

Chile

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Torres del Paine** – explore the glacial lakes and rugged spires above the howling Patagonian steppe (p524)
- **Central Valley** – carve tracks on Portillo's steep slopes or Valle Nevado's vast tracts of open terrain (p432)
- **Valparaíso** – meander the hills of Neruda's pet city, the bohemian heart of Chile (p433)
- **Atacama Desert** – journey through the stark landscapes of fumaroles, salt mountains and adobe villages in the driest desert in the world (p455)
- **Off the beaten track** – cowboy into the remote pioneer heartland in the turquoise river valleys around Cochamó, Coyhaique and Palena (p516)
- **Best journey** – trek around springy grasslands and flamingo-filled lagoons under the snowcapped domes of Parque Nacional Lauca (p468)

FAST FACTS

- **Area:** 748,800 sq km land, 8150 sq km water, 6435km of coastline
- **Best bargain:** a bottle of Misiones de Rengo Carmenere US\$3.50
- **Best street snack:** dare we say? *Un completo*: a hotdog smothered in guacamole, mayo & tomatoes (US\$1.50)
- **Budget:** US\$35-40 a day
- **Capital:** Santiago
- **Costs:** *hospedaje* (budget accommodations with shared bathroom) with breakfast US\$10-12, set lunch US\$6, national park entrance free-US\$17
- **Country code:** ☎ 56
- **Famous for:** politics, *pisco* (brandylike liquor; the national drink) & Patagonian peaks
- **Languages:** Spanish, Mapudungun, Rapanui
- **Money:** US\$1 = 527 pesos
- **Phrases:** *chorro*, *bacán* (cool), *asco* (disgusting), *copete* (cocktail)
- **Population:** 16 million
- **Time:** GMT minus 4hr (minus 3hr in summer)
- **Tipping:** 10% in better restaurants; tip all guides
- **Visas:** North American, Australian & most European citizens need only a valid passport



CHILE

TRAVEL HINTS

Travel with small bills. Order the *menú del día* special instead of off the menu. Allow for extra travel time in rural Patagonia, where infrequent transportation can strand you in towns a day or two.

OVERLAND ROUTES

Crossings include Tacna (Peru); Ollagüe and Colchane (Bolivia); and Paso Jama, Puente del Inca, San Martín de los Andes, Junín de los Andes, Villa La Angostura, Trevelin, Los Antiguos, Río Turbio and Río Gallegos (Argentina).

Spindly Chile stretches 4300km – over half the continent – from the driest desert in the world to massive glacial fields. A mosaic of volcanoes, geysers, beaches, lakes, rivers, steppe and countless islands fill up the in-between. Slenderness gives Chile the intimacy of a backyard (albeit one fenced between the Andes and the Pacific). What's on offer? Everything. With easy infrastructure, spectacular sights and the most hospitable hosts around, the hardest part is choosing an itinerary. Seek out its sweeping desert solitude, craggy Andean summits and the lush forests of the fjords for a sample. The mystical Easter Island or isolated Isla Robinson Crusoe offer extra-continental exploits. But don't forget that Chile is as much about character as it is setting. Its far-flung location fires the imagination and has been known to make poets out of barmen, dreamers out of presidents and friends out of strangers. A few wrong turns and detours and you too will be part of this tightly woven family who barbecues on Sunday. Don't forget to bring an extra bottle of red to the long, lazy dinners that await.

CURRENT EVENTS

Who would have thought that Chile would elect a woman president? These words were socialist Michelle Bachelet's own as she joined the growing ranks of left-leaning leaders on the continent. Clearly in retribution mode, Chile is still working on prosecuting former dictator General Augusto Pinochet for his involvement in disappearances during his regime. These charges come on top of others of tax evasion and corruption relating to some 27 million dollars he kept overseas under assumed names. While Chile sprints up world development ratings (now 37th), poised to become Latin America's first first-world nation, its probusiness stance threatens to make the environment its sacrificial lamb with unchecked paper-mill contamination in Valdivia, the proposal to move a glacier for the Pascua Lama mining project, and megadam projects threatening southern Chile's most pristine waterways.

HISTORY

Early History

The discovery of a single 12,500-year-old footprint in Monte Verde, near Puerto Montt, marks Chile's earliest tangible roots. In the north, Aymara and Atacameño farmers and herders predated the Inca. Other early peoples include the El Molle and the Tiwanaku, who left their mark with geoglyphs; Chango fisherfolk on the northern coast; and Diaguita who inhabited inland river valleys.

The Mapuche, who were shifting cultivators of the southern forests, were the only indigenous group to successfully hold off Inca domination. Meanwhile the Cunco fished and farmed Chiloé and the mainland. In the south, groups such as Selk'nam and Yagan long avoided contact with Europeans, who

would eventually bring them to the brink of extinction.

Colonial Times

Conquistador Pedro de Valdivia and his men crossed the harsh Atacama desert to found Santiago in the fertile Mapocho valley in 1541. They set up the famous *encomiendas*: forced labor systems that exploited the north's relatively large, sedentary population. In the south there was no such assimilation – the Mapuche fought European colonization for over three centuries. When the *encomiendas* lost value, agricultural *haciendas* or *fundos* (farms), run by American-born Spanish took their place. These *latifundios* (estates), many remaining intact into the 1960s, became the dominant force in Chilean society.

Revolutionary Wars & the Early Republic

Spain's trade control over the Viceroy of Peru provoked discontent among the *criollo* (American-born Spaniards). With independence movements sweeping the country, it was actually an Argentine, José de San Martín, who liberated Santiago in 1818. Under San Martín's tutelage, Chilean Bernardo O'Higgins, the illegitimate son of an Irishman, became 'supreme director' of the Chilean republic.

O'Higgins dominated politics for five years after independence, decreeing political, social, religious and educational reforms, but landowners' objections to his egalitarian measures forced his resignation. Businessman Diego Portales, spokesman for landowners, became de facto dictator until his execution in 1837. His custom-drawn constitution centralized power in Santiago and established Catholicism as the state religion.



Expansion & Development

At independence Chile was small, but triumphed over Peru and Bolivia in the War of the Pacific (1879–83) and treaties with the Mapuche placed the nitrate-rich Atacama Desert and the southern Lakes District under Chilean rule. Chile also annexed remote Rapa Nui (Easter Island) in 1888.

