



## CHILE (with a focus on the city of Valdivia)

By Haley Marceau

### Background:

#### *Land and Climate*

A long and narrow coastal country on the west side of the Andes Mountains, Chile stretches over 2,880 miles north to south but only 265 miles at its widest point east to west. This encompasses a remarkable variety of landscapes; the northern Atacama Desert contains great mineral wealth, primarily copper and nitrates. The relatively small Central Valley, which includes Santiago, dominates the country in terms of population and agricultural resources. Southern Chile is rich in forests, grazing lands, and features a string of volcanoes and lakes. The southern coast is a labyrinth of fjords, inlets, canals, twisting peninsulas, and islands. The Andes Mountains are located on the eastern border.

Chile is the longest north-south country in the world, and also claims 480,000 square miles of Antarctica as part of its territory. Chile controls Easter Island, Robinson Crusoe Island in the Juan Fernández Islands, and Sala y Gómez Island, the easternmost islands of Polynesia. Easter Island is today a province of Chile.

The climate of Chile comprises a wide range of weather conditions across a large geographic scale, extending across 38 degrees in latitude, making generalizations difficult. According to the Köppen system, Chile within its borders hosts at least seven major climatic subtypes, ranging from desert in the north, to alpine tundra and glaciers in the east and south east, humid subtropical in Easter Island, Oceanic in the south and Mediterranean climate in central Chile.

There are four seasons in most of the country: summer (December to February), autumn (March to May), winter (June to August), and spring (September to November).

**Valdivia** is a city in southern Chile. The city is named after its founder Pedro de Valdivia and is located at the confluence of the Calle-Calle, Valdivia and Cau-Cau Rivers, approximately 20 miles east of the coastal towns of Corral and Niebla. Since October 2007, Valdivia has been the capital of the newly created Los Ríos Region and is also the capital of Valdivia Province.

Valdivia has a temperate rainy climate with Mediterranean influences. In short Valdivia features a Marine west coast climate, an oceanic climate with a



distinct drying trend during the summer. A similar climate is found in the Pacific Northwest region of North America.

### *History*

About 10,000 years ago, migrating Native Americans settled in fertile valleys and coastal areas of what is present-day Chile. The Incas briefly extended their empire into what is now northern Chile, but the Mapuche (or Araucanians as they were known by the Spaniards) successfully resisted many attempts by the Inca Empire to subjugate them, despite their lack of state organization.

In 1520, while attempting to circumnavigate the earth, Ferdinand Magellan discovered the southern passage now named after him, the Strait of Magellan. The next Europeans to reach Chile were Diego de Almagro and his band of Spanish conquistadors, who came from Peru in 1535 seeking gold. The Spanish encountered various cultures that supported themselves principally through slash-and-burn agriculture and hunting. The conquest of Chile began in earnest in 1540 and was carried out by Pedro de Valdivia, one of Francisco Pizarro's lieutenants, who founded the city of Santiago on February 12, 1541. Although the Spanish did not find the extensive gold and silver they sought, they recognized the agricultural potential of Chile's central valley, and Chile became part of the Spanish Empire.

Conquest of the land took place gradually, and the Europeans suffered repeated setbacks at the hands of the local population. A massive Mapuche insurrection that began in 1553 resulted in Pedro de Valdivia's death and the destruction of many of the colony's principal settlements. Subsequent major uprisings took place in 1598 and in 1655. Each time the Mapuche and other native groups revolted, the southern border of the colony was driven northward. The abolition of slavery by the Spanish crown in 1683 was done in recognition that enslaving the Mapuche intensified resistance rather than cowing them into submission. Despite the royal prohibitions relations remained strained from continual colonialist interference

A national junta in the name of Ferdinand – heir to the deposed king – was formed on September 18, 1810. The Government Junta of Chile proclaimed Chile an autonomous republic within the Spanish monarchy (in memory of this day Chile celebrates its National Day on September 18 each year). After these events, a movement for total independence, under the command of José Miguel Carrera (one of the most renowned patriots) and his two brothers Juan José and Luis Carrera, soon gained a wider following. On February 12, 1818, Chile was proclaimed an independent republic. The political revolt brought little social change, however, and 19th century Chilean society preserved the essence of the stratified colonial social structure, which was greatly influenced by family politics and the Roman Catholic Church. A strong presidency eventually emerged, but wealthy landowners remained powerful.

