

# CHILE...



## IP Santiago, CHILE

Studying abroad in Santiago, Chile was one of the most rewarding experiences I have had and one of the best decisions I have made during my academic career. Not only did I grow academically, but I also experienced a personal growth that is unique to studying in a foreign country. Studying abroad not only gives you the fluency in Spanish that is important both in the university and your future career, but also teaches you a variety of life skills that are invaluable.

### **First things first.....**

As exciting as studying abroad is, it is easy to get distracted with all the glitz and excitement of living in a foreign country that you forget to get all your important matters taken care of in a timely manner. Organizing certain legal and financial things before you study abroad in Chile can help save you time, energy, money, and headaches before and during your stay abroad.

### **Passport and Visa:**

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of getting your VISA and your PASSPORT as soon as possible. Applying for your passport if you don't already have a valid one and obtaining your visa as soon as possible helps make your final weeks in the US less stressful.

Passport- The post office located on 550 Vallombrosa Avenue has designated hours for the passport service window. All applications and forms are online at [www.usps.com/passport/](http://www.usps.com/passport/), along with fee schedules and other helpful information. Usually it only takes about 2-4 weeks to receive your passport, but apply for it as soon as possible.

Visas- This part is a little trickier. The Chilean consulate office closest to Chico is in San Francisco. When I applied for my VISA, the workers were quite rude and were annoyed that I hadn't scheduled an appointment although I had repeatedly called the number to try and make one. Check on their website for the most current and up to date information so that your trip to San Francisco is your first and your last in regards to your visa. If calling to schedule an appointment doesn't work, I recommend emailing and hopefully they will respond. IP will be sending you all the information about what to bring, but all the necessary information is also listed on their website: <http://consuladochilesfo.com/indexE.html>

## **Financial Matters**

Maintaining your finances while studying abroad is fairly simple, but requires a few key resources to help balance that check book from a distance.

Online banking: Being able to access your accounts abroad and view all of your activity is a must. Most banks offer free online banking and if you don't currently use it, sign up ahead of time and familiarize yourself with it while you are in country and close to your branch to ask any questions and clear up any problems. Online banking should include the ability to transfer funds between savings and checking and check up on any deposits (i.e. financial aid) and withdrawals. Also, if you will be paying several bills monthly while abroad, look into the possibilities of online bill pay.

Debit card with VISA or MASTERCARD symbol: Having a debit card with a Visa or MasterCard symbol that is linked directly to your checking account makes withdrawals from ATM's hassle free. Although your card may not work in every ATM machine (many students had problems with Banco de Chile ATM's), it is guaranteed to work in at least one ATM carrier (Redbanc, Santander de Santiago, etc...). As long as you have a debit card that is directly linked to your checking account there is no need to open a bank account and I highly recommend against opening one in Chile. Just withdraw cash from an ATM whenever needed, but make sure to check how much your bank will charge you for withdrawals from a foreign ATM. If you have any doubts, please contact your bank and talk to them about accessing cash from your debit card internationally before you head out.

Legal Power of Attorney: I highly recommend giving legal power of attorney to someone who you trust while studying abroad. The benefits of this are: (1) having someone who can conduct all of your business for you in case you can't handle everything through phone calls and emails, (2) having an authorized signer who can act on your behalf while abroad and access any records or information that you may need that must be requested in person. I had my Dad as my legal power of attorney and it was helpful when I needed to have my taxes done and other legal paperwork that I wouldn't have been able to do while abroad.

Contact Information: Make sure you bring with you a list of all the important information, email addresses, phone numbers and contact information that you will or might need while studying abroad. A good idea for keeping track of it all is making a word document of all the phone numbers and information and then email it to yourself, so that whether or not you have your disc or papers, you will always have the necessary information online.

**BIENVENIDOS A SANTIAGO, CHILE**



When my plane touched the runway, I couldn't contain the excitement! Life couldn't get much better than this. But after over 20 hours of travel time and all the gross TACA airplane sandwiches I could possibly keep down, I was exhausted and a little overwhelmed once I stepped out of the airport. Suddenly, about 10 Chilean taxi drivers and shuttle personnel surrounded my friends and I, trying to make deals on a transfer bus, hotels, how much to tip them for handling baggage and who knows what else. Talk about a strong wake up call at 1:30 in the morning. I had read a lot of information about Chile and had studied abroad once before, but this was psycho. Here we were at an airport, in a foreign city none of us had ever been to, trying to find our own transportation to a hotel, with only a small internet map and the street names. It was awesome. The adventure had officially begun, and although it was quite overwhelming at the time, I look back now and laugh at all the funny adventures we had in trying to adjust to a new culture, a new way of doing business and a new atmosphere. These are the types of situations that get people addicted to studying abroad. New surroundings, adrenaline rushes, adventures wherever you go, new people and foods. But like any new adventure or trip, having a least a map and an idea of how things work help to prepare you mentally for whatever you may encounter and let you know that everything you are going through is **perfectly normal**.

