

The Best of Chile

Chile's tremendous length covers a hugely diverse array of landscapes, from the desolate moonscape of Chile's Atacama Desert, to the fertile vineyards of the Central Valley, to the lush rainforests of the Lake District, down to the magnificent glaciers and peaks of Patagonia—not to mention more than 4,830km (3,000 miles) of coastline and Easter Island. It's truly mind-boggling to think of how many different experiences a traveler can have in just 2 or 3 weeks in this South American nation. The following is a list of the best Chile has to offer, including hotels, restaurants, and outdoor activities—so read on and start planning!

1 THE MOST UNFORGETTABLE TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

- **Discovering the Madcap Streets of Valparaíso:** The ramshackle, colorful, and sinuous streets of Valparaíso offer a walking tour unlike any other. Antique Victorians and tin-walled buildings cling to steep hillsides, roads and walkways wind haphazardly around the slopes like a rabbit's warren, and rickety funiculars lift visitors to the tops of hills. Beyond the fun of exploring this city, a handful of the region's best restaurants and boutique hotels can be found here, too. Poetic, chaotic, and enigmatic, Valparaíso embodies the soul of its most famous denizen, Pablo Neruda, like no other. See chapter 7.
- **Visiting the Valley of the Moon:** The barren beauty of the Atacama desert presents a surreal odyssey that plays out the sci-fi fantasies of every youth. As the sun rises and falls upon this rarified, ethereal landscape of timeless volcanoes, serrated mountains, and striated mesas, some of nature's most foreboding glories are reinvented again and again as the palette shifts from beige and golden brown to improbable pinks, blues, and greens, and silhouettes recast the imagination to thoughts of lost civilizations. See chapter 9.
- **From Ocean to the World's Highest Lake:** Only 200km (124 miles) separate the Pacific Ocean from Lake Chungará, one of the world's highest bodies of water. Head up the lush Lluta Valley, dramatically hemmed in by desert walls featuring giant geoglyphs centuries old. Time crunches and space can be dizzying as you ascend high altitude terrain quickly. Take it slow, immersing yourself in the wondrous sights, from colonial churches to perfect snowcapped volcanoes and the world's highest trees along with teeming wildlife. See chapter 9.
- **Stargazing in the Southern Hemisphere's Clearest Skies:** Northern Chile's dry skies are some of the clearest in the world, which is why so many international research teams have flocked to this region to erect multimillion-dollar observatories. There are plenty of stargazing opportunities for the amateur, too. The area around La Serena has several observatories geared to casual visitors. A couple of hotels,

including Elqui Domos in the Elqui Valley, have their own telescopes; or you can book a night tour with a degreed guide who can point out Southern Hemisphere constellations and other celestial wonders. The stunning Elqui Valley also offers a handful of wonderful accommodations choices geared to travelers looking to immerse themselves in outdoor pursuits and achieve holistic equanimity. See chapter 8.

- **Sailing the Quiet Fjords of Southern Chile:** Quietly sailing through the lush beauty of Chile's southern fjords is an accessible experience that all can afford. Budget travelers get a kick out of Navimag's 3-day sail between Puerto Montt and Puerto Natales, mid-range travelers enjoy Skorpios's programmed journeys to hot springs and the Chiloé coast, and the luxury market loves the freedom of a chartered yacht. These pristine, remote fjords rival the drama and beauty of Norway's fjords, and often the camaraderie that grows between passengers, in the end, is what makes for such a fulfilling trip. See chapter 11.
- **Traveling to the End of the World:** It's a tough, crunchy drive along 1,000km (620 miles) of gravel road, but that is precisely why Chile's "Southern Highway" has kept the crowds at bay. This natural wonderland, saturated in green and hemmed in by jagged, snowcapped peaks, offers a journey for those seeking to travel through some of Chile's most remote and stunning territory. It can be done in a variety of directions and segments, but you'll need a rental car unless

you have a lot of time. There are plenty of great stops along the way, including rainforest walks, the idyllic mountain valley of Futaleufú, the wet primeval forests of Pumalín and Parque Queulat, Puyuhuapi and its thermal spas, and the untouched wilds around Lake General Carrera. Top it off with Mt. Fitz Roy and Torres del Paine near the southern tip of the continent, crossing through Argentina. See chapters 12 and 13.