Toward the end of the 19th century, the government in Santiago consolidated its position in the south by ruthlessly suppressing the Mapuche during the Occupation of Araucanía. In 1881, it signed a treaty with Argentina confirming Chilean sovereignty over the Strait of Magellan. As a result of the War of the Pacific with Peru and Bolivia (1879–83), Chile expanded its territory northward by almost

one-third, eliminating Bolivia's access to the Pacific, and acquired valuable nitrate deposits, the exploitation of which led to an era of national affluence. The Chilean Civil War in 1891 brought about a redistribution of power between the President and Congress, and Chile established a parliamentary style democracy.

By the 1920s, the emerging middle and working classes were powerful enough to elect a reformist president, Arturo Alessandri Palma, whose program was frustrated by a conservative congress. In the 1920s, Marxist groups with strong popular support arose. A military coup led by General Luis Altamirano in 1924 set off a period of great political instability that lasted until 1932. The longest lasting of the ten governments between those years was that of General Carlos Ibáñez del Campo, who briefly held power in 1925 and then again between 1927 and 1931 in what was a de facto dictatorship. By relinquishing power to a democratically elected successor, Ibáñez del Campo retained the respect of a large enough segment of the population to remain a viable politician for more than thirty years, in spite of the vague and shifting nature of his ideology. When constitutional rule was restored in 1932, a strong middle-class party, the Radicals, emerged. It became the key force in coalition governments for the next 20 years. During the period of Radical Party dominance (1932–52), the state increased its role in the economy. In 1952, voters returned Ibáñez del Campo to office for another six years. Jorge Alessandri succeeded Ibáñez del Campo in 1958, bringing Chilean conservatism back into power democratically for another term. The 1964 presidential election of Christian Democrat Eduardo Frei Montalva by an absolute majority initiated a period of major reform. Under the slogan "Revolution in Liberty", the Frei administration embarked on far-reaching social and economic programs, particularly in education, housing, and agrarian reform, including rural unionization of agricultural workers. By 1967, however, Frei encountered increasing opposition from leftists, who charged that his reforms were inadequate, and from conservatives, who found them excessive. At the end of his term, Frei had not fully achieved his party's ambitious goals.

In the 1970 election, Senator Salvador Allende of the Socialist Party of Chile (part of the "Popular Unity" coalition which included the Communists, Radicals, Social-Democrats, dissident Christian Democrats, the Popular Unitary Action Movement, and the Independent Popular Action) became the next President of Chile. An economic depression that began in 1972 bottomed out in 1975, exacerbated by capital flight, plummeting private investment, and withdrawal of bank deposits in response to Allende's socialist program. Production fell and unemployment rose. Allende adopted measures including price freezes, wage increases, and tax reforms, to increase consumer spending and redistribute income downward. Allende's program included advancement of workers' interests, replacing the judicial system with "socialist legality", nationalization of banks and forcing others to bankruptcy, and strengthening "popular militias" known as MIR. By early 1973, inflation was out of control. The crippled economy was further battered by prolonged and sometimes simultaneous strikes by physicians, teachers, students, truck owners, copper workers, and the small business class.

Finally, a military coup overthrew Allende on September 11, 1973. As the armed forces bombarded the presidential palace of (Palacio de La Moneda), Allende reportedly had committed suicide. A military junta, led by General Augusto Pinochet

Ugarte, took over control of the country. The first years of the regime were marked by human rights violations and on October 1973 at least 72 people were murdered by the Caravan of Death. In the time of Pinochet's rule at least 2,115 were killed and at least 27,265 were tortured.

