tah · How much is it?

La cuenta, por favor

lah KWEHN-tah, pohr fah-BOHR · The bill, please

¿Dónde está el baño?

DOHN-deh ehs-TAH ehl BAH-nyoh · Where is the toilet?

¡Salud!

sah-LOOD · Cheers! (literally 'health')

Al tiro

ahl TEE-roh · Right away

Chao

CHOW · Bye

Things you might not know

1. Chile stretches more than 4,300 km from north to south, but on average it is only about 175 km wide, and at its narrowest just 64 km.
2. The Atacama is the driest non-polar desert in the world. Some weather stations there have never recorded rain.
3. The earthquake that struck Valdivia on 22 May 1960, of about magnitude 9.5, is the strongest ever recorded.
4. Chile has two winners of the Nobel Prize in Literature: Gabriela Mistral in 1945, the first Latin American author to win it, and Pablo Neruda in 1971.
5. Easter Island is about 3,500 km from the nearest point of mainland Chile, making it one of the most remote inhabited islands in the world.
6. The tallest moai ever set up on Easter Island, called Paro, was almost 10 m high and weighed about 82 tonnes.
7. Ojos del Salado, on the border with Argentina, is the highest volcano on Earth at about 6,893 m. A small crater lake near its summit is the highest lake of any kind in the world.
8. As of 2019, Chile was the world's largest producer of copper, mining more than a quarter of the world's supply.
9. The Scottish sailor Alexander Selkirk lived alone for more than four years from 1704 on one of the Juan Fernández Islands, and his story may have inspired Robinson Crusoe. The island is now called Robinson Crusoe Island.
10. The cueca, a dance in which partners circle each other waving handkerchiefs, was declared Chile's national dance in 1979.
11. Rodeo, in which a pair of riders in traditional huaso dress must stop a young bull, was declared Chile's national sport in 1962.
12. One theory says the name Chile comes from the Mapuche word chilli, which may mean 'where the land ends'.
13. The ALMA observatory in the Atacama links 66 radio telescopes on a plateau about 5,000 m high, where the air is thin and very dry.
14. Chile claims about 1,250,000 km² of Antarctica, an area larger than all of mainland Chile.

Questions for the group

- Have you ever been to Chile, or has someone in your family? What do you remember?
- Have you ever tasted Empanada de pino or Pastel de choclo? What is a dish you remember from a trip?
- Chileans vote No to Pinochet (1988). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- Democracy returns (1990). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- Have you seen The moai of Rapa Nui National Park, in person or in pictures? Which famous place would you most like to see?
- If you could spend one day in any city of Chile, which would it be and why?

QUIZ

How well do you know Chile?

Circle the right answer. The answers are on the last page.

1. In the 1988 vote on whether Pinochet should stay in power for another eight years, about what share of voters said No?

- A) About 78 percent
- B) About 35 percent
- C) About 56 percent
- D) About 90 percent

2. Where and when did the strongest earthquake ever recorded strike?

- A) San Francisco, USA, 1906
- B) Tokyo, Japan, 1923
- C) Valdivia, Chile, 1960
- D) Lisbon, Portugal, 1755

3. The Atacama is the driest non-polar desert in the world.

- A) True
- B) False

4. Which city has been the seat of Chile's National Congress since 1990?

- A) Santiago
- B) Concepción
- C) Valdivia
- D) Valparaíso

5. Which of these countries does NOT share a border with Chile?

- A) Peru
- B) Bolivia
- C) Argentina
- D) Ecuador

- 6. At about what altitude is the desert village of San Pedro de Atacama?**
- A) About 5,500 m
 - B) About 400 m
 - C) About 2,400 m
 - D) About 1,000 m
- 7. In Chile, what is a palta?**
- A) A potato
 - B) An avocado
 - C) A bean
 - D) A lemon
- 8. Which phrase is polite to say when you get up and leave the table at a formal meal?**
- A) Buenos días
 - B) Con permiso
 - C) ¡Salud!
 - D) No entiendo
- 9. How do you ask for the bill in a restaurant?**
- A) ¿Dónde está el baño?
 - B) La cuenta, por favor
 - C) Mucho gusto
 - D) Con permiso
- 10. About how many moai statues are there on Easter Island?**
- A) About 50
 - B) About 10,000
 - C) Nearly 1,000
 - D) About 200
- 11. Who founded Santiago in 1541?**
- A) Pedro de Valdivia
 - B) Bernardo O'Higgins
 - C) Ferdinand Magellan
 - D) José de San Martín

12. Which is Chile's northernmost city, only 18 km from the border with Peru?

- A) Valparaíso
- B) Iquique
- C) Arica
- D) Concepción

Quiz answers

1. C) About 56 percent

About 56 percent voted No, against about 44 percent for Yes. Free elections followed in 1989 and democracy returned in 1990.

2. C) Valdivia, Chile, 1960

Valdivia, Chile, 1960: the earthquake of 22 May 1960, of about magnitude 9.5, is the strongest ever recorded.

3. True

True. The Atacama in northern Chile is the driest non-polar desert, and some of its weather stations have never recorded rain.

4. D) Valparaíso

The National Congress has met in Valparaíso since 1990, even though Santiago is the capital.

5. D) Ecuador

Ecuador does not border Chile. Chile's neighbours are Peru, Bolivia and Argentina.

6. C) About 2,400 m

San Pedro de Atacama is at about 2,400 m, and trips from there go higher, so altitude sickness is a risk.

7. B) An avocado

An avocado: palta is the Chilean word for it. Chileans put mashed avocado on bread, sandwiches and hot dogs.

8. B) Con permiso

Chileans say 'Con permiso', with your permission, when they leave the table or need to get past someone.

9. B) La cuenta, por favor

La cuenta, por favor means 'The bill, please'.

10. C) Nearly 1,000

Easter Island has nearly 1,000 moai, carved by the Rapa Nui people between about 1250 and 1500.

11. A) Pedro de Valdivia

The Spanish conquistador Pedro de Valdivia founded Santiago on 12 February 1541. The Mapuche captured and killed him in 1553.

12. C) Arica

Arica is Chile's northernmost city, about 18 km south of the Peruvian border.

Chile visa page

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