- **Glimpsing the Cuernos and Torres del Paine:** It's the iconic image of Patagonia, one of the most stunning horizons on the planet. Many make the arduous journey to the end of the world without ever actually seeing the majestic horns and towers that make up the Paine Massif. Those who are fortunate enough to be awarded with even a quick glance through the stormy clouds will never, ever forget the sight. See chapter 13.
- **Exploring Easter Island:** The poster child of Chile, Easter Island or "Rapa Nui," is famous for its ethereal moai sculptures that defy hyperbole, regardless of how many tourist brochure images of them you've seen. Traveling to the world's most remote island—it's located farthest away from land than any other island—will make for an unforgettable odyssey. The entire island is a veritable living museum; it boasts two gorgeous beaches, phenomenal scuba diving in indigo blue water, wild horses, and a rich Polynesian culture that has survived against all odds. See chapter 14.

2 THE MOST CHARMING SMALL TOWNS

- **San Pedro de Atacama:** Quaint, unhurried, and built of adobe brick, San Pedro de Atacama has drawn travelers the world over who have come to experience the mellow charm and New Age spirituality that waft through the dusty

roads of this town. Its location in the driest desert in the world makes for starry skies and breathtaking views of the weird and wonderful land formations that are just a stone's throw away. A distinctive collection of adobe hotels,

which embody so effortlessly the concept of rustic chic, completes the town's lost pueblo ambience. See chapter 9.

- **Putre:** At a breathtaking 3,500m (11,500 ft.), splendidly backed by the double summits of the 5,775m (19,000-ft.) Taapacá Volcano, this tranquil Aymara village is a compelling vision of Andean culture. With 17th- to 19th-century stone portals flanking doors at many houses and a charming central square, it's a pretty place, reminiscent of pre-colonial Inca villages. Putre is the gateway to Chile's altiplano, and many tiny colonial villages nearby are still well off the beaten track. See chapter 9.
- **Pucón:** Not only was Pucón bestowed with a stunning location at the skirt of a smoking volcano and the shore of a glittering lake, but it's also Chile's self-proclaimed adventure capital, offering so many outdoor activities that you could keep busy for a week. But Pucón also has plenty of low-key activities if your idea of a vacation is plopping yourself down on a beach. You'll find everything you want and need without forfeiting small-town charm (that is, if you don't come with the Jan and Feb crowds). Rough-hewn wood restaurants, pubs, and crafts stores fill downtown, blending harmoniously with the forested surroundings. See chapter 10.
- **Frutillar & Puerto Varas:** Built by German immigrants who settled here in the early 1900s, these neighboring towns bear the clear stamp of Prussian order and workmanship, from the crisp lines of trees to the picturesque, shingled homes and tidy plazas ringed with roses. If you're lucky, you can still catch a few old-timers chatting in German over coffee and *küchen* (cake). Both towns feature a glorious view of Volcán Osorno and a lakefront address, a picture-postcard location that makes for an excellent boardwalk stroll. If that isn't enough, both towns also offer above-par lodging and a few of the best restaurants in the country. See chapter 10.
- **Futaleufú:** Nestled in a green valley surrounded by an amphitheater of craggy, snow-encrusted peaks, Futaleufú is made of colorful, clapboard homes and unpaved streets, and is, without a doubt, one of the prettiest villages in Chile. The population of 1,200 swells during the summer, when the hordes descend for rafting adventures on the nearby Class V river; but it hasn't changed the town's fabric too dramatically, and locals rarely saunter past a visitor without a tip of the hat and a "*Buenas tardes.*" See chapter 12.
- **Caleta Tortel:** This remarkable little logging town near the very end of the Carretera Austral is an unreal, S-shaped place suspended somewhere between the steep slopes of a cypress forest and the pistachio green waters at the mouth of the Baker River. Wood-shingled houses cling precariously to the hillside, and cypress wood walkways and boats are the only way to get around. Cars are banished to a lot at the end of the Carretera Austral—even the fire truck is a boat, just like in Venice. Hiking trails and fishermen's boats can take you to even remoter spots, including glaciers. See chapter 12.
- **Puerto Natales:** Set on the stunning shores of the Ultima Esperanza fjord, with the rugged steppe to the east and giant mountains to the north and west, this Patagonian outpost is a modern mecca for adventurers. Nestled within the wind-ravaged streets are cozy cafes, lovely inns, funky bistros, and bookstores, and nature-lovers can head into or out of one of the finest pieces of wilderness in the world, nearby Torres del Paine National Park. You may think it's just a jumping-off point, but you'll find Natales to be friendly, warm, and rich with memory-making moments. See chapter 13.