British, North American and German capital turned the Atacama into a bonanza, as nitrates brought some prosperity and funded the government. The nitrate ports of Antofagasta and Iquique grew rapidly until the Panama Canal (1914) reduced traffic around Cape Horn and the development of petroleum-based fertilizers made mineral nitrates obsolete.

Mining also created a new working class and a class of nouveau riche, both of whom challenged the landowners. Elected in 1886, President José Manuel Balmaceda tackled the dilemma of unequally distributed wealth and power, igniting congressional rebellion in 1890 and a civil war that resulted in 10,000 deaths, including his own suicide.

20th-Century Developments

As late as the 1920s, up to 75% of Chile's rural population still lived on *latifundios*, holding 80% of prime agricultural land. As industry expanded and public works advanced, urban workers' welfare improved, but that of rural workers declined, forcing day laborers to the cities.

The 1930s to 1960s saw a multifaceted struggle for agrarian reform. During this time North American companies gained control of copper mines that were to become the cornerstone of Chile's economy. Reformist Eduardo Frei became president in 1964. Opportunistically attacking the US-dominated export sector, Frei advocated 'Chileanization' of the copper industry, in which the government took just over 50% ownership of the mines that were controlled by US companies.

Considered too reformist by the right and too conservative by the left, Frei's Christian Democratic administration faced many challenges, including from violent groups like MIR (the Leftist Revolutionary Movement), which found support among coal miners, textile workers and other urban laborers, and also agitated for land reform. As the 1970 election grew near, the Christian Democratic Party, unable to satisfy society's expectations for reform, grew weaker.

Allende Comes to Power

Socialist candidate Salvador Allende's Unidad Popular (Popular Unity or UP) coalition offered a radical program advocating nationalization of industry and expropriation of *latifundios*. Elected in 1970 by a small

margin, Allende began instituting state control of many private enterprises alongside massive income redistribution. Politics grew more confrontational as peasants, frustrated with the slow pace of agrarian reforms, seized land. Harvests declined, and expropriation of copper mines and other enterprises, plus conspicuously friendly relations with Cuba, provoked US hostility. By 1972 Chile was paralyzed by strikes, supported by the Christian Democrats and the National Party.

A military coup in June 1973 failed but opposition gathered force. Relative unknown General Augusto Pinochet exacted a *golpe de estado* (coup d'état) on September 11, 1973, overthrowing the UP government and resulting in Allende's death (an apparent suicide) and the death of thousands of Allende supporters. Police and the military apprehended thousands of leftists, suspected leftists and sympathizers. Many were herded into Santiago's National Stadium, where they suffered beatings, torture and even execution. Hundreds of thousands went into exile.

Pinochet's Dictatorship & Legacy

Many opposition leaders, some of whom had encouraged the coup, expected a quick return to civilian government, but General Pinochet had other ideas. From 1973 to 1989, he headed a durable junta that dissolved Congress, banned leftist parties and suspended all others, prohibited nearly all political activity and ruled by decree. The Caravan of Death killed many political opponents, many of whom had voluntarily turned themselves in. Detainees came from all sectors of society, from peasants to professors. Thousands were 'disappeared' during the 17-year regime.

In 1980 Pinochet submitted a new, customized constitution to the electorate which ratified his presidency until 1989. It passed though many voters abstained in protest. Though Pinochet had put Chile's economy on track and established a lasting stability, voters rejected his 1988 bid to extend his presidency until 1997. In 1989, 17 parties formed the coalition Concertación para la Democracia (Consensus for Democracy) and its candidate Patricio Aylwin easily won. Aylwin's presidency was limited by constraints of the new constitution, but it did see the publication of the Rettig report, documenting deaths and disappearances during the dictatorship.

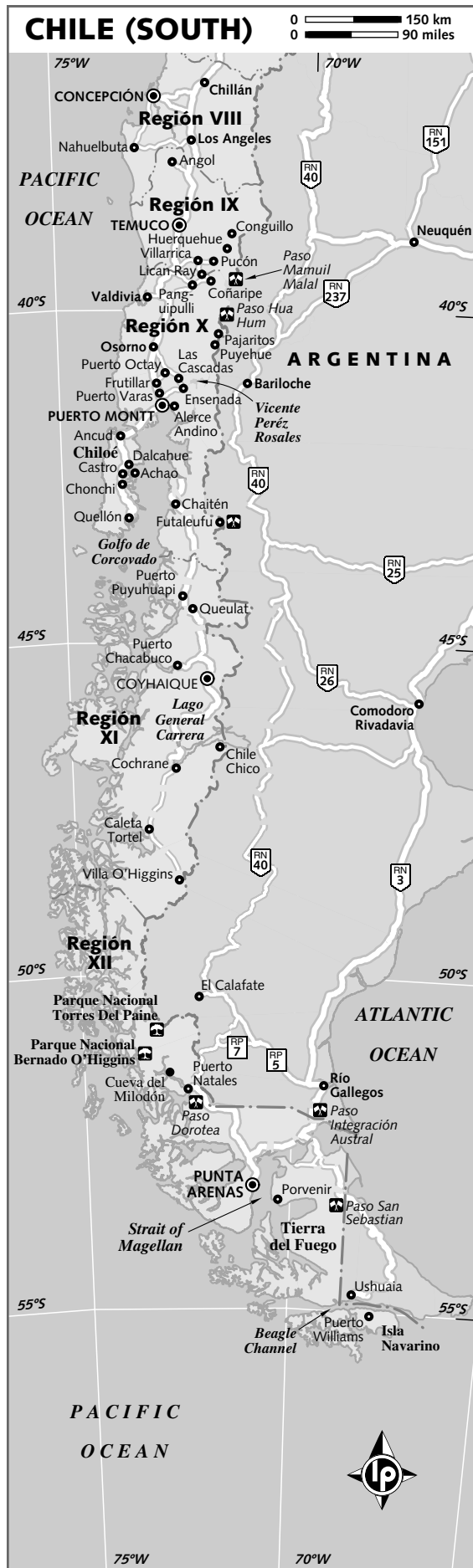
An international uproar exploded when General Pinochet was arrested and kept under house arrest in London in September 1998 following Spanish judge Baltazar Garzón's investigation of the deaths and disappearances of Spanish citizens in the aftermath of the 1973 coup. Both the Court of Appeals (in 2000) and the Supreme Court (2002) concluded that he suffered from dementia and ruled him unfit to stand trial. Pinochet returned to Chile but lost his status as lifetime senator. Despite the intense legal activity which continues, many Chileans are doubtful that Pinochet, now in his 90s, will ever reach trial.