Climate: "Santiago does not generally experience extremes of temperature..."...ummm, scratch that statement from the record. It may be that our group was sensitive to the changes of weather or experienced a record breaking year, but I don't think either was the case. Santiago gets cold in the winter and very hot in the summer. The main problem is that if you do not live in a newer apartment, the chance of your house/apartment having insulation is slim to nothing. Santiago's winter is from early June through September and the summer from December to March. Santiago rarely experiences a beautiful spring and a moderate fall. It is like one day you are wearing shorts and then after 3 – 4 weeks of fall (just slightly cooler summer), you are putting on your gloves, scarf and coat to stay warm. It's the same way with the transition into summer. I highly recommend bringing a good warm winter coat for the city and a snow coat if you plan on snowboarding or heading to the Andes for some skiing. A couple of warm sweaters are a must and bring plenty of clothes that you can layer so that you can adjust between riding the metro (which tends to get hot and stuffy during the winter) and walking around in the city. Summer is extremely hot and although the temperature gauge only reads 30 – 34 Celsius, the smog and lack of ozone layer magnifies the sun's rays and the lack of breeze tends to create the greenhouse effect in Santiago. Although it is important to pack clothes

appropriate for hot and cold weather, don't over pack and bring tons of clothes. Just choose key things that you can layer and work with so that you can save plenty of space in the suitcases for all the stuff that you will probably be bringing back. Also, note to women, Chileans don't tend to wear short shorts or even shorts in general. Feel free to wear shorts like you would in the U.S, I'm not saying leave your shorts at home, just don't be surprised if it draws attention. Summer skirts are more common.

La Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile: The Católica is a very challenging and prestigious university. The main campus, San Joaquín, is beautiful and modern and the other campuses are older, but have beautiful architecture and modern libraries and Crisol computer clusters. Most professors, especially in the literature department are very helpful and understanding about the difficulties of studying in a foreign language. Ask professors any questions you may have and they will help you in any way possible. Make sure to try and catch them after class as many professors do not have office hours and do not meet with students outside the classroom or correspond through email. La Católica is very different from US universities in a variety of aspects. Most teachers conduct lectures and there is little interaction between student and teacher, or students with one another. Books are commonly not used at all. You will have to go to the fotocopiadora and look for the carpeta that has all your classes' material in it and make photocopies. Do this as early as possible because the fotocopiadora gets crowded easily and Chileans do not make lines. Don't bother asking *dónde está la fila?*, because chances are, one never existed! There are several libraries on campus and there are also computer rooms where you can check email, do school work and access the internet. The wait for a computer may be long, but it is free and the connection is somewhat good. Internet cafes are usually faster and nicer, but the computers at the Católica basically have everything you need. Printing does not cost anything, but you must wait in a separate line and bring your own paper. Sometimes the wait time for printing isn't too long, but usually lots of students have to print off whole books from the internet (100 pages or more), try not to wait last minute to print.

Don't get discouraged if you haven't made hardly any Chilean friends in the first several months. Chileans tend to stick with one another and there are so many foreign students that are in and out in one semester that many Chileans don't bother meeting foreigners and making new friends. You will probably have to initiate everything. I was self conscious at first because I felt they were analyzing my every word, but you just have to get over it and be willing to look like a fool and have fun. I didn't make very many Chilean friends by meeting them in class. Instead, I met a lot of Chilean friends through extra curricular activities and *carretes* that various departments put on. Meeting Chileans through volunteer work or special groups is the best way to make friends. **I strongly recommend doing at least one volunteer trip through the FEUC or whatever university group at least one time during the summer.** This is how I made all my Chilean friends and everyone else I know who did a volunteer trip had a blast the second semester because they had lots of Chilean friends to hang out with outside of school, they experienced a unique part of the culture and were fluent in Spanish and Chilean slang. Definitely travel throughout Chile and South America during the summer, but reserve at least 2 weeks for volunteer work in Chile.

