

Frequently asked questions

Q: What is Patagonia?

A: Patagonia is the name of a vast territory in the southern cone of America, where lived the Tehuelches or Aonikenk natives. Fernando de Magallanes gave the name in 1520 and chronicles of several sea explorers gave to this land an aura of mystery.

Q: Is Patagonia part of Chile or Argentina?

A: Patagonia is a territory shared by Chile and Argentina.

Q: How can I come to Patagonia?

A: There are daily air connections from Santiago de Chile and Puerto Montt to Punta Arenas, the capital city of the Chilean Patagonia, located at the bank of the Magellan Strait.

Q: Are necessary visas to enter to a Patagonia?

A: Being part of Chile and Argentina, the international formalities are the same for coming to these two countries. If you think about enter and leave Chile-Argentina and then enter/leave again, you must verify if you need a multiple entrance visa.

Q: What clothes is advisable to wear?

A: Patagonia is synonym of outdoors, excursions are mostly outdoors to watch nature, which demands casual clothing; it is recommended to bring good shoes for trekking, windbreak parka, appropriate clothing for mild climate, hat and gloves.

Q: Is it important the use of sun protection?

A: There has been many comments about ozone and its effects by sun radiation. It is important to point out that even has been scientifically proved that there is no such danger, is recommended the use of protective lotions to counteract the effect of southern wind, always present in particular at the steppes (pampas).

Q: How is the climate?

A: Extremely changeable is its principal feature. Days vary among wind a total calm, tepid and cold air, some rain, some sun, everything in just one day. Our summer extends from December to March, with frequent winds and some time very strong, days are long with even 18 hours of light in December and sunny. Temperatures vary a lot according to the place but there are not extremes, with average yearly temperatures between 3°C and 7°C. In summer, from December to March, average temperatures are between 6°C and 12°C.

Our middle season, spring and autumn, correspond to September to December and March to June, respectively. Climate is a little colder than in summer, but without temperatures under zero.

Winter goes from June to August and is characterized by clear days, plenty of sun, little wind and a pristine air. Temperatures are around 0°C. Average of the coldest month is between -1°C and 1°C, with about 7 hours of light in June.

Q: Is there much wind in Patagonia?

A: Yes, especially in spring and summer, but for short time and there is no risk.

Q: Are credit cards accepted?

A: Most of the shopping and tourist houses receive international credit cards, Visa, MasterCard, Diners and American Express; debit cards Visa Electron and Maestro. At some rural areas, where there are difficult communications, credit and debit cards are not accepted. Some inns and lodgings in Torres del Paine don't accept credit cards.

Q: May I pay directly with USD o EUR?

A: Many establishments accept dollars. The use of euros is not well set up yet. There are exchange houses that receive US dollars and euros, also in the local banks is possible to exchange money.

Q: Are there Automated Teller Machines?

A: Yes, there are Cirrus, Redbank, Plus, Checkline, Visa Electron ATM in the cities.

Q: What are the normal office hours for Banks and stores?

A: The Banks are open from Monday to Friday, from 09:00 to 14:00 and the Stores in general are open from Monday to Friday, from 09:30 to 13:00 and from 15:00 to 20:00 in the evening.

On Saturdays, they are open from 10:00 to 13:00.

Q: What is the local currency?

A: The currency in Chile is the Peso (Ch\$). The exchange rate is about \$614 pesos per US\$ dollar (April 2015). The denominations are as follows: Coins of \$1, \$5, \$10, \$50, \$100 and \$500 and Bills of \$1.000, \$2.000, \$5.000, \$10.000 and \$20.000.

Q: Do the tourists pay any kind of tax?

A: Tourists are exempted from taxes when they stay at hotels or make use of some means of transportation, only if they pay in dollars. The rest of the products or services include the 19% IVA (Value-Added Tax).

Q: Which are the most important holidays?

A: January 1 : New Year

Holy Week. (03 days)

May 1 : Labor Day.

May 21 : Navy Day (Combate Naval de Iquique).

June 16 : Corpus Christi.

August 15 : Assumption Day.

September 18 : National Independence Day.

September 19 : Armed Forces Day.

November 1 : All Saints' Day.

December 8 : Immaculate Conception.

December 25 : Christmas Day.

Q: How does the Electric current system operate in Chile?

A: The electric current operates on 220 volts, 10 amp.

Q: What kind of telephone facilities are there in Chile?

A: Chilean telephone facilities are varied. It is possible to call anywhere as there are Call centers of different telephone carriers and also magnetic phone cards that can be used in public phones. Most of the hotels have a long-distance service for national and international calls.

Q: What are the current taxi rates inside and outside the city?

A: Some of the rates are:

From the Main Square to the airport US\$ 14.-

Round trip, from the Main Square to the Penguins' Colony US\$ 90

Round trip, from the Main Square to the Fuerte Bulnes. US\$ 90

City Tour. US\$ 35

Q: Are necessary vaccines to enter the Chilean Patagonia?

A: There is no need of special vaccines to come to Patagonia. It is always advisable to ask in the country of origin.

Q: Is tap water drinkable?

A: The water is drinkable but anyway is always advisable to drink bottled water.

Q: Do penguins walk in the middle of the city?

A: No, penguins can be watched in places specially adapted to their habitat, like the Penguin colony at 60 km. from Punta Arenas, or other places far from cities or towns, but you will have to hire the services of some company specialized in this kind of tour.

Q: What are the social security facilities in case of sickness or accident?

A: The cities have hospitals and emergency services. In Punta Arenas there also are private clinics.

Q: Are there cybercafes in Patagonia?

A: Yes, there are many services of Internet. Communications are very up-to-date, even inns in country areas have telephonic communications.

Q: Are required special permissions to practice mountain climbing in Patagonia?

A: Yes, the Corporacion Nacional Forestal, administrator of the national parks, issues the permissions to practice mountain climbing.

Q: Are required special permissions for trekking?

R: A: No, it is not necessary a special permission.