3 THE BEST OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

• **Skiing & Snowboarding the Andes:**

Taking to the mountains not only has a certain cachet but also, in terms of exhilarating terrain, convivial ambience, and affordability, the Andes deliver awesome skiing and snowboarding opportunities in Chile from June to October. **Portillo** has been around for 54 years, and its steep chutes still raise fear in the hearts of those about to make the descent. **Valle Nevado** and **Termas de Chillán** have a full infrastructure that includes state-of-the-art spas. And, the après ski scene in the Andes is certainly ebullient. Heliskiing companies and **Ski Arpa**, a Snowcat-serviced resort, can get you to terrain where the only living thing you'll see is a condor sailing through the sky. See chapter 7.

• **Follow in Darwin's footsteps and hike to the summit of Parque Nacional La Campana:**

Less than an hour's drive from Santiago, the precipitous lookout point of this lush national park was immortalized by Charles Darwin in *Voyage of the Beagle*; Darwin eulogized that never had he enjoyed a day so much than the one spent atop this mountain. It is a challenging but infinitely rewarding 8-hour trek to reach the summit at 5,905 feet. There are also several tamer trails which offer the unique opportunity to trek through dense concentrations of Palma Chilena, the world's southernmost species of palm tree. See chapter 7.

• **Summitting a Volcano:**

There's something more thrilling about summiting a volcano than any old mountain, especially when the volcano threatens to blow at any given time. Chile is home to a large share of the world's volcanoes, some of which are perfectly conical and entirely feasible to climb, such as

Volcán Villarrica in Pucón and **Volcán Osorno** near Puerto Varas. Active Villarrica is a relatively moderate climb to the gaseous crater, followed by a fun slide on your rear down a human toboggan chute. Osorno offers a more technical climb, roping up for a crampon-aided walk past glacier crevasses and caves. In the far north, perfect conical volcanoes include **Parícuta**, east of Arica, and **Licancabur**, near San Pedro, both on the border with Bolivia. And in southern Aysén, ice fields around **San Valentín** beckon adventurous climbers. See chapters 9, 10, and 12.

• **Rafting & Kayaking the Futaleufú River or Pacific Ocean:**

With churning river sections that are frightening enough to be dubbed "Hell" and "The Terminator," the Class V Futaleufú River, or the "Fu," as it's known, is solemnly revered by rafting and kayaking enthusiasts around the world as one of the most difficult to descend. A little too much white-knuckle excitement for your nerves? Rafting companies offer short-section rafting trips on the Futaleufú and down the tamer, crystal-line waters of the neighboring Espolón River—kayak schools use this stretch, too. The scenery here redefines mountain beauty. An alternative is sea kayaking along the Patagonian channels or around Isla Damas, at the southern fringe of the Atacama Desert, renowned for their teeming wildlife; see chapters 10 and 12.