The International Stage

In 2000 moderate leftist Ricardo Lagos joined a growing breed of left-leaning governments elected across South America. The country recovered from a troubled period between 2001 and 2003 to become the brightest economic star of Latin America, boosted by record prices for its key export, copper. Public and foreign debt is low, foreign investment is up, and the government has been busily signing free-trade agreements, notably with the EU and North America.

Now ranked as the world's 37th most developed country, Chile's healthcare has improved, life expectancy is up, education has increased by 25% and poverty has been halved since 1990. Socially Chile is rapidly shedding much of its traditional conservatism. A divorce law was finally passed in 2004 and the death penalty was abolished in 2001. The arts and free press are once again flourishing and women's rights are being increasingly recognized in law.

The 2005 election of Michelle Bachelet, former Minister of Defense under Lagos, was a watershed event. Not only because she is a woman, but she represents everything which Chile superficially is not: an agnostic, socialist single mother. Her father was an Air Force general who died under the hands of Pinochet's forces; she was also detained and tortured but released, and lived in exile abroad. A former doctor, Bachelet's skill as a consensus builder has helped her heal old wounds with the military and the public. Most feel that she represents a continuum of the policies of Lagos and only has to not 'mess up' Chile's already strong economy. But there is no denying that her presence speaks volumes about a country that is open to change.



THE CULTURE

The National Psyche

Chile is going through a period of radical social change. This former 'island' between the Andes and the sea has been flooded with outside influence. At the same time Chile is intrinsically starting to second-guess the conformity instilled under the dictatorship and Catholic Church. This isn't easy; notoriously diplomatic and polite, Chileans shy away from controversies.

Lifestyle

Travelers crossing over from Peru or Bolivia may wonder where the stereotypical 'South America' went. Chilean lifestyle superficially resembles its European counterparts. The well-off live quite comfortably, often with maid service and a nanny, while the poorest eke out a hand-to-mouth existence. These disparate income gaps translate to class consciousness. The average Chilean focuses energy on family, home and work. Chileans usually remain dependent on their parents through university years and live at home until marriage. Independence isn't nearly as valued as family unity and togetherness. Regardless, single motherhood is not uncommon. Divorce was legalized recently but informal separations had been the norm. Women, while underrepresented in the workforce, are respected as professionals. For gays and lesbians, Chile is still quite a conservative culture. While not aggressively antigay, Chile offers little public support for alternate lifestyles. Adults dress conservatively, leaning toward business formal, and their initial regard toward you will depend on your appearance.

Population

About 75% of Chile's population occupies just 20% of its total area, in the main agricultural region of Middle Chile. This region includes Gran Santiago (the capital and its suburbs), where over a third of the country's estimated 16 million people reside. More than 85% of Chileans live in cities.

While most of the population is of Spanish ancestry mixed with indigenous groups, immigration waves added British, Irish, French, Italians, Croatians and Palestinians to the mix. German colonists settled the Lakes District starting in 1852. The northern Andes are home to around 69,200 Aymara and Atacameño

peoples. Mapuche number around 620,000, based largely in La Araucanía. Chilean law may restrict immigration to Easter Island in a move to preserve the culture of its 3800 Rapa Nuians. In Tierra del Fuego there remains one Yagan who is in her 70s.

SPORTS

Fútbol (soccer) rules the hearts of all Chileans. In rural Patagonia teams will travel a full day on horseback to play a Sunday match. The main teams are Santiago-based Colo Colo, Universidad de Chile (populist) and Universidad Católica (elitist). Tennis is wildly popular, thanks to Nicolás Massú and Fernando González' medals in the 2004 Athens Olympics – Chile's first gold ever. They come on the heels of Marcelo 'El Chino' Ríos, who rose quickly in the ranks of tennis stars. Chilean rodeos proliferate in the summer when, from Santiago to deep Patagonia, elegant *huasos* (cowboys) perform quick skills in a *medialuna* (half-moon stadium).

RELIGION

About 90% of Chileans are Catholic, with Evangelical Protestantism covering most of the rest of the population.

ARTS

Cinema

Chilean cinema is undergoing a renaissance, relishing the freedom to narrate uncut tales, the themes of which range from social conscience to goofy sex. Twenty-something director Nicolás López uses dark humor and comic-book culture to the delight of youth audiences with *Promedio Rojo* (2005). *Mi Mejor Enemigo* (My Best Enemy, 2004) is a wonderfully told tale of not-so-distant enemies, set in Patagonia during a 1978 territorial dispute with Argentina (coproduced with Argentina and Spain). Andrés Wood's hit *Machuca* (2004) chronicles coming-of-age during class-conscious and volatile 1973. Wood's *La Fiebre del Loco* (Loco Fever, 2001) shows the social folly of a small Patagonian fishing village during abalone harvest. *Sub Terra* (2003) dramatizes the exploitation of Chilean miners. *Taxi Para Tres* (Taxi for Three, 2001), by Orlando Lubbert, and Diego Izquierdo's *Sexo con Amor* (Sex with Love, 2002) are worth a look. Acclaimed documentarian Patricio Guzmán focuses on the social impact of the dictatorship; his credits include the fascinating

Obstinate Memory (1997). Check out Chile's latest releases at www.chilecine.cl.

Literature

This land of poets earned its repute with Nobel Prize winners Gabriela Mistral and Pablo Neruda. Vicente Huidobro is considered one of the founders of modern Spanish-language poetry and Nicanor Parra continues the tradition.

Popular contemporary writer Isabel Allende bases much of her fiction in her native Chile, although along with playwright-novelist-essayist Ariel Dorfman, she lives in the USA. Other important literary figures include José Donoso, whose novel *Curfew* narrates life under dictatorship through the eyes of a returned exile, and Antonio Skármeta, who wrote the novel *Burning Patience*, upon which the award-winning Italian film *Il Postino* (The Postman) is based. Jorge Edwards (1931–) was a collaborator and contemporary of Neruda, writing the acclaimed tribute *Goodbye, Poet*. Luis Sepúlveda (1949–) is one of Chile's most prolific writers, with such books as *Patagonia Express* and the novella *The Old Man Who Read Love Stories*.