A new Constitution was approved by a controversial plebiscite on September 11, 1980, and General Pinochet became president of the republic for an 8-year term. In the late 1980s, the government gradually permitted greater freedom of assembly, speech, and association, to include trade union and political activity. Chile moved toward a free market economy that saw an increase in domestic and foreign private investment, although the copper industry and other important mineral resources were not opened for competition.

In a plebiscite on October 5, 1988, General Pinochet was denied a second 8-year term as president (56% against 44%). Chileans elected a new president and the majority of members of a two-chamber congress on December 14, 1989. Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin, the candidate of a coalition of 17 political parties called the *Concertación*, received an absolute majority of votes (55%). President Aylwin served from 1990 to 1994, in what was considered a transition period.

In January 2006, Chileans elected their first female president, Michelle Bachelet Jeria, of the Socialist Party and in January 2010, Chileans elected Sebastián Piñera, of the National Renewal party of the right-wing Coalition for Change.

The city of **Valdivia** and Chiloé Island were once the two southernmost enclaves of the Spanish Empire. From 1645 to 1740, the city depended directly on the Viceroyalty of Peru that financed the building of the Valdivian fort system, which turned Valdivia into one of the most fortified cities of the New World.

In the second half of 19th century, Valdivia was the port of entry for German immigrants who were given land and settled in the surrounding areas. The city was severely damaged by the Great Chilean Earthquake of 1960 — the most powerful earthquake ever recorded. Debris and destroyed buildings from the earthquake can still be found in the suburban areas — land subsidence and sediments make navigation of the local rivers complex, with some ruined buildings still adjoining the water.

## People:



### *Population*

Chile's population of around 15.5 million people is a multiethnic population; many descending from European settlers, predominantly the Spanish (Castilian, Andalusian and Basque). The remaining minorities consist of German, Italian, Irish, French, British, Swiss, and Croatian ancestry. There is also a "Mestizo" segment which would derive its European component from colonial Spanish settlers with its

Amerindian component from various tribes (mainly the Mapuche Indians).

About 85% of Chile's population lives in urban areas, with 40% of the entire population living in the Greater Santiago area.

The city of **Valdivia** had 140,559 inhabitants (*Valdivianos*) according to the 2002 census.

### *Language*

Spanish is the primary language spoken in Chile, but is quite distinct from its Latin American neighbors. The Spanish spoken in Chile is distinctively accented and final syllables and "s" sounds are often dropped, and some consonants have a soft pronunciation. Accent varies only very slightly from north to south; more noticeable are the small differences in accent based on social class or whether one lives in the city or the country. Like most languages, "slang" or "*modismos*" are commonly used and are sometimes difficult to identify to the non-Chilean Spanish speaker.

German is spoken to a great extent in southern Chile, either in small countryside pockets or as a second language among the communities of larger cities. Through initiatives such as the English Opens Doors program, the government made English mandatory for students in fifth-grade and above in public schools. Most private schools in Chile start teaching English from kindergarten. Common English words have been absorbed and appropriated into everyday Spanish speech. There are several indigenous languages spoken in Chile: Mapudungun, Quechua, Aymara and Rapa Nui. After the Spanish invasion, Spanish took over as the lingua franca and the indigenous languages have become minority languages, with some now extinct or close to extinction.

### *Religion*

Roman Catholicism is the predominantly practiced religion in Chile and is declared as the national religion with over 70% of the population declaring to be practicing Roman Catholics.

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contribute to the generally free practice of religion. The law at all levels protects this right in full against abuse, either by governmental or private actors. Church and state are officially separate in Chile. The 1999 law on religion prohibits religious discrimination. However, the Catholic Church enjoys a privileged status and occasionally receives preferential treatment. Government officials attend Catholic events as well as major Protestant and Jewish ceremonies.

The Government-observed religious holidays include Christmas, Good Friday, the Feast of the Virgin of Carmen, the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, the Feast of the Assumption, All Saints' Day, and the Feast of the Immaculate Conception as national holidays. The government has recently declared October 31, Reformation Day, a public national holiday, in honor of the Protestant churches of the country.