• **Casting a Line for Jumbo Trout:**

Chile has literally thousands of spots for fly-fishing, from the Lake District all the way down to the sub-Antarctic wilderness of Tierra del Fuego. Above all, the many lodges along the remote Carretera Austral draw fishing aficionados from

around the world to rivers and lakes full of trout, weighing in from a pound to the hefty 8- to 10-pounders around Villa O'Higgins at the end of the road. Remember that the farther south you go, the shorter the season gets. See chapters 5 and 12.

- **Trekking in Torres del Paine:** Torres del Paine is one of the most spectacular national parks in the world, with

hundreds of kilometers of trails through ever-changing landscapes of jagged peaks and one-of-a-kind granite spires, undulating meadows, milky turquoise lakes and rivers, and mammoth glaciers. The park has a well-organized system of *refugios* and campgrounds, but there are also several hotels, and visitors can access the park's major highlights on a day hike. See chapter 13.

4 THE BEST SPLURGE HOTELS

- **Ritz-Carlton, Santiago** (☎ 2/470-8500; www.ritzcarlton.com): If old-world grandeur, superlative service, and flawless attention to detail are at the top of your list, you'll want to stay at the Ritz. This hotel lives up to its luxurious brand name with such amenities as a heated pool (a novelty in Chile) and serene spa, plus a convenient location close to some of the city's finest restaurants. The glass-domed top floor affords beautiful panoramas of the city and the Andes. For the ultimate in decadence, soak in a bath of carmenère wine, prepared by your very own bath butler, then head down to the butch bar, brimming with brass, leather, and mahogany, which offers an unholy alliance of top shelf liquors, cigars, and delectable snacks well into the early hours. See p. 92.
- **Hotel del Mar, Viña del Mar** (☎ 32/250-0800; www.hoteldelmar.cl): Viña's new Sheraton pales next to the classic Hotel del Mar, with its central location, regal Greco-Roman decor, and Monte Carlo-style casino. Best of all, everything's within reach, including the beach, just a hop across the street. For families, there's a children's center and proximity to kid-pleasing carriage rides and ice cream stands. See p. 128.
- **Casa Higuera, Valparaíso** (☎ 2/657-3950; www.hotelcasahiguera.cl):

Clinging to a hillside above the emblematic city, this restored mansion is now a sumptuous boutique hotel that defies hyperbole: gorgeous decor, luxurious bathrooms, views, service, gourmet cuisine, and the only hotel swimming pool in town. See p. 147.

- **Hacienda Los Lingues, near San Fernando** (☎ 2/431-0510; www.losingues.com): For pure old-world faded grandeur, step back in time to the 17th century with a visit to one of Chile's oldest hotels, located in the rural heartland of the Central Valley south of Santiago. Los Lingues has been in the same family's hands for more than 400 years, and each venerable room has been lovingly and individually decorated, with personal touches such as family antiques, photos, and other collectibles. If you are looking for high class and idiosyncratic character—not a high-end contemporary resort—this antique property will live long in the memory. See p. 173.
- **Clos Apalta Casitas, Santa Cruz** (☎ 72/321-803; www.closapalta.cl): If money is no object, a couple of nights staying in one of the four deluxe *casitas* at Clos Apalta's state-of-the-art winery are the perfect indulgence for any oenophile. Nestled on a gentle slope high above the expansive Apalta Valley in the Colchagua Valley, this is one of the country's

most exclusive lodgings. Each secluded, one-room cottage is pared-down yet sophisticated, and an adjoining deck provides what is certainly the best view from any lodging unit in Chile's wine country. Horseback riding, gourmet meals, wine tastings, and tours, and a bottle of Chile's finest wine are included in the package. See p. 176.