Marcela Serrano (1951–) is considered to be one of the best Latina authors in the last decade. Pedro Lemebel (1950–) writes of homosexuality, transgender issues and other controversial subjects with top-notch shock value. The posthumous publication of Roberto Bolaño's (1955–2005) encyclopedic *2666* (set to be released in waves) seals his cult-hero status. Alberto Fuguet's (1964–) *Mala Onda* (Bad Vibes) launched the McOndo movement, which claimed (to the horror of academics) that Latin American magic-realism was dead, presenting the disconnected reality of urban youth in consumer culture in its place.

Music & Dance

Chile's contemporary music spans the revolutionary folk of the 1960s and '70s to Andean folklore, modern rock and alt bands. Folk movement La Nueva Canción Chilena (New Chilean Song) lyricized about the social hopes and political issues, synthesized in Violeta Parra's 'Gracias a la Vida' (Thanks to Life). The movement included Victor Jara (later murdered in the military coup) and groups Quilapayún and Inti-Illimani.

Music groups in exile found success in Europe, such as Paris-based Los Jaivas, Los

Prisioneros and La Ley (based in Mexico). Joe Vasconcellos performs energetic Latin fusion. Contemporary bands grabbing domestic and international attention are La Ley, Lucybell, Tiro de Gracia, Los Bunkers, Javiera y los Imposibles and Mamma Soul. Bars are excellent venues for new bands of all stripes. Jazz enjoys an upsurge while Reggaton (Spanish-language reggae) dominates the dance floor.

The only 'traditional' Chilean dance is *cueca*. Dancers encircle each other, each teasingly twirling a bandana above their head or out of sight.

ENVIRONMENT

The Land

Continental Chile stretches 4300km from Peru to the Straits of Magellan. Less than 200km wide on average, the land rises from sea level to above 6000m in some areas, with a narrow depression running through the middle.

Mainland Chile, dry-topped and glacial heavy, has distinct temperate and geographic zones, with the length of the Andes running alongside. Norte Grande runs from the Peruvian border to Chañaral, dominated by the Atacama Desert and the *altiplano* (Andean high plain). Norte Chico stretches from Chañaral to Río Aconcagua, with scrubland and denser forest enjoying increased rainfall. Here mining gives way to agriculture in the major river valleys.

Middle Chile's wide river valleys span from Río Aconcagua to Concepción and the Río Biobío. This is the main agricultural and wine-growing region. The Araucanía and Lakes District go south of the Biobío to Puerto Montt, featuring extensive native forests, snowcapped volcanoes and lakes. Chiloé is the country's largest island, with dense forests and a patchwork of pasturelands. On the mainland, famed Patagonia has indeterminate borders: for some it begins with the Carretera Austral, for others it starts in rugged Aisén, running south to the Campos de Hielo (the continental ice fields), and ending in Magallanes and Tierra del Fuego.

The country is divided into 13 numbered administrative regions: I Tarapacá, II Antofagasta, III Atacama, IV Coquimbo, V Valparaíso (including Rapa Nui and Archipiélago Juan Fernández), Región Metropolitana (not numbered), VI Libertador General Bernardo O'Higgins, VII Maule, VIII Biobío, IX La Araucanía, X Los Lagos, XI Aisén del General

Carlos Ibáñez del Campo and XII Magallanes y Antártica Chilena.

Wildlife

Bounded by ocean, desert and mountain, Chile is home to a unique environment that developed much on its own, creating a number of endemic species.

Within the desert reaches of the north, candelabra cacti grow, spaced well apart for *camanchaca* (fog) absorption. Guanaco (a large camelid), *vicuña* (wild relative of the domestic llama and alpaca, found only at high altitudes in the south-central Andes), llama and alpaca (as well as the ostrichlike rhea, called *ñandú* in Spanish) and the vizcacha (a wild relative of the chinchilla) live here, as well as a variety of birdlife, from Andean gulls and giant coots to three species of flamingo.

The south has protected forests of monkey-puzzle tree (*Araucaria araucana*; *pehuén*) as well as cypress and southern beech. Region X harbors the remaining unexploited *alerce*, the world's second-oldest tree. Valdivian temperate rainforest provides a substantial variety of plant life including the *nalca*, the world's largest herbaceous plant. Seldom-seen puma roam the Andes, along with a growing and destructive population of wild boar. The rare and diminutive deer *pudú* hides out in thick forests, *bandurrias* (buff-necked ibis) frequent southern pastures and tweeting trailside *chucaco* reputedly signal bad luck if on the left. Supposedly better than a watchdog, the *queltehue* squawks to protect its ground nests. A colony of Humboldt and Magellanic penguins seasonally inhabit the northwestern coast of Chiloé.

From the Lakes District to Magallanes, you'll find verdant upland forests of the widespread genus *Nothofagus*. Decreased rainfall on the eastern plains of Magallanes and Tierra del Fuego creates extensive grasslands. Protected guanaco have made a comeback within Torres del Paine, where *caiquenes* (upland geese), rheas and foxes can also be spotted. Punta Arenas hosts colonies of Magellanic penguins and cormorants. Chile's long coastline features many marine mammals, including sea lions, otters, fur seals and whales.

National Parks

With Torres del Paine as the glaring exception, Chile's diverse and beautiful parks are considerably underutilized. Parks and reserves are

administered by the underfunded Corporación Nacional Forestal. Visit **Conaf** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 02-390-0282; www.conaf.cl in Spanish; Av Bulnes 291) in Santiago for inexpensive maps and brochures.

Private nature reserves protect over 106 areas from massive deforestation. They include: Parque Pumalín in northern Patagonia; Alto Huemul in Region VII; El Cañi, near Pucón; Monte Verde, on Isla Riesco north of Punta Arenas; and Bahía Yendegaia, on Tierra del Fuego. Big projects in the works include Valle Chacabuco and 115,000-hectare Parque Tantauco in southwest Chile.

The following lists the most popular and accessible national parks from north to south. A couple of them are actually national reserves.

Alerce Andino (p504) Preserves stands of *alerce* trees near Puerto Montt.

Altos del Lircay A reserve with views of the Andean divide and a loop trek to Radal Siete Tazas.

