
Matanzas

ALFREDO ESCOBAR

Southern Chile



The Republic of Chile is a gigantic sliver of a country crammed between the Andes and Pacific. Over 6,000km – a sixth of the Earth's circumference – of firing coastline remains relatively untapped by the masses, though adventurous riders know the south as a world-class port tack alternative during the Northern Hemisphere winter. Despite nearly two decades under Pinochet's dictatorship Chile has emerged a friendly, vibrant and educated country, so do spend a while exploring the capital of Santiago – but if it's wavesailing you're after, head south. The country divides into 15 Regions, numbered I to XV.

The best kite spot near Santiago in Region V is **Santo Domingo** (K). You'll need a 4x4 vehicle and there's often current, but it's worth the hassle as this world-class wave boasts three distinct sections. Windsurfers congregate 15km down the coast at the point breaks of **Punta Toro** (W) and **Ho'okipa** (W). On the border with Region VI, at the mouth of Rio Rapel is **La Boca** (W) – great for learners until about 1pm, after which winds can top 30 knots. For a real challenge, Las Brisas promises choppy waves and pounding shorebreak with strong cross-onshore winds and heavy currents. The main break in the popular venue of **Matanzas** is generally quite small with gusty cross-offshore wind, but there's a larger, cleaner, more cross-shore wave just north of town. If the swell's too small to work, drive five minutes off-road to **Pupuya** – an open beach offering great onshore jumping and backside riding that can get very windy. Further south, way off the beaten track within a private hacienda is **Punta Topacalma**. This place is cross-offshore waveriding perfection, more suited to advanced windsurfers than kiters as winds get seriously strong and gusty in the afternoon. Visitor numbers are controlled and permission to enter Fundo del Topacalma must be sought at the gate; take ID. Camp half an hour south at Puertecillo. Two spots in


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PROS & CONS

+ Consistently awesome wind and waves
+ Uncrowded
+ Great atmosphere

– Cold water and strong currents
– Long, expensive flights
– Almost exclusively port tack

TRAVEL INFO

▸ **Contacts & Links p. 309 and www.stoked-publications.com**

Population: Chile – 15.5 million
Santiago – 6 million

Language: Spanish (official) plus Mapuche, Aymara and Quechua

Currency: Chilean Peso. 1€ ~ 690 CLP

Time Zone: UTC-4

Getting There
International flights arrive in Santiago (via Madrid from Europe, €800-1200 return with a flight time of 17-18 hours). The coast is just a an hour and a half away by road, the popular areas around Matanzas and Pichilemu an hour or two further, and the southern spots a whole day behind the wheel.

Getting Around
Taxis are easy to find from the airport to any location within Santiago. Book a vehicle (preferably a truck or similar, around €300 per week) before arrival as rentals can prove difficult. Even if staying for a long time, buying a vehicle isn't wise as local regulations can prove tricky and expensive. If travelling light, the bus system in Chile is an excellent and inexpensive alternative.

Lodging & Food
At most places, cheap cabañas can be found from around €10pppn – often right on the beach. Apart from high season (Jan-Feb) at busier resorts, there's no need to book ahead. Camping is easily found and is a popular and enjoyable option. As in the rest of the developed world, food can range in price enormously. Basic roast chicken (super pollo) and fries are around €8. Coastal areas offer seafood connoisseurs local specialties such as ceviche salad and mariscal soup for even less. Resorts such as Llico can see restaurant prices rise to €20-40 a head. Chile is famous for a vast array of great wines, and the local drink of choice is pisco grape brandy.

Climate
Heading south from the Mediterranean weather in Santiago towards the icefields and glaciers of Chilean Patagonia the climate gets increasingly cold, forested, and beautiful. The south of Chile is noticeably wetter and more humid than the north. The high Andes mean snowsports are always available inland.

	J/F	M/A	M/J	J/A	S/O	N/D
Ø max temp (°C/°F)	22/72	21/70	17/63	17/63	19/66	22/72
Ø min temp (°C/°F)	13/55	12/54	10/48	9/43	11/52	13/55
sunshine (h/day)	10	7	4	4.5	7	10.5
rainy days/month	6	6	15	13	8	5
Ø precipitation (l/m²)	1	6	64	79	16	5

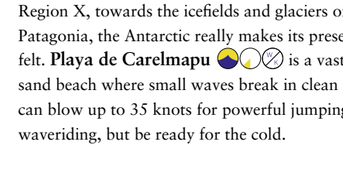
Nature & Culture
Like much of the Americas, Chile has a vibrant and interesting mix of culture. With a quiet indigenous population and largely Mestizo (mixed native and European blood) groups it is an endlessly interesting country. Don't miss going to a media luna (crescent) rodeo where Huaso cowboys ride horses uniquely trained to canter sideways. Most beaches are black sand.

