

CHILE

"I never thought that the experience with AFS was going to be so great, comfortable and fun. I love being here. I have found wonderful people who have welcomed me and in a short time have become unforgettable. "Chile is just 'cool.' Everything!! Complete!! No more to say, just that from now on I will use my host family's last name as my second last name. They are my second family and that's my way to honor them."

Johanna Sztucki González, sojourner from Germany, 2003

Chile extends along more than half of South America's Pacific coastline, stretching from glacial mountains in the south to the world's most arid desert in the north. In rural areas, Chileans tend to lead quietly paced lives, but Chile's cities, where most people live, are charged with energy. Among South American countries, Chile ranks with the most developed and economically stable, and its lifestyle is one of the most European. Chileans are welcoming and eager to share their culture. They are also proud, courteous and concerned for everyone's "dignidad."

AFS & Your experience

AFS Chile has been in existence since 1958. AFS volunteers in more than 38 communities across the country work hard to provide you with the most satisfying intercultural experience possible. During the school year, AFS Chile hosts approximately 110 AFSers from more than 12 countries.

AFS will be at your side throughout your intercultural exchange. Even before leaving your home country, you will participate in organized AFS orientations and have the assistance of experienced AFS volunteers. Once in your host country, you can rely on your local volunteer contact and other chapter volunteers to support you in your experience. Together we will ensure that you have an incredible experience abroad.

Landing in Chile

Your flight will arrive in Santiago, Chile's capital city, where AFS Chile staff and volunteers will bring you to your first Chilean orientation.

Orientation

After you have spent many long and tiring hours on an airplane, the two-day orientation, organized by staff and run by volunteers, will give you a chance to relax, meet other AFSers from around the world, ask questions and learn about AFS in Chile as well as about Chilean culture. A post-arrival orientation will be held about four weeks after arriving in your host community.

Living in Chile

Lifestyle and Family Living

Today, because of the early laws of colonization, Chile is a vast mixture of races and nationalities such as Mapuches (the native Chileans), Aymara, Palestinians, Jews, Italians, Asians, Yugoslavians, Greeks and Germans. Because of this great ethnic diversity, Chileans are open to many different types of people.

Even so, with the partial exception of the indigenous groups, the Chilean population perceives itself as essentially homogeneous. Despite the configuration of the national territory, regional differences and sentiments are remarkably muted. Even the Spanish accent of Chileans varies only very slightly from north to south; more noticeable are the small differences in accent based on social class. In fact, social prejudice in Chile is based primarily on class. Chile is currently the largest middle-class nation in South America.

Like Latin Americans in general, Chileans are friendly. They view education as the way to a better life. Life in Chile is very family-oriented. Although the father is the primary breadwinner and decision maker, the mother has considerable influence in the family. Parents tend to treat boys differently from girls; boys are likely to have a much more liberal curfew than girls, and girls may not be allowed to go out alone in the evening. Children accept parental authority, and exchange students are expected to do the same. Parents

expect to know when the children are going out and where they are going. Chilean host families, like host AFS families worldwide, are not paid. They open their homes to students in order to share their community and culture as well as to enrich their own family lives. Host families are usually middle- or upper-middle-class Chileans who live in small towns and have an interest in other cultures.

Dress and Appearance

Chilean students dress much the same as young people in other western nations: casual clothes, jeans, T-shirts, sneakers, etc. Chile's seasons are the reverse of those in the northern hemisphere. Many homes lack central heating, so bring sweaters and a warm jacket. Students are encouraged to bring one or two nice outfits for special occasions: dress shirts and ties for men, dresses for women.

Diet and Meals

Lunch is the main meal of the day. The main course usually includes meat (beef, lamb, pork or chicken) or fish with rice or pasta and vegetables. Food is mostly steamed, fried in vegetable oil or barbecued. Between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. most people have a meal called *onces* at which tea or coffee is served with bread and butter or marmalade and possibly cakes or some other kind of pastry. For some families, this is the evening meal, and they may add cold cuts, avocados or other foods to make it more substantial. Other families have dinner between 8 p.m. and 9 p.m. and serve basically the same types of food as lunch but in smaller portions. Fruits are varied and abundant in Chile throughout the year. It is considered inappropriate for individuals to request special foods, to prepare separate food for themselves or to raid the refrigerator. Vegetarians are difficult to place.