Chiloé (p508) Features broad sandy beaches, blue lagoons and myth-bound forests.

Conguillío (p483) Mixed forests of araucaria, cypress and southern beech surrounding the active, snowcapped Volcán Llaima.

Huerquehue (p489) Near Pucón, hiking trails through araucaria forests, with outstanding views of Volcán Villarrica.

La Campana Close to Santiago, protects forests of native oaks and Chilean palms.

Lauca (p468) East of Arica, with active and dormant volcanoes, clear blue lakes, abundant birdlife, *altilano* villages and extensive steppes.

Llanos de Challe On the coastal plain of the Norte Chico, best site to view 'flowering of the desert' after rare heavy rains.

Los Flamencos In and around San Pedro de Atacama, a reserve protecting salt lakes and high-altitude lagoons, flamingos, eerie desert landforms and hot springs.

Nahuelbuta (p478) In the high coastal range, preserves the area's largest remaining araucaria forests.

Nevado Tres Cruces (p450) East of Copiapó, includes a 6330m-high namesake peak and 6900m-high Ojos del Salado.

Puyehue (p495) Near Osorno, with fancy hot springs and ski resort, and a popular hike through volcanic desert, up the crater, to thermals and geyser fields.

Queulat (p513) Wild evergreen forest, mountains and glaciers stretch across 70km of the Carretera Austral.

Torres del Paine (p524) Chile's showpiece near Puerto Natales, with an excellent trail network around the country's most revered vistas.

Vicente Peréz Rosales (p500) Chile's oldest national park includes spectacular Lago Todos los Santos and Volcán Osorno.

Villarrica (p489) The smoking symmetrical cone of Volcán Villarrica is playground for trekkers and climbers, snowboarders and skiers.

Environmental Issues

Environmental folly may be the price paid for Chile's growing prosperity. In this resource-rich country, the most notable conflicts of its probusiness policies are mining projects like Pascua Lama (which intends to move a glacier in the Andes) and the destruction of Patagonia's major river systems (Río Puelo, Río Baker, to name a few) to construct dams and hydroelectric power plants. From Region VIII south, native forest continues to lose ground to plantations of fast-growing exotics, such as eucalyptus and Monterey pine. Native araucaria and *alerce* have declined precipitously over the past decades. The Celco-Arauco pulp mill in Valdivia has caused unprecedented environmental damage: it killed off a population of 5000 black-necked swans, polluted the local rivers, and continues to operate despite local and international opposition. Salmon farming in the south threatens to pollute both the freshwater and saltwater as well as endanger marine life. Another issue is the intensive use

BORDER CROSSINGS

For road conditions at the border crossings, the **carabineros** (☎ 133) in border areas are good resources. For Peru, Arica to Tacna is the only land crossing. Connections between Chile and Bolivia are much improved, but many of these routes are long, arduous trips. The most accessible crossings are the following:

Arica to La Paz Highway completely paved, goes through Parque Nacional Lauca, many buses, hitching is feasible.

Calama to Ollagüe Eight-hour train ride with connections to Oruro and La Paz.

Iquique to Oruro Goes via Colchane/Pisiga; highway almost all paved, regular buses, passes by Parque Nacional Volcán Isluga; keep an eye out for wildlife.

San Pedro de Atacama to Uyuni Popular 4WD tour.

of agricultural chemicals and pesticides to promote Chile's fruit exports. In the north, mining and agricultural pesticides threaten the limited water supply. The growing hole in the ozone layer over Antarctica has become such an issue that medical authorities recommend wearing protective clothing and heavy sunblock to avoid cancer-causing ultraviolet radiation, especially in Patagonia.

TRANSPORTATION

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Santiago's Aeropuerto Internacional Arturo Merino Benítez is the main port of entry. Some other cities have international service to neighboring countries. Only Lan flies to Rapa Nui (Easter Island). Taca and Lan all have nonstop flights to/from Lima, Peru. Peruvian flights to Tacna, Chile are slightly cheaper. LAB and Lan fly to/from La Paz, Santa Cruz and Cochabamba (all in Bolivia). Taca and Avianca link Santiago with Bogotá, Colombia. Varig and TAM fly to Brazilian and Paraguayan destinations. Lan flies to Montevideo, Uruguay. Aerolíneas Argentinas and Lan often have internet specials from Santiago to Buenos Aires. European airlines picking up passengers in Buenos Aires before going long-haul offer competitive fares. DAP Airlines flies between major destinations in Patagonia.

Bus

Except in far southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, travel to Argentina involves crossing the Andes; some passes close in winter. Crossings in the Lakes District and Patagonia are very popular, especially in summer

DEPARTURE TAX & ENTRY FEES

Departure tax for international flights is US\$26 or its equivalent in local currency. Reciprocity fees are applied to US (US\$100), Australian (US\$34) and Canadian (US\$55) citizens upon arrival at Santiago's international airport. The stamp given is valid for the life of the passport. Fees must be paid in exact amounts in cash, and preferably in US dollars. Entering via other airports or overland routes can save travelers a hefty fee.

GETTING TO ARGENTINA

Crossing the border into Argentina is easy. Buses with international routes simply cross – no changing, no fees. Border outposts are open daylight hours, although a few long-haul buses cross at night. Dorotea (near Puerto Natales) is open 24 hours in summer. Bring your tourist card and passport. Leave that bunch of bananas back at the hostel – food's a no-no.

months, so booking early and confirming reservations is advised.

Chile Chico to Los Antiguos Frequent bus service.

Coyhaique to Comodoro Rivadavia Several weekly bus services, usually heavily booked, go through Río Mayo.

Futaleufú to Esquel Regular *colectivo* (taxis with fixed routes) service goes to the border, from where other transport is readily available.

Iquique, Calama and San Pedro de Atacama to Jujuy and Salta Paso de Jama (4200m) is most often used; Paso de Lago (4079m) is an excellent trip through little-visited *salar* (salt pans) country; book early.

Osorno to Bariloche Quickest land route in the Lakes District; frequent buses use Paso Cardenal Samoré, often called Pajaritos, year-round.

Puerto Montt and Puerto Varas to Bariloche Year-round, touristy bus-ferry combination tours.

Puerto Natales to El Calafate Many buses in summer; limited off-season.