Housing & Meals: For your first ten days in Chile you will be staying in a hotel downtown while looking for housing. The hotel costs are included in your program costs. Maria Jose, the IP Program Coordinator, is very helpful with finding a residencia to live in or an apartment. This program is very independent, so while it may seem overwhelming to try and find housing in the first week you are there, try your best to get out and see as much as possible so that you can decide quickly where you

want to live. Most people in our program moved into a residencia or rented a room from someone. A few people decided to stay there all year long, but many chose to move to their own apartment or rent a room with other students after a month of living there and familiarizing themselves with the city. I moved in with a family which turned out to be the wrong living situation for me. Although I enjoyed living with a host family in Costa Rica, in Chile good host families are expensive and they usually live far away which is a pain once you start making friends and are constantly outside the house. I strongly recommend living in an apartment with other students or waiting until the semester begins and looking for a room to rent with other people. But no matter what you decide, don't panic at the beginning when finding housing. Realize that you can always change your housing situation if you are unhappy and nothing is done by contract when renting rooms or living in a residencia, so you have no obligation to wherever you are staying.

Prices for rent are a lot less expensive than in the U.S. I rented a room out in a very nice apartment that came fully furnished and I paid 200 dollars a month (year 2003-2004), including utilities. You can find cheaper rooms if you live in more sketchy neighborhoods, but I would plan on spending about 200 to 400 dollars in rent alone just so that you leave yourself some extra cash to plan with. Food is fairly inexpensive and probably costs around 100 dollars a month if you cook at home and don't eat out a lot. Recommending how much someone should plan for housing is difficult because within our group there were several people who lived on as little as 500 dollars a month while other spent up to 1200 dollars a month. So, really think of what kind of living situation you want to be living in and plan accordingly. Another helpful resource is to check the Mercurio online to see what going rates are for renting a room or an apartment and plan from there. Just visit [www.mercurio.cl](http://www.mercurio.cl) and click on Clasificados and look under propiedades. Or go straight to <http://propiedades.mercurio.cl>

### Transportation:

Buses: *Las micros* in Chile are the basic public transportation buses that go just about anywhere in Santiago at anytime day and night. They can be a little intimidating at first because they race around the city and don't quite slow down enough for you to read the little signs of all their destination stops. But, they are awesome because you can get anywhere on one and they are relatively safe. They cost 310 pesos or about 50 cents to ride. The buses are numbered and have a set routine that they follow, so once you learn which number works for you best, just look for that number as the buses whiz on by.

Metro: The subway in Chile is the best way to get around town. It's fast, efficient, safe and easy to navigate. Although it doesn't quite reach all parts of the city (although new lines are set to open late 2005) you can easily get to all main parts of the city and the San Joaquin main campus. Ticket prices vary from 45 cents to 65 cents depending on what time of the day you travel. Definitely buy a *multivia* pass, the metro pass because you can put money on the card and just swipe as you go and you get a 10 to 20 peso discount and a free ride for every ten rides, just for using the card. There also are various *metrobuses* located outside several metro stops that you can connect with to get to certain destinations not covered by the metro and they are a little cheaper than the micro buses. These buses are easy to spot because they are a little smaller than a regular bus and are blue and white.

Taxis: Taxis are more expensive for everyday traveling, but are an alternative. Taxis are great for coming home after being out all night or at a *carrete* at someone's house. There are two kinds of

taxis, the main taxis are black with yellow and you can catch those anywhere along the street. The other type is radio taxis that you call from your cell phone and have them pick you up wherever you are calling from. Regular taxis are fine, but radio taxis are nice if you are going a long distance across town because they don't rip you off and the operator on the phone usually tells you the set price for the ride. Be firm when negotiating a price with the taxi drivers because they will try their best to get the most expensive fare possible and if they are not willing to negotiate a price, make sure the meter is running.

Health: The medical services offered at La Catolica are the best in Chile and are easily accessible to students. Health insurance is provided with the program, it's just a big pain to be reimbursed because you have to mail in all necessary paperwork and then wait for them to reimburse you. Luckily, the health care is not too expensive and medications are fairly reasonable also. I was severely sick about one month before I returned to the U.S. and I spent about \$50 which included 2 doctor appointments, various blood tests and medication. I found the staff to be very professional and helpful and was even lucky enough to have a doctor that spoke both English and Spanish.

If you are currently taking any medication bring some with you and have a doctor's note that explains the chemical composition of the medication so that you can find it in the pharmacies because name brands are generally not offered. If there are certain medications and name brands that you must have, bring some of them along. I brought Alka Seltzer and Nyquil because those are two brands I love and couldn't find down there. I definitely recommend bringing a strong sinus decongestant and cold medicine because every one of us suffered from both symptoms as we adjusted to the smog and the extreme changes in temperature. If you wear glasses, bring a copy of your prescription in case you need to buy some glasses while down there. Also, a note to ladies, if you are on birth control, make sure you speak to your doctor about how much you can take with you. La Catolica hospital does offer gynecology appointments *but will not* under any circumstances prescribe birth control. It is possible to find birth control and have it prescribed but you might have to pay more money to see a private doctor.