### *General Attitudes*

Chileans value family, education, and respect. The Chilean disposition is jovial, open and helpful. Manners are very important and formality of language and conduct is always considered important when addressing an elder or stranger. Humor and sarcasm are commonplace among majority of Chileans.

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## Customs and Courtesies:

### *Greetings*

As is typical with most Latin American countries, warm greetings are customary. For women, it is respectful to greet both men and other women of all ages with one kiss on the cheek, generally right cheek to right cheek. For men, when greeting women a kiss on the cheek is appropriate. When men are greeting men, a handshake is acceptable.

### *Visiting and Eating*

Chilean's pride themselves in entertaining and having guests and parties for special events. The home is a very welcome place for guests and visitors where great meals are prepared, cocktails served, and hours of conversation to follow. In some houses, there is a special room for entertaining called a "Quincho" where there is generally a large space with a large table(s) and a pit or stove for barbequing.

Eating out at restaurants is not commonplace, and generally all meals are prepared at home. When eating out, it is generally for a very special occasion when honoring one or many people. For example, mothers day in a multigenerational family or a farewell party for a visiting group of students at a university.



## Lifestyle:

### *Family*

Families are very tight-knit in Chile. It is more common to have two or more children with a large amount of spacing between each child, sometimes more than seven or eight years between. Older generations are revered and highly respected. Divorce is not common like it is in the United States and status of women has not yet reached equality but has made extreme advances over the years.

### *Dating and Marriage*

Dating occurs generally between the ages of 13-30, and public displays of affection are extremely common from the younger age-range. It is not uncommon to walk down a street and see a young couple "necking" on a park bench.

Marriage normally does not occur until later in life, mid-to-late twenties.



### *Diet*

Since Chile is a long and skinny coastal country, the diet largely consists of shellfish and seafood. *Paila* and *Curanto* are common dishes; they are basically a seafood stew/soup.

Fresh fruits and vegetables are also an important part of the diet, but specialty items such as *Paella* (a Spanish dish) and *empanadas con mariscos* are very typical of Chile.

Lunch is the most important meal of the day to all Chileans. Schools and work places shut down for at least one hour, sending everyone home to enjoy lunch with their families. These meals are often the most extravagant of the day, often served with wine (depending on the content of the meal). This meal is typically followed by dessert, *postre*, consisting of fresh fruit.

For dinner, or *la once*, a smaller meal of toast and avocado (*palta*) and cheese is common. This meal is more like a night-time snack than a meal, and is often served with tea or coffee.

### *Recreation*

A great deal of the population takes soap operas (*telenovelas*) very seriously. These TV programs do not hold the same reputation as they do in the United States, they are very serious, and entertaining programs.

Soccer (*futbol*) is a popular past-time and is also taken very seriously. Chile recently played in the 2010 World Cup for the first time in 52 years. Although the team did not advance far in the competition, the entire nation became united with this participation and schools would close down to watch the games when they were aired on television.

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## **Society:**

### *Government*

The Congress of Chile has a 38-seat Senate and a 120-member Chamber of Deputies. Senators serve for 8 years with staggered terms, while deputies are elected every 4 years. The last congressional elections were held on December 13, 2009, concurrently with the presidential election. The Congress is located in the port city of Valparaíso, about 140 kilometres (84 mi) west of the capital, Santiago.

Chile's judiciary is independent and includes a court of appeal, a system of military courts, a constitutional tribunal, and the Supreme Court of Chile. In June 2005, Chile completed a nation-wide overhaul of its criminal justice system. The reform has replaced inquisitorial proceedings with an adversarial system more similar to that of the United States.

Chile is divided into 15 regions, each headed by an intendant appointed by the president. The regions are further divided into provinces, with provincial governors also appointed by the president. Finally, each province is divided into

communes that are administered by municipalities, each with its own mayor and council elected for four-year terms. Each region is designated by a name and a Roman numeral, assigned from north to south. The only exception is the Santiago Metropolitan Region that is designated *RM (Región Metropolitana)*.