Punta Arenas to Río Gallegos Many buses ply this six-hour route daily.

Punta Arenas to Tierra del Fuego Two-and-a-half-hour ferry ride to Porvenir, with two buses weekly to Río Grande, connecting to Ushuaia; direct buses via Primera Angostura.

Santiago to Mendoza Tons of options crossing Libertadores; *colectivos* cost more, but are faster.

Temuco to San Martín de los Andes Very popular route with regular summer buses using the Mamuil Malal pass (Paso Tromen to Argentines).

Temuco to Zapala and Neuquén Regular but thin bus service via Pino Hachado (1884m); Icaima (1298m) is an alternative.

Valdivia to San Martín de los Andes Bus-ferry combination crosses Lago Pirehueico to Paso Hua Hum, from where buses continue to San Martín de los Andes.

GETTING AROUND

Air

Lan (☎ 600-526-2000; www.lan.com) and **Sky** (☎ 600-600-2828; www.skyairline.cl in Spanish) provide domestic flights. Weekly website specials released

Tuesdays can shave off up to 40% on a last-minute fare with Lan. Air taxis in the south link more inaccessible regions but do not insure passengers. Their weight limit for carry-on items can be as low as 10kg, with hefty charges for extra baggage.

Boat

Passenger/car ferries and catamarans connect Puerto Montt with points along the Carretera Austral, including Caleta Gonzalo (Chaitén) and Coyhaique, and also connect Quellón and Castro, Chiloé to Chaitén. Ferries from Hornopirén to Caleta Gonzalo only run in summer.

A highlight for many travelers is the trip from Puerto Montt to Puerto Natales on board Navimag's *Magallanes*. Book with **Navimag** (☎ 02-442-3120; www.navimag.com; Av El Bosque Norte 0440, Santiago) far in advance. This is a cargo vessel outfitted for tourism, not a cruise ship. Cabins and beds are quite comfortable, but the cheapest beds are closest to farm animal smells and most vulnerable to the tossing waves. Meals are passable; vegetarians should give notice when booking. Pack motion-sickness remedies, snacks and drinks, which are expensive at the bar.

Bus

The Chilean bus system is fabulous. Tons of companies vie for customers with *ofertas* (seasonal promotions), discounts and added luxuries like movies. Long-distance buses are comfortable, fast and punctual. They usually have toilets and either serve meals or make regular food stops. Make advance bookings on popular long-distance routes (mainly those heading to Argentina) in the summer and on or close to major holidays. Luggage holds are safe, but a lockable sack doesn't hurt and keeps the pack grime-free. Two of the most convenient and reliable companies, Pullman Bus and Tur Bus, have membership clubs you can join for US\$5 for 10% discounts on long-distance trips. Tur Bus discounts tickets purchased online.

Car & Motorcycle

Having wheels gets you to remote national parks and most places off the beaten track. This is especially true in the Atacama Desert, Carretera Austral and Easter Island. Security problems are minor, but always lock your vehicle and remove valuables. Santiago and

its surroundings frequently restrict private vehicle use to alleviate smog.

Hitchhiking

Especially among young Chileans on summer holiday, hitchhiking is a favored form of getting around the country. Some backpackers solicit rides at *servicentros* on the Panamericana. In Patagonia, where distances are great and vehicles few, be prepared to camp out roadside. Carry snacks and water, especially in the desert. Note that Lonely Planet doesn't recommend hitchhiking.

Local Transportation

All main towns and cities have taxis, most of which are metered. Some have set fees for tourist-oriented destinations. Confirm the price before going. *Colectivos* are taxis with fixed routes, shown on the placards on the roof. Rates are about US\$40¢ per ride. *Micros* are city buses, clearly numbered and with a sign indicating their destination. Keep your ticket, which may be checked by an inspector. Santiago has a clean, quick and easy-to-use metro system which connects the most visited and popular neighborhoods.

Train

The **Empresa de Ferrocarriles del Estado** (EFE; ☎ 02-376-8500; www.efe.cl in Spanish) runs a southbound passenger service from Santiago to Chillán, Concepción and Temuco, changing trains to head to Puerto Varas and Puerto Montt. It makes many intermediate stops. Classes of service are *turista* and *salón*, both with reclining seats, *cama pasillo* (sleeper), and *clase departamento*, the most luxurious with private two-bed chambers and washbasin. The costlier *cama* class are modern models with upper and lower bunks.

SANTIAGO

☎ 02 / pop 4,671,500

Santiago's postcard face is that of a modern metropolis poised under gargantuan snow-tipped Andean peaks. Its courteous and orderly surface makes it the least intimidating of all South American capitals for travelers, although the prevalent mall culture can be a bit of a drag. The city itself defies pinning down. Visitors will find polished suburbs and worn downtown cafés, neoclassical architec-

GETTING INTO TOWN

Aeropuerto Internacional Arturo Merino Benítez (☎ 601-9001) is in Pudahuel, 26km northwest of downtown Santiago. **Tur Bus** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 671-7380; Moneda 1529) runs every 15 minutes between 6:30am and 9pm (US\$2.50, 30 minutes). **Buses Centropuerto** (☎ 677-3010; Alameda) provides a similar service (US\$1.70) from Los Héroes metro station. A door-to-door shuttle service (US\$6 to US\$8) is provided by **New Transfer** (☎ 677-3000) and **Transfer** (☎ 777-7707). A cab ride to the center costs about US\$25. All of the main bus stations are right off the Alameda, where you can find metro stations.

ture dulled to grey and a conservative culture which nonetheless erupts in street protest every now and then. Perhaps the most evasive face of the city is its lovely mountain backdrop. The sky – when not cerulean blue – is covered by a heavy drapery of smog.

Take advantage of the fact that this is a safe and quirky city to explore. Squeeze onto the subway – or a yellow bus if you dare – to start exploring. If downtown's not your style, check out the trendy nightlife of Bellavista or the bohemian buzz of Barrio Brasil. Providencia and Las Condes offer fancy cafés and bookstores. Strangers to the city need only witness an airport reunion of prodigal sons and their families to get an inkling of its charm.

HISTORY

Founded by Pedro de Valdivia in 1541, Santiago's site was chosen for its moderate climate and strategic location for defense. It remained a small town until the nitrate boom in the 1880s. Its central station was designed by Gustave Eiffel. In 1985 an earthquake shook down some of downtown's classic architecture. It's currently a major financial center for the continent and headquarters for multinationals like Yahoo!, Microsoft and JP Morgan.

