



18 Top reasons to visit Chile in 2012





**Watch a beautiful sunrise**

[Tierra Atacama](#), just a five-minute bike ride outside the city center of San Pedro de Atacama, offers a luxury-level accommodation with fantastic views of the Licancabur volcano from all rooms. Self-described as an “adventure spa,” this is truly a place where you can play hard and relax well. After a day of hiking, biking, horseback riding, or exploring, you’ll appreciate the expert massages, swimming and soaking pools and meditation/yoga areas. [Read more...](#) [See more from Tierra Atacama...](#)



## Bicycle tours of Santiago

For my money, the best way to see a lot of any city in a short amount of time is by bike. You can stop wherever you want, you're not waiting for erratic bus schedules and the breeze generated is always more refreshing than walking. An excellent choice for bike tours in Santiago is [Paseos en Bicicleta](#). [Read more...](#)  
[See more photos...](#)





**Explore the desert**

If adventure is why you came, the choices are as varied as the visitors. Moon Valley with its naturally sculpted salt formations and Salar de Atacama (salt lake) with its three types of flamingos are the most often visited sites, easily reached from all hotels. If you are an early riser, don't miss the trip to El Tatio, home to active geysers. [Read more...](#) [See more photos of the desert...](#)





### See the world through Pablo Neruda's eyes

Nobel prize-winning poet Pablo Neruda so loved Valparaíso that he searched the city for the perfect location to build his hillside home. He wanted to be able to see the ocean and watch the town from his favorite chair on one of its upper floors. With a multi-language audio tour of his home, you'll learn fascinating facts about the man and his eclectic home. [See more photos of Valparaíso...](#)



### **Shoot the flamingos at the salt flat**

That's shooting with a camera. Salar de Atacama (the salt flats) has the most unusual, thick textured granular covering of salt and lithium that only a photograph could describe. All that salt attracts hundreds of flamingos. Los Flamencos National Reserve offers incredible views of three species of flamingos, and beautiful sunsets over the lake. [Read more...](#)





### **Gaze forever at hand-carved flowers**

These flowers will never die. They are hand-carved from wood by some very talented crafters in Pucon. Looking just like a typical florist's road-side stand from the street, it's only when you get up close that you realize these are not the real thing. Beautiful to look at and very reasonably priced, you can't afford not to bring home a bouquet. [See more photos...](#)





### **Walking tours to see architecture**

Within minutes of the center of Santiago, you can see dozens of interesting significant architectural examples. The start of any walking tour will probably be Plaza de Armas, the proverbial heart of Santiago. With cathedrals, post office, museum, as well as the animated street performers and impromptu art shows, there's always something to see here. [Read more...](#) See more photos [here](#) and [here](#).





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### **Have a barbie for lunch**

Americans know them as Bar-B-Que's, but in Chile they use the Aussie term "Barbie." Either way you say it, an outdoor lunch or dinner can't be beat. In the Atacama desert, the chefs from Alto Atacama do an amazing lunch for their guests or you could go eco-touristic and have a lamb roast at a local's home. [Read more...](#) [See more photos of the Alto Atacama...](#) [See more photos of cultural tourism at work in Chile...](#)





### **Watch the surf at Vina del Mar**

On the coast, immediately adjacent to Valparaiso, sets the wonderful community of Vina del Mar. With a great long promenade, you can walk, exercise, eat or drink and never miss a single wave crashing onto the great, sandy beach. Sunrises over the hills or sunsets over the ocean make great bookends to your day. [See more photos of Vina del Mar...](#)





**Take a thermal bath in a lush green valley**

[Termas Geometricas](#) (near Pucon) is a phenomenal blend of rich, red architectural shapes, leading to any of 17 slate-covered hot-springs pools, spread out in a canyon-like setting. Waterfalls, rising mists, some snow up above and soothing warm waters all spell nothing but relaxation, whether you come for an hour or for the day. [See more photos...](#)





**Watching the sun go down**

[Hotel Antumalal](#), on the banks of Lake Villarica, in Pucon offers the ultimate location for your adventures in southern Chile. Within an hour's drive, you can be boating, hiking, biking, volcano climbing, shopping or skiing...all on the same day. As the day winds to a close, beat it back to the hotel for a gorgeous sunset view, a fabulous dinner, maybe a massage and then retire to your own room with roaring fireplace. [See more photos...](#)



### Drinks and appetizers, oh my!

**Piegari Ristorante** (located in the Noi Vitacura hotel; Av. Nueva Costanera 3736; Santiago; Telephone (56-2) 941 80 00) is the newest location for this 16 year-old Italian dining experience. Wine selection is huge (that's their back wall folks.) For seafood lovers, there are no less than 11 seafood appetizers. The Calamares a la Romana were fried just perfectly and made a superb side to a wonderfully large Caesar salad. Not a seafood lover? There were 13 other non-seafood appetizers to choose from – the Carpaccio di Manzo and Empanada Vitello being a couple favorites. [Read more...](#)



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### **Hike Moon Valley**

Hiking Valle de la Luna (Moon Valley) opens the eyes to so many unique terrestrial formations, from stone, to sand to salt, in shapes that defy the imagination. Make sure you have your camera at sunset for luscious light plays off the colored hills. [Read more...](#)





### Santiago's choice of restaurants is unbelievable.

Whatever your taste, there's bound to be one to please your palate. **Liguria** (19 Avenida Luis Thayer Ojeda; Santiago; Telephone (56-2) 231 13 93) is a two-story family style Italian restaurant with a large, diverse selection of entrees. Pastas and seafood selections rock the menu. Ask to be seated upstairs and try for a table overlooking the railing. From this perch, you'll be able to take in all the artwork on the two-story high walls, people watch the diners below, and listen to the band if they are performing in the piano corner. [Read more...](#)





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#### **Take a wine tasting trip**

The weather in Chile is perfect – especially if you are a grape. With mountain air currents, breezes off the ocean and a reasonable amount of precipitation, you'll find grapes growing everywhere around Santiago. To the north you'll find them growing in the Aconcagua Valley, to the south in the Maipo and Colchaqua valleys and to the east in the picturesque Casablanca Valley. The Colchaqua Valley was named best Wine Region of the World in 2005 by Wine Enthusiast magazine. [Read more...](#)





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### **Skiing in summer**

How about skiing a volcano? No, the heat doesn't melt all the snow. At Volcano Villarica (shown here), you can even hike to the top and slide all the way back down.

Skiing is big in Chile from mid-June through late September. It offers North Americans the perfect opportunity to give those skis a mid-year workout on Chile's famous ski adventures such as Portillo, Tres Valles or Ski Arpa. [Read more...](#) [See more photos...](#)





### **Dig the graffiti in Valparaiso**

As you walk (or drive) around the hilly town of Valparaiso, you are treated to graffiti taken to a new level. Wonderful artwork stretches for an entire city block in some areas. From fanciful to down-right masterful, the artists of Valparaiso have taken the stone walls from utilitarian to awe-inspiring. [See more photos...](#)





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### **Try counting all the stars**

Done for the day? Don't go to bed early, the night skies are something to behold. The giant ALMA telescope project won't open until 2014, but every night you can see more stars here with the naked eye than most anywhere else on earth. [Read more...](#) [See more night skies from Tierra Atacama...](#)



Thanks for viewing. I hope you enjoyed the photos. My greatest joy in traveling is capturing beautiful images and sharing them with others. It's not as good as being there, but hopefully you'll find the opportunity to go and see for yourself sometime soon. If you do plan to visit, drop me a line and I'd be happy to share some ideas.

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