Safety Issues: In general Santiago is a fairly safe city, but **be alert!** Be careful walking around downtown and other shady areas in the late afternoon/evening time or even on the weekends when there aren't as many people around. Pick pocketing is the most prevalent crime and is especially a problem for foreigners since we tend to stick out. I was fortunate to never have had an incident with being pick pocketed or stolen from, but from our group, 3 digital cameras were stolen, over 8 cell phones, a purse and a video recorder. Most people never realized they were stolen from until later, but one or two saw it happen and one was an actual mugging. *But don't let this scare you or intimidate you at all!* This is a normal part of living in a big international city. The key to not being pick-pocketed is to be alert, constantly be aware of your surroundings, don't draw lots of attention to yourself and make sure your backpack or purse is secure. Don't leave your purse sitting on a table while at an outdoor café and don't set your cell phone out on the table or clip it to your jeans. And when going out at night, whether it is dancing, drinking or just hanging out downtown, only take what you are willing to lose. This may sound weird but it's true. Take a photocopy of your passport or ID, what money will be necessary for the night and your keys and cell phone. I never knew of anyone who ever had a problem with pick pocketing or being stolen from while they were out on the town, it mainly occurred during the daytime and rush hour traffic, but you can never be too safe. Being aware of your surroundings and alert will deter many thieves and make your trip a crime free one.

Local Phrases/Slang: One thing that I love about Chile is their accent in Spanish and their slang. It is important to try your hardest to at least learn the slang and make it a part of your vocabulary. This will not only help you understand what the heck the Chileans are talking about, but it will help you to better express yourself in everyday terms. I will list several important phrases, but I really recommend the book How to Survive the Chilean Jungle, which is available at almost any bookstore in Chile, because it lists so many phrases and how to use them. It also is a great souvenir of all the fun phrases you've learned in Chile.

Al tiro – Right away, in a second

Mino/a – Dude/ chick

Micro – bus

Cachai? - Get it? You know? Understand?

Que penca – that sucks

De repente – suddenly or sometimes

Pololo/a – boy/girlfriend

Luca – 1000 pesos

Guagua – baby

Fome – boring

Que lata – What a bummer

Nunca tanto – it's not that  
bad

## BUENA SUERTE!!

I know this guide probably does not answer all of your questions and doubts, but it's a good place to start to get a feel for what to expect before and while in Chile. There are plenty of helpful websites for travel in Latin America and I recommend buying a good guide book for traveling South America before you head down to Chile. Just remember, you are going to have the most amazing year and the only thing you will ever have one hundred percent control of is your attitude, so make it a positive one. Try and do all the things you have ever dreamed about and enjoy every second of your stay, the good and the bad times because you will cherish and appreciate them all upon your return. Buena suerte, que les vayan super bien!!!

## Chile: The Experience of a Lifetime!

Let me just start by saying that I can not believe how wonderful these past six months have been and all of the amazing things I have seen and done. I can honestly say that I feel like Chile is my home and I don't even want to imagine leaving for good. There are so many things to say about this place and its people, I will do my best to explain some issues and attitudes that I have witnessed that I think will help you in determining if Chile is the place for you.

First of all: Chileans. What I am about to explain to you may not make sense until you are actually here but I hope it gives you some insight into the culture and people of the country. The word *efficient* is non-existent in the Chilean culture, we have all decided that if something can be done in one simple step, the Chileans do it in fifteen. A quick example will help make that clear. During one of my first weeks in Chile I went to buy a sandwich from the deli. Sounds simple right? WRONG. I first got in line to tell them what I wanted and they

gave me a ticket and told me to get in the next line. Second, I waited in a line to give someone my ticket and pay for what I wanted. They gave me another ticket and told me to get in the next line. Then I gave the person behind the counter my ticket, which says what I want and they gave me a different ticket and told me to get in the next line. Finally, I got in the line to pick up my sandwich and hand in my final ticket. Thankfully there was not a ticket or line to get out the door or I think I would have strangled someone! Heaven forbid you ever lose any of your tickets or good luck. There are tickets for everything, food of any sort, photocopying, clothing stores, banks, ID cards, EVERYTHING. Now I know this sounds like I am complaining about the country but I'm not. I have so much love for the people that now I just sigh and say, "Chile, what are you going to do?" After you get over the initial phase of trying to figure out ways to make the people more efficient (I have spent a good amount of hours thinking about that) you just accept it and learn to love it as part of the country.