ORIENTATION

'El Centro' is a compact, triangular area bounded by the Río Mapocho and Parque Forestal in the north, the Vía Norte Sur in the west, and Av General O'Higgins (the Alameda) in the south. Key public buildings cluster near the Plaza de Armas, which branches out into a busy graph of shopping arcades and pedestrian streets. North and east of the center is Barrio Bellavista, with Cerro San Cristóbal (Parque Metropolitano). To the west is Barrio Brasil, the bohemian enclave of the city. At the tip of this triangle and extending east are the wealthy *comunas* (sectors) of Providencia and Las Condes, accessed via the

Alameda. Nuñoa is a residential neighborhood south of Providencia.

INFORMATION

Bookstores

Chile's 19% tax on books means high prices.

Books (Manuel Montt, Av Providencia 1652, Providencia) Paperbacks and guidebooks in English.

English Reader (www.englishreader.cl; Av Los Leones 116, Providencia) Top selection of new and used books in English with readings and exchange evenings (Tuesdays and Thursdays).

Feria Chilena del Libro (Map pp424-5; Paseo Huérfanos 623) Santiago's best-stocked bookstore.

Librería Inglesa Local 11 (Paseo Huérfanos 669); Providencia (Av Pedro de Valdivia 47)

Cultural Centers

Instituto Chileno-Británico (Map pp424-5; ☎ 638-2156; Santa Lucía 124)

Instituto Chileno-Norteamericano (Map pp424-5; ☎ 696-3215; Moneda 1467)

Emergency

Ambulance (☎ 131)

Fire Department (☎ 132)

Police (☎ 133)

Internet Access

All-hour internet cafés abound, charging about US\$1 per hour.

Axceso Internet (Map pp424-5; Agustinas 869, Galería Imperio, 2nd fl) Sixty computers and fast connections.

Cyber.sur (Map pp420-1; Maturana 302; ☎ until 11pm) On the corner of the Barrio Brasil plaza.

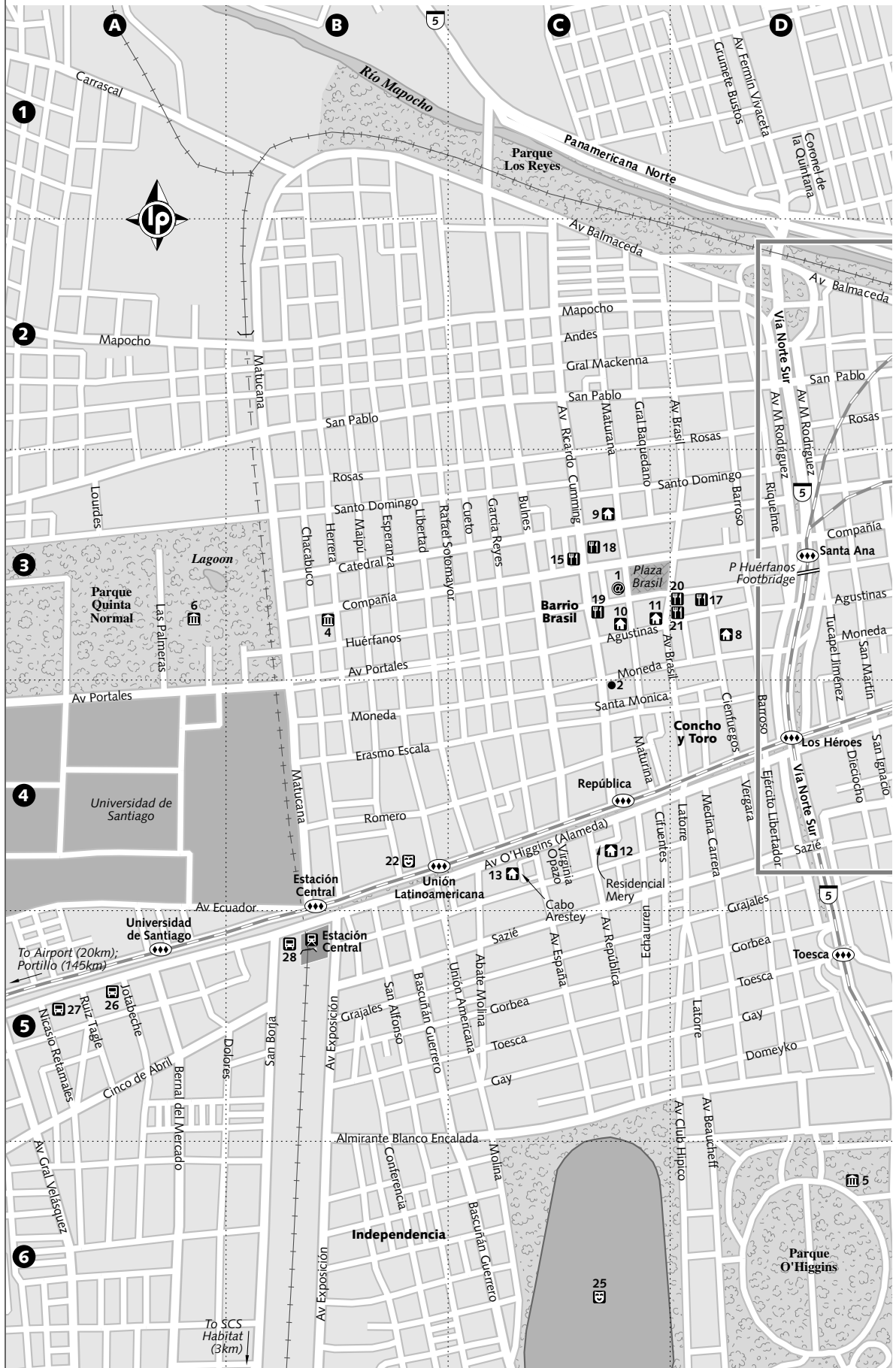
Laundry

Self-service isn't a concept here. The laundries listed here charge about US\$5 per load to wash, dry and fold.

Lavandería Autoservicio (Map pp424-5; Monjitas 507) South of Parque Forestal.