- **Hotel Awasi**, San Pedro de Atacama (☎ 2/233-9641; www.awasi.cl): This luxury newcomer to the all-inclusive scene in San Pedro de Atacama combines effortless style, gracious service, and superlative amenities in a rustic adobe setting that blends harmoniously with the landscape. With your own private tour guide and 4x4 vehicle at your disposal, you are guaranteed the freedom to experience this stunning area without compromise. With one of the finest chefs in the region at the helm in the kitchen, dining under the stars doesn't get much better than this. See p. 220.
- **Hotel Antumalal**, Pucón (☎ 45/441011; www.antumalal.cl): This low-slung, Bauhaus-influenced country inn is one of the most special places to lodge in Chile. Located high above the shore of Lake Villarrica and a sloping, terraced garden, the hotel literally sinks into its surroundings, offering a cozy ambience and an excellent view of the evening sunset. A warm welcome and a room with no lock are all part of making you feel at home. The inn has outstanding cuisine, too. See p. 261.

- **Hacienda Tres Lagos** (☎ 2/333-4122 in Santiago; www.haciendatreslagos.com): Nestled near the southwest corner of spectacular Lake General Carrera, this *estancia*-style resort has a lake—and beach—of its own. Accommodations vary from hotel suites in the main lodge to family-oriented, independent *cabañas* to romantic yet very modern luxury apartments, but all share the lakefront view of Lago Negro and the Patagonian Andes beyond, and all are finely decorated with great attention to detail. As befits its location, it offers plenty of outdoor activities on foot, horseback, boats, or farther afield to the Tamango Nature Preserve to try to glimpse the endangered huemul deer. See p. 360.
- **explora Patagonia Hotel Salto Chico**, Torres del Paine National Park (☎ 866/750-6699 in the U.S., or 2/206-6060 in Santiago; www.explora.com): This is the hotel that put Torres del Paine on the map and created a new sense of outdoor luxury, where great hiking and divine service go hand in hand. And while \$600 (£400) per person per night may be tough to swallow, consider that your stay here includes everything from superb bilingual guides, hikes, and horseback rides to fresh-baked cookies, an excellent wine list, and a spa. Plush beds, soaker tubs, and all meals are also included. See chapter 13.

5 THE BEST MODERATELY PRICED HOTELS

- **Hotel Orly**, Santiago (☎ 2/231-8947; www.hotelorly.cl): This is my all-around favorite for reasonable prices; an absolutely ideal location near the Metro, shops, and restaurants; cheerful service; and coziness. Like the Vilafranca (below), this former mansion has rooms of varying sizes, so book accordingly. See p. 90.
- **Vilafranca Petit Hotel**, Santiago (☎ 2/232-1413; www.vilafranca.cl): Santiago's hectic pace slows down when you step into this delightful B&B. Steeped in French Provençal decor, this former

home has been converted into a boutique hotel that is economically priced and a cozy place to stay; note that some doubles are tight. See p. 91.

- **Hotel Agora**, Viña del Mar (☎ 32/269-4669; www.hotelagora.cl): There is a plethora of midrange lodging options in Viña, but this Miami-style, art-deco confection has fresh, contemporary decor, a great location, and gracious hosts. The hotel is tucked away on a street just 3 blocks from the beach. See p. 135.
- **El Puesto**, Puerto Río Tranquilo (☎ 2/196-4555; www.elpuesto.cl): One of Patagonia's top places to stay is this three-room boutique hotel in tiny Puerto Río Tranquilo, on Lake General Carrera. While not directly on the lake-shore, family-run El Puesto is the perfect place to relax after a day of wilderness activities, from hiking on glaciers, visits to the beautiful Marble

Cathedral and Chapel in the lake, to soaring through forest canopies. The whole place exudes a cozy, light atmosphere. See p. 360.

- **Indigo**, Puerto Natales (☎ 61/413609): To say this former backpackers' hang-out has been transformed is a major understatement. It's a little too big to call it a boutique hotel, yet it is a jewel indeed, from top-floor whirlpool and sauna to the clean-cut intimacy of the rooms, accessed through a spider's web of eucalyptus, black steel, and concrete walkways. While it also has the finest views of the Last Hope Sound and glaciers beyond, it's the most convenient place for a stroll into town. The previous, rickety backpackers' haunt—still charmingly clad in weather-beaten shingles—now boasts a very contemporary ground-floor restaurant and second-story lounge in airy, pale woods. See p. 383.