School

You will attend school during your stay in Chile. School is probably the best place for you to meet people and make friends while you are on the program. Seventy percent of Chilean schools are private, and most AFSers are placed in private schools. The grade in which you are placed will depend on your age and grade level at home. There is a fixed curriculum that includes about 10 subjects per grade. Required subjects include Chilean history and geography, economics, science, math and a foreign language. Art and music are offered as electives. You will study all subjects with one group of students, probably in the same room. It is likely that this group has been classmates throughout their education.

The Chilean school year begins in late February or early March and lasts until early December. School runs Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; some schools take a break from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. when classes begin again and run until 5:00 p.m. Schools require students to wear uniforms that cost approximately US\$170.

Lunch break usually lasts one hour, and there is a 10-minute break every two class periods.

Teen Life

In their spare time, young Chileans like to get together at friends' houses or go to movies. They also like to gather in the town square, go to parties, or just hang out in the local café.

Your local high school and community organization may offer several activities in which you can become involved. These may include sports, language or science clubs, drama, etc. Getting involved in these activities is a great way to learn more about the community and to make friends.

AFS Activities

In addition to an orientation at your arrival, AFS Chile will provide you several others. These may include informal get-togethers, weekend trips and picnics. There may be additional events as well, depending on your local chapter.

AFS orientations are a chance for participants to meet and talk about expectations for the future program and past experiences. Orientations involve participating in group activities and self-examination. Sessions usually provide new information and ways of looking at things while also allowing participants to share points of view. AFS orientations are social, interactive and educational, bringing together young people from many countries and helping them to better understand their own intercultural learning experiences. Last, but definitely not least, is the so-called "End-of-Stay." You will get together with the students placed in your region, approximately four to six weeks before departure. The "End-of-Stay" is about looking back at your exchange experience and sharing memories with other AFSers. It is also about thinking of the future.

Travel

Although it is natural for you to want to travel while in Chile, AFS is not designed as a tourist program. AFS offers the rare opportunity to be immersed in a culture and a country. It is likely, however, that you will have many opportunities to travel with your host family, school, community organization, local chapter or AFS Chile. We strongly discourage traveling on your own or with friends.

Spending Money

Host families are asked to pay only for ordinary family events in which hosted students are expected to join. When hosted students do such things as shopping for themselves or visiting friends on their own, the expenses are their responsibility. AFS recommends about US\$1,600 for a full academic year. Because traveller's checks are difficult to cash in some communities, and banks charge a high commission on money transfers, bringing some cash and a credit or debit bankcard are options. Bringing more than one-third of your money in cash is not a good idea, however. You must take precautions if you decide to use a card, as cash and cards do not offer the same protection as traveller's checks in case of loss or theft. The AFS Chile Welcomes You booklet, which you'll receive before leaving home, offers additional alternatives on this topic. Chilean youth are not used to carrying or spending large amounts of money. Spending more than your peers may create a distance between you and them. It is wise to learn to spend as they do.

Safety and Support

Chile is relatively safe, and you should do well if you follow the normal precautions you would use in your home country. During your stay, local AFS volunteers will be available to assist you as you learn to live as a Chilean. In the event of an emergency, AFS staff can be reached 24 hours a day by you in your host country and by your natural family at home.

For the welfare of participants, AFS worldwide has two rules: no driving and no use of drugs for non-medicinal purposes. Any student who violates either of these rules will be automatically sent home. AFS Chile may have additional rules.

Health Precautions

In addition to the precautions mentioned above, AFS suggests that you discuss the health recommendations for Chile (which you can get from your government or easily find on the Internet) with your personal doctor, to determine what is best for you and your personal needs.

If you require any medical assistance during your stay, your host family or local volunteers will be ready to help find it. As an AFS participant, your medical expenses are covered for illness or injuries incurred while on the program, exclusive of pre-existing, dental or visual aid expenses.

Documents

You must have a passport that will be valid for six months longer than your intended stay. In addition to your passport, you also need a visa to enter and reside in your host country. Visas are obtained through the consular offices in your region and requirements often vary from consulate to consulate.

Consulates charge fees for their services, and obtaining your visa can be a complicated and lengthy process requiring a great deal of paperwork, patience and persistence. It is your responsibility to obtain your visa and pay the fees. However, AFS will let you know how to proceed and will provide you with the documents you need to apply for the visa.