### *Economy*

Chile has a dynamic market-oriented economy that is characterized by a high level of foreign trade. During the early 1990s, Chile's reputation as a role model for economic reform was strengthened when the democratic government of Patricio Aylwin – who took over from the military in 1990 – deepened the economic reform initiated by the military government.

In 2006, Chile became the country with the highest nominal GDP per capita in Latin America. The government's role in the economy is mostly limited to regulation, although the state continues to operate copper giant CODELCO and a few other enterprises (there is one state-run bank). Chile is strongly committed to free trade and has welcomed large amounts of foreign investment. Chile has signed free trade agreements (FTAs) with a whole network of countries, including an FTA with the United States that was signed in 2003 and implemented in January 2004.

Chile's overall trade profile has traditionally been dependent upon copper exports. The state-owned firm CODELCO is the world's largest copper-producing company, with recorded copper reserves of 200 years. Chile has made an effort to expand nontraditional exports. The most important non-mineral exports are forestry and wood products, fresh fruit and processed food, fishmeal and seafood, and wine.

The main economic activities in **Valdivia** include tourism, wood pulp manufacturing, forestry, metallurgy, and beer production. The city is also the home of the Universidad Austral de Chile, founded in 1954, and Centro de Estudios Científicos.

### *Transportation*

The most widely used form of transportation in the medium to large sized cities is that of the *colectivo* or the *micro*. A *colectivo* is similar to a taxi but with routes unique to each certain neighborhoods; these routes are identified by certain colors. *Micros* also run a certain route but with a number system. *Micros* are a cheaper form of travel, and students often receive a discounted price Monday through Friday. However, *micros* only operate for certain hours of the day whereas *colectivos* operate at all hours.

### *Education*

The levels of education in Chile are: Pre-school (for children up to 5 years old, optional for 1 grade), Primary school (*Enseñanza básica*, for children from 5–13 years old, divided into 8 grades), Secondary school (*Enseñanza media*, for teenagers from 13–18 years old, divided into 4 grades), and University (a system divided in public or “state” universities and a private system).

Secondary school is also divided into: (1) Scientific-humanities approach: From Tercero Medio (11th grade) in high school, students can choose a major in either science (math, physics, chemistry, biology), or humanities (literature, history, philosophy), which means they will get more lessons in the area of their choice. (2) Technical-Professional education: Students receive 'extra' education in the so-called 'technical' areas, such as electricity, mechanics, metal assembly, etc. This second type of education is more typical of public schools (Liceos), to give students from poorer areas a chance to work right away after completion of highschool, as a way to fund a possible higher education career later.

Students can choose between 25 state universities and over 50 private ones, which are increasingly growing in number. However many of the newer private universities are considered of inferior quality when comparing to the older traditional universities. The difference in quality is accompanied by large differences in prestige rankings.

Many students who come from low-income families find that their chances of admission to universities are diminished. However, many talented students who cannot afford school qualify for scholarships, either from the government or from the universities themselves. For students who obtained high enough scores to enter a public university or to an accredited private university, there is a system of government-backed loans which is offered through several commercial banks, but the amount and terms of the credits not necessarily fit the needs of the students.

### *Health*

The Ministry of Health of, also known as MINSAL, is the cabinet-level administrative office in charge of planning, directing, coordinating, executing, controlling and informing the public health policies formulated by the President of Chile.

Fondo Nacional de Salud also known as FONASA is the funding branch of the Ministry of Health (Chile). The National Health Fund (FONASA), created in 1979 by Decree Law No. 2763, is the financial entity entrusted to collect, manage and distribute state funds for health in Chile. This system is funded completely by the public; notably, all employees pay 7% of their monthly income to FONASA.

More than 12 million beneficiaries benefit from FONASA. Despite universal health care, beneficiaries can opt for more costly private insurance through ISAPRE. Political questions have been raised due to very wealthy beneficiaries opting for ISAPRE and thus generating health care inequity.

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## Contact Information:

### Embassy of Chile

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