6 THE BEST DINING EXPERIENCES

- **Aquí Está Coco**, Santiago (☎ 2/235-8649): This place is wildly popular with foreign visitors, with good reason: The kitschy atmosphere is as fun as the food is mouthwatering. The restaurant is spread over two levels of a 140-year-old home and festooned with oddball and nautically themed gadgets and curios. Arrive a little early and enjoy an aperitif in the cavelike, brick cellar lounge. Seafood is the specialty here. See p. 101.
- **Astrid y Gastón**, Santiago (☎ 2/650-9125): Astrid y Gastón is the best restaurant in Santiago—the reason you'll often need to make reservations days in advance. The chef uses the finest ingredients, combined so that each plate bursts with flavor and personality; here, you'll find French, Spanish, Peruvian, and Japanese influences, as well as
- impeccable service, an on-site sommelier, and a lengthy wine list. If you can afford it, don't miss dining here. See p. 101.
- **Sukalde**, Santiago (☎ 2/665-1017). For adventurous diners who are not averse to inhaling their food and who revel in all things fusion, Suklade offers a culinary odyssey like no other in Santiago. Chef Matias Paloma graduated from the hallowed El Bulli in Spain to create his own dynamic menu, and it's made the critics froth by combining interesting and unexpected ingredients with aplomb. See p. 102.
- **Bar Liguria**, Santiago (☎ 2/235-7914): The two Bar Ligurias in Providencia are equally lively and loads of fun, often filling up before 10pm and spilling out onto tables on the sidewalk. Everyone loves the Ligurias: actors,

artists, businessmen, and locals converge here in a vibrant *mélange* that always feels celebratory. The Chilean fare is hearty and delicious, and the sharply dressed waiters rushing to and fro provide quick, attentive service. See p. 103.

- **Pasta e Vino**, Valparaíso (☎ 32/249-6187): There's no view of the city harbor, but the mouthwatering cuisine at Pasta e Vino makes this restaurant one of the top five in Chile—which is why you'll often need to book days, even weeks, in advance. With its limited opening hours—which serves to heighten its exclusivity all the more—it really is the Holy Grail of dining in Valparaíso. Pasta e Vino virtually launched the culinary revolution in Valparaíso, offering a warm, intimate ambience, with brick walls and wooden tables, gourmet Italian cuisine that is consistently good, a well-chosen wine list, and owner-attended service. See p. 149.
- **El Chiriquito**, Zapallar (☎ 33/741024): El Chiriquito, located in the upscale beach enclave Zapallar, is surely the most famous restaurant along Chile's Central Coast, and with good reason. Is there any more delightful way to spend a sunny day than to dine alfresco on seafood while watching the waves crash and pelicans swoop about? Alternatively, head south to the tiny harbor at Maitencillo for ultrafresh shellfish sold at simple seafood stalls near the beach. See p. 154.
- **Maracuyá**, Arica (☎ 58/227600): The Azapa and Lluta valleys are Chile's

tropical fruit orchards, and this restaurant makes ample use of its namesake, the passion fruit (*maracuyá*, in Spanish). For seafood, it's Arica's best choice, with fruit flavored sweet-and-sour sauces for the varied choices on the menu. Couple this with its location, perched in a villa almost over the water on a rocky stretch of coastline near the Morro, and you have one fine restaurant indeed. See p. 234.

- **Latitude 42**, at the Yan Kee Way Lodge, Ensenada (☎ 65/212030): Worth the drive from Puerto Varas, this gorgeous restaurant boasts superb views of the Volcán Osorno (Osorno Volcano) and delectable cuisine served in a beautiful dining room. The talented chef uses locally grown produce to create imaginative dishes that come as close to nouvelle cuisine as you're ever going to get in southern Chile. Service is impeccable and there's a cigar bar and a cellar for wine tasting, as well. See p. 300.
- **Última Esperanza**, Puerto Natales (☎ 61/411391): Few places in Patagonia compare with this old favorite in Puerto Natales that boasts a roughly 20-year tradition. The decor is nothing to write home about, but restaurants are about food, right? Última Esperanza has the best food in Magallanes, even beating out its rivals in the big city of Punta Arenas. It makes the best of Puerto Natales' location—on the ocean but near Patagonian ranches—to combine meats and seafood in a mean *curanto*, also serving such fine fish as conger eel and the renowned *centolla*, or king crab. See p. 385.