Hazards & Hassles
Since Chile is the most developed country in South America it has a very comfortable and easy-going feel to it (except when an earthquake shakes the country which occurs roughly once a year). However, huge mining operations mean a number of spots suffer high levels of toxic pollutants – if you don't understand a warning sign at the beach, don't take the risk; get someone to translate it. If taking kit, expect to pay excess baggage on top of the already huge airline ticket price.

Good to Know
Definitely bring a surfboard as winds can die for days on end and the surf is world class. Some Spanish is very helpful as few rural Chileans speak much else. A visa is not required to enter Chile for a stay of 30-90 days for most major European and American citizens. Credit cards are widely used and accepted, though cash is often the only option. ATMs are easy to find.


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Pichilemu offer great waves: The Point in town is amazingly long and clean, if slightly sheltered from the wind. Infernillos to the south is shorter, yet faster, more hollow, and open to the wind. Into Region VII, the broad sweeping beach of **Llico** hosts the Chilean windsurf nationals every year. Cross-onshore with a serious wave, though heavy shorebreak and high winds are common. A few minutes inland, there's camping and very cool nightlife at Lake Vichuquen. Near the town of Constitución, **Punta Parron** is an excellent riding wave that rarely gets too big or too windy. It's ideal for kiting, but requires good off-road driving skills to find. **Curanipe** is a friendly town with a glassy wave and meaty lips. It's one of Chile's best surfing spots, but gets cross-shore wind most afternoons. Ten minutes away another wave breaks in front of the rocks at the south of the huge black beach of **Playa Sirena**. There's a fair rip and the wave breaks pretty close to shore, but it's relatively safe for anyone with wavesailing experience. 100km south, **Dichato** and **Lenga** are sheltered spot for beginners, with moderate winds and no waves. Three hours further south, the radical break at **Quidico** can challenge anyone on its day with cross-offshore winds and great swell. It takes a boat to reach **Isla Mocha**, 15km offshore, then there's nothing but horse-drawn carts to get around some exceptional spots: **Faro Viejo** offers cross-offshore riding with a wave that's excellent for aerials. Downwind, **Parcela 25** is great for cross-onshore jumping. And **Parcela 12** is a picturesque white sand, clear water spot that's good for waveriding and jumping. It's notable for facing south, making it one of Chile's only starboard tack locations. Back on the mainland, **Tirua** is a nice jumping spot with a left-hander and strong cross to cross-onshore winds. Deeper into Region X, towards the icefields and glaciers of Patagonia, the Antarctic really makes its presence felt. **Playa de Carelmapu** is a vast white sand beach where small waves break in clean sets. It can blow up to 35 knots for powerful jumping and waveriding, but be ready for the cold.


UGO RICHARD

A combination of desertified land, cold ocean current and huge west-facing Pacific coastline creates some of the best conditions in the world. The dry interior and extremely hot desert north sucks cold ocean air all the way up Chile's coast, creating strong southerly winds that can establish for days on end. A stable Pacific anti-cyclone sets up wind in the south during summer (Nov-Jan), migrates north to the central Regions V and VI during spring and autumn, becoming unreliable during winter (May-July) when low pressures can interfere. Windless spells might last days on end, but whenever the wind does blow expect it to build from 20-25 knots in the morning to 30-40 knots in the afternoon – often lasting until late.

It's rarely flat along Chile's coast as S-SW Antarctic swells march relentlessly in on the Humboldt Current, producing awesome waves and long point breaks. Welcome to 'the land of lefts', a port tack paradise where swells are super-consistent and often big; up to 5m. The downside of the Humboldt Current is the Polar-influenced water temperature, which demands thick neoprene year-round – fortunately, the frigid waters of the deep south are most reliably windy in high summer. A tidal range of up to 1.5m can heavily influence conditions at most spots, yet tide tables aren't easy to find – if in doubt, ask the locals what the tides are doing.



Month	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Recommendation												
Wind ≥ Force 4 (in %)	100	80	60	40	20							
Swell Size (m)	6	5	4	3	2	1						
Dominant wind direction	S-SW		S-SW		S-SW		S-SE		S-SW		S-SW	
Water (°C/°F)	17 / 63		18 / 64		14 / 57		13 / 55		14 / 57		16 / 61	
Wetsuit												


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