Program Prices

All participants are required to pay participation fee **and** do a mandatory fundraising. To get further information, please visit our website www.afscanada.org or contact us.

The program price covers the following: round-trip international travel with your AFS group; travel in the host country to your host family; travel from your host family to your international departure point; AFS's medical plan; placement with your host; orientation in your home country and your host country; 24 hour emergency assistance in your home and host countries; a global medical assistance organization to support extreme emergencies; a network of trained volunteers who support you throughout your experience.

In order to keep costs low and provide good service, AFS utilizes a network of volunteers and staff in 50+ countries around the world. Volunteers need training, support and assistance from professional staff in each country. Other expenses you will normally need to pay in addition to the program price: passport and visa fees, required inoculations, expenses for eyeglasses, contacts and dental care, school uniforms (where applicable) and personal spending money. Your housing and food are provided by your host family as part of their commitment to our program.

Country Information

Geography and Climate

Chile is a land of diversity, wonder, and great beauty. It is a very long, thin country that is located in the extreme southwest of South America. The closest neighbors include Argentina to the east, and Bolivia and Peru to the north. The entire country at its widest point is only about 480 km (300 miles) wide with an average width of 170 km (about 100 miles), but its 4,000 km (2,500 miles) length makes Chile the longest country in the world.

Chile is geographically diverse. To the south, Chile reaches into the cold and inhospitable Antarctic zone. To the west, the shores are pounded by hundreds of miles of the great Pacific Ocean. In the north, Chile is home to the Atacama Desert, one of the most arid lands in the world. Finally, to the east, the huge Andes mountain range, running nearly the entire length of the country, serves to isolate Chile from the rest of South America.

Except in the north where there is almost no winter, Chile has four well defined seasons that are typical of the southern hemisphere (the opposite of those in the northern hemisphere).

Population

The population is about 15 million. Santiago, the capital, has a population of 4.6 million. It is made up of a rich mixture of mestizos (people of Spanish and Indian descent) and immigrants from Germany, Italy, the former Yugoslavia, Asia and the Arab nations, among others.

Language

The official language in Chile is Spanish

Government

Chile recovered its democratic form of government in 1990 after 17 years of rule by a military *junta*. With its political and economic stability, Chile is considered one of the strongest countries in Latin America.

Today Chile is divided politically into regions, provinces, and municipalities. The elected leader of the nation is the *Presidente*. The provinces are headed by the *Intendente*, or governor, while the municipalities elect a mayor, or *Alcalde*.

Religion

More than 80 percent of Chileans are Roman Catholic; the rest are Protestant or other.

Launching Your AFS Experience

Evaluations by previous participants support our belief that students who prepare prior to leaving have the best experience. In order to get yourself ready, first make every effort to learn some key Spanish words and phrases so that you arrive with at least some basic knowledge of the language.

To familiarize yourself further with life in Chile, make use of your local library and/or the Internet. A lot of general information is available about Chile and its culture.

Although each participant's experience is unique, we strongly suggest that you speak with a recent AFS participant to Chile. This person will be an excellent resource regarding living life as a Chilean. If you do not know any alumni, please contact your local volunteer or AFS Interculture Canada office. In addition, AFS Chile will provide you with a special packet of country-specific information.

Chilean people will be curious about your home community. You may be surprised to find out how much they already know about your country. Therefore, it is also helpful to be as informed as possible about current events in your community and country.

Curiously Chilean

- ☀ Pablo Neruda, one of the most celebrated poets of the 20th century, was from Chile.
- ☀ Before Europeans came to America, Inca tribes were living in Chile.
- ☀ Penguin colonies live in southern Chile.

How to Apply

You first have to fill out the Preliminary Application form that you can find on our website at www.afscanada.org. If you don't have access to Internet, call us at (514) 288-3282 or 1-800-361-7248 and we will send you the document by mail.

Quick Facts

Student age (upon arrival)	16 years to 18 years	
Country data	Size	756,826 km ² (292,134 mi ²)
	Population	15,328,000
	Official language	Spanish
	Government	Presidential republic
	Currency	Chilean pesos
Useful website	http://www.webpages.comcast.net/dchappell/chile/	
AFS Chile website	http://afs.cl	