7 THE BEST MUSEUMS

- **Palacio de la Real Audiencia/Museo Histórico Nacional**, Santiago (☎ 2/411-7010): The National History Museum holds a superb collection of more than 70,000 colonial-era pieces,

from furniture to suits of armor to home appliances. This fascinating grab bag of artifacts is laid out in 16 display rooms within the lemon-colored, neo-classical Palacio de la Real, built in

1807 and the historic site of the first Chilean congressional session. The museum will give you insight into the history of the lives of Chileans, and it's conveniently located on the Plaza de las Armas. See p. 108.

- **Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino**, Santiago (☎ 2/688-7348): More than 1,500 objects related to indigenous life and culture throughout the Americas make the Pre-Columbian Museum one of the best in Santiago. Artifacts include textiles, metals, paintings, figurines, and ceramics from Mexico to Chile. All objects are handsomely lit and mounted throughout seven exhibition rooms that are divided into the Mesoamerica, Intermedia, Andina, and Surandina regions of Latin America. The museum is housed in the old Royal Customs House built in 1807. If you need a break, there's a patio with a small cafe and a good bookstore to browse. See p. 110.
- **Iglesia, Convento y Museo de San Francisco**, Santiago (☎ 2/638-3238): One step into this museum and you'll feel like you've been instantly beamed out of downtown Santiago. This is the oldest standing building in Santiago and home to a serene garden patio where the only sounds are a trickling fountain and the cooing of pigeons. The museum boasts 54 paintings depicting the life and death of San Francisco, one of the largest and best-conserved displays of 17th-century art in South America. On the altar of the church, you'll see the famous *Virgen del Socorro*, the first Virgin Mary icon in Chile. See p. 112.
- **Casa Pablo Neruda**, Isla Negra (☎ 35/461-2844; www.fundacionneruda.org): This was Nobel Prize-winning poet Pablo Neruda's favorite home, and although his other residences in Valparaíso and Santiago are as eccentric and absorbing, this is the best preserved of the three. The home is stuffed with books by his favorite authors and the whimsical curios, trinkets, and toys he collected during his travels around the world, including African masks, ships in bottles, butterflies, and more. The museum can be found in Isla Negra, south of Valparaíso. See p. 195.
- **Museo de Colchagua**, Santa Cruz (☎ 72/821050; www.museocolchagua.cl): In terms of historical range and scope, this is arguably Chile's best museum. You'll find a stunning collection of everything from pre-Hispanic objects throughout the Americas and local Indian artifacts to Spanish conquest-era helmets and artillery and *huaso* ponchos, and more. This museum is a not-to-be-missed stop while visiting the wine country. Unbelievably, the museum is really the private collection of a local man who earned his fortune in bomb manufacturing and arms dealing, and because he cannot leave the country (and risk arrest by the FBI), he has reinvested in projects such as this in his hometown. See p. 178.
- **Museo Arqueológico Padre le Paige**, San Pedro de Atacama (☎ 55/851002): This little museum will come as an unexpected surprise for its wealth of indigenous artifacts, such as "Miss Chile," a leathered mummy whose skin, teeth, and hair are mostly intact, as well as a display of skulls that show the creepy ancient custom of cranial deformation practiced by the elite as a status symbol. The Atacama Desert is the driest in the world, and this climate has produced some of the best-preserved artifacts in Latin America, on view here. See p. 217.
- **Museo Arqueológico San Miguel de Azapa**, Arica (☎ 58/205555; www.uta.cl/masma): For anyone with even a minimal interest in history and archaeology, this small museum belongs to the top attractions in the Western

Hemisphere. Around 5,000 B.C.—long before even the Egyptians began to mummify their dead—the Chinchorro culture developed a technique of its own to preserve bodies for eternity. The displays outline the entire history of pre-Columbian cultures in the Arica area through Tihuanaco and the Inca periods. The museum also has a section devoted to recent and contemporary Aymara culture in the area. See p. 232.