One of the positive aspects that I love about this inefficiency is the restaurant atmosphere. You go in and order a coke (practically the Chilean national drink) in a busy restaurant, and they will not ask you to leave or bring the bill until *you* feel like leaving. It is not uncommon to go to a cafe with a friend and be there a few hours just talking. This same attitude is present when it comes to just hanging out in a Chilean's house. They drink tea and nescafe, that's it, no real coffee in anyone's home (very very rarely, like on Christmas). I sometimes come home from class at 2, sit down for tea with my host mom and don't get up until 5 or 6, not even noticing that so much time has passed. Chileans love to talk. Once you get to know them, they always have stories and things to share with you.

Living here in Santiago is wonderful and I really have enjoyed it so much more than I imagined. You see, before I came I did my best to hold no expectations about what the year would be like, then when I got here and found out, it was just amazing in every way. First of all, in California, I had almost 5 classes a quarter, played basketball for my university (almost a full time job) and tutored kids in foster homes four nights a week. It was a lot and I didn't even realize how little free time I had. When I got to Santiago and started classes, I really had time to relax, enjoy the city and people and just be a student. No one is allowed to work, because of the student visas, and it makes life great. You can focus on your classes, friends, yourself!

I know that for me coming here I was very concerned about the difficulty of classes, the language aspect, and the level of education in general. For me personally and a lot of my friends the semester was great, good grades are not impossible if you work at it and the Spanish just kind of happened for me. The university is a very good school and I thought it was going to completely consume my life just staying on top of my classes. Thankfully IP has us in classes the right amount of time. I had two history classes and the required grammar and culture class, these combined let me have some free time if I was sure to keep on top of my reading. For history we had to read about 200 to 300 pages a week, all in Spanish of course, and had quizzes about once a month. Spending a few hours a day was sufficient to keep on top of my studies and my Spanish has improved so so much!

Coming to Santiago I had taken three years of college Spanish and am glad that I did. Everyone in the group has improved in their spoken Spanish, and two years is enough to enter the program. However, even though my speaking ability was low when I first got here, it got better much more quickly because I had taken that extra grammar class. I would say that I am fluent for sure and after another semester I hope to have increased my vocabulary a lot. There are some students in the program who have struggled a little more with the language but not enough to make their time here any less enjoyable than mine. Everyone picks up the language at their own pace and even those that are slightly less advanced have gotten a lot better and don't have any problems

communicating with people. So if you are concerned about your Spanish ability, just talk to people as much as you can and don't dwell on it so much; it will happen in its own time. Don't get frustrated if you feel like you're picking it up more slowly than some of the other students. It will get better. It really will.

On the language aspect, something that helped me tremendously was living with a family. Not only a regular host family to me, but really like my family, I was lucky and got the most amazing people to live with! They are caring, helpful in everything, and love talking and hearing about things in my life, which gave me a great outlet to practice Spanish. There were about five people out of the group of fourteen that decided to live in apartments right from the start, they all had a good experience but it was slightly harder for them to speak Spanish all the time. Out of the group that lived with families, only two or three weren't happy with their choice (it really depends on how you click with the family). It is important to have the mindset that they are letting you into their home and family. Respect is important but even more important is an attitude of openness and the confidence and comfort to speak up when you need to. All of us are moving into apartments for the second semester - for me not because I want to leave the family but because I want both experiences of living away from home. They do all the cooking, laundry, sometimes even remake your bed if they think it looks messy! It is nice not having to worry about cooking, grocery shopping, laundry, the first months you are here still figuring things out. After a semester though, I miss cooking for myself, doing things on my own, and being 100% independent. I would suggest that everyone live with a family for at least the first two months. It helps with the language and your host family can help you with useful things like directions, good places to go out if you want, where to get your hair cut, and other things like this that you might not think about but that come in very handy. If you don't like living with the family, you can always move. For me, I am positive that this first semester would not have been as wonderful without my host family.

In summary, Chile is a great place, a lot like America in many parts of Santiago, modern and clean, but then only 25 minutes away there are poor places too. It is like any other big city in the world. There are a lot of things to do and a lot of places to find your niche. I have changed and had my eyes opened in so many ways after only a few months. I am so excited that I get to spend a second semester here to find new things and meet new people! Chile is great, and I know you will grow to love it as much as I do.