- **Museo Regional de Magallanes**, Punta Arenas (☎ 61/248840): The Museo Regional de Magallanes is the former home of one of Patagonia's wealthiest families. Tapestries, furniture from France, Italian marble fireplaces, hand-painted wallpaper—this veritable palace

is a testament to the Braun family's insatiable need to match European elite society. Several small salons are devoted to ranching and maritime history, but the grandeur of this museum is really the reason for a visit. See p. 371.

- **Museo Salesiano Maggiorino Borgatello**, Punta Arenas (☎ 61/221001): There's so much on display here that you could spend more than an hour wandering and marveling at the hodgepodge collection of archaeological artifacts, photo exhibits, petroleum production interpretative exhibitions, ranch furniture, industrial gadgets, and, best of all, the macabre collection of stuffed and mounted regional wildlife gathered by a Salesian priest. See p. 370.

8 THE BEST AFTER-DARK FUN

- **Barrio Bellavista**, Santiago: Santiago's bohemian district features various sultry jazz clubs that offer quality lineups of international and local talent. **La Casa en el Aire** (☎ 2/735-6680; www.lacasaenel aire.cl) and **El Perseguidor** (☎ 2/777-6763; www.elperseguidor.cl) are the city's current jazz hot spots, with nightly performances starting around 11pm and a smooth, romantic candlelit ambience. Or stop by the long-time favorite **Club de Jazz** (☎ 2/326-5065; www.clubdejazz.cl), where Louis Armstrong once played and now crooning legends perform to a crowd of impassioned jazz devotees. See p. 122 and 123.
- **Catedral**, Santiago (☎ 2/664-3048): The chic Catedral is one of the capital's most ebullient bars, and it's where the gilded and glamorous gather to preen and strut. Arrive early in the evening to claim one of the coveted outdoor seats on the rooftop patio. See p. 98.
- **Club de Jazz**, Coquimbo (☎ 51/288784): La Serena's prosaic neighbor,

Coquimbo, happens to have the best live jazz bar in Chile, outside of perhaps Santiago, home to another Club de Jazz. Locals would claim that this Club de Jazz, located in the attractive enclave of Barrio Inglés, is the nation's top jazz venue, however, with stellar musicians and a raw and authentic ambience that is lacking in the capital's version. See p. 123.

- **Mamas & Tapas**, Pucón (☎/fax 45/449002): Graze on tapas and appreciate the excellent soundtrack at Pucón's number-one bar, which is never short on atmosphere or musical talent, often courtesy of hip local DJs during the peak summer season. See p. 267.
- **Termas Los Pozones**, Pucón (no phone): The natural setting, 24-hour schedule, and cheap prices of Los Pozones hot springs in Pucón prove a decadent lure for young Chileans and travelers who are keen to keep in a party spirit after the discos have closed up shop for the night. See p. 267.

- **Mama Rosa Bar at Indigo Hotel,** Puerto Natales (☎ 61/413609): After a day out in the blustering weather of Patagonia, slip behind the tall iron door into this converted hostel for a pisco sour (choose from 15 different options), some cool tunes, and warm vibes. Through giant windows, watch the sun set behind the fjords and mountains in the distance and toast the sense of adventure that just oozes through the air here. See p. 383.
- **Topatangi, Hanga Roa** (☎ 32/255-1554): From Thursday to Saturday nights in Hanga Roa, the dance floor at Topatangi Pub floods with Rapa Nui 20- and 30-something island girls and guys grooving to the sounds of local bands that jam everything from traditional sounds to '70s American rock. Don't go before 10pm and don't leave before sunrise. See p. 442.