Lavandería San Miguel (Map pp420-1; Moneda 2296) In Barrio Brasil.

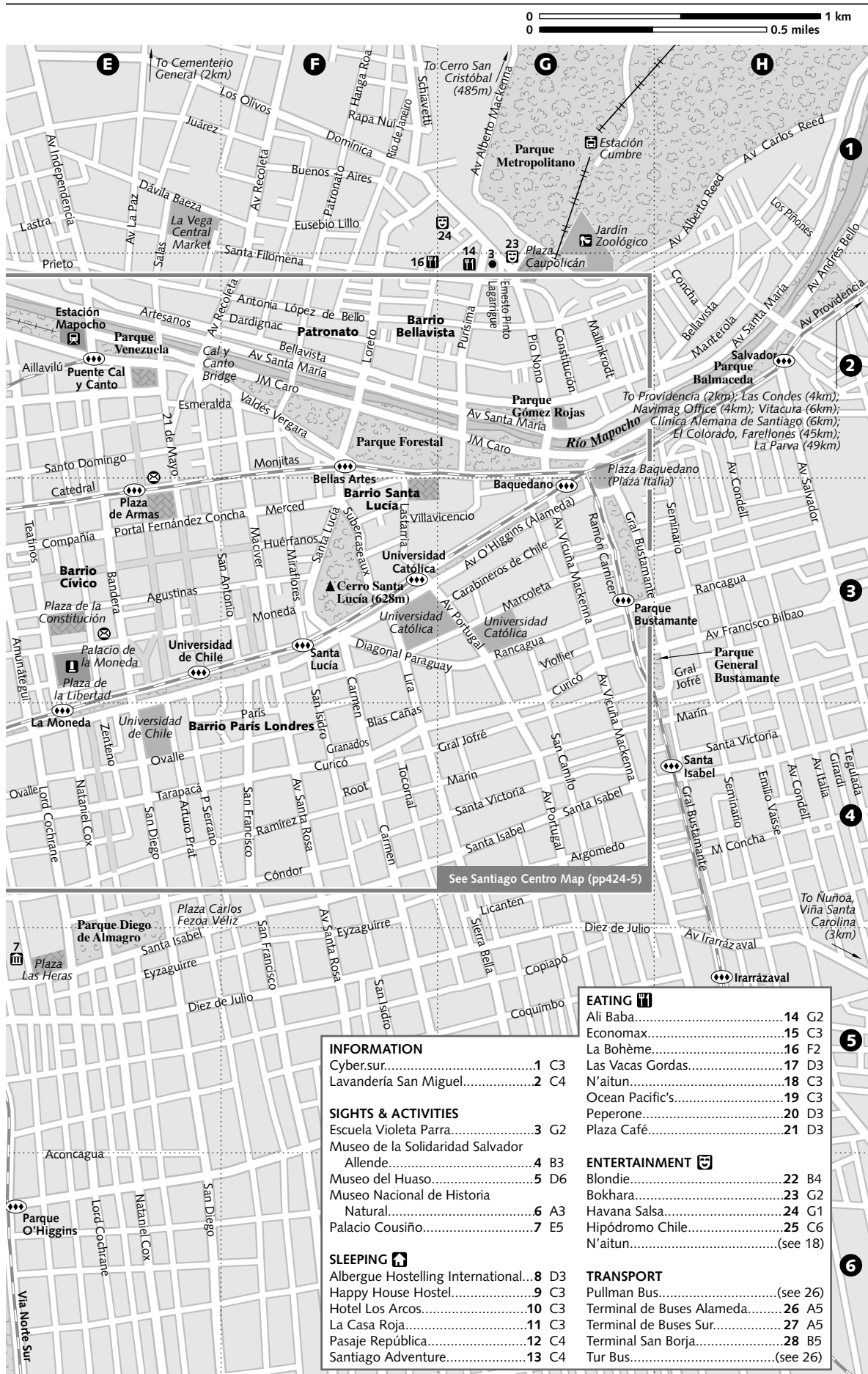
SANTIAGO



CHILE

To Airport (20km);
Portillo (145km)

To SCS
Habitat
(3km)



CHILENISMOS 101

Chilean Spanish fell off the wagon: it is slurred, sing-song and peppered with expressions unintelligible to the rest of the Spanish-speaking world. *¿Cachay?* (you get it?) often punctuates a sentence, as does the ubiquitous *pues*, said as 'po.' 'Sípo,' all clattered together actually means, 'well, yes.' Lazy tongues emit 'pa' instead of 'para,' offering *¿pa'que po?* to say, 'Well, why is that?' Country lingo is firmly seeded in this former agrarian society who refer to guys as *cabros*, complain *'es un cacho'* ('it's a horn,' meaning a sticking point) and go to the *carrete* to *carretear* ('wagon,' meaning party/to party). Lovers of this *loco* lingo should check out John Brennan's *How to Survive in the Chilean Jungle*, available in Santiago's English-language bookstores (see p419). *¿Cachay?*

Left Luggage

All the main bus terminals have a *custodia*, where you can stash a bag for about US\$2 per day. Another option is storing luggage for free at a reputable lodging.

Medical Services

Clínica Alemana de Santiago (☎ 210-1111; Av Vitacura 5951) In Vitacura, the next suburb east of Las Condes; well recommended.

Posta Central (☎ 634-1650; Portugal 125) Santiago's main emergency room, near metro Universidad Católica.

Money

Casas de cambio line Agustinas between Bandera and Ahumada. They change cash and traveler's checks and are open regular business hours and Saturday morning. ATMs (Red-banc) are found throughout the city.

Blanco Viajes (☎ 636-9100; Gral Holley 148, Providencia) Represents American Express.

Post

Main post office (Plaza de Armas; 📧 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, to 6pm Sat) On the north side of the plaza. Handles poste restante for a minor pick-up fee. Mail is held for 30 days. Other locations: in the Centro at Moneda 1155 and in Providencia at Av Providencia 1466.

Tourist Information

Conaf (Map pp424-5; ☎ 390-0282; www.conaf.cl in Spanish; Paseo Bulnes 291; 🕒 9:30am-5:30pm Mon-Thu, to 4:30pm Fri) Information on all of the parks and reserves, with some topographic maps to photocopy.

Municipal tourist office (Map pp424-5; ☎ 632-7783; www.ciudad.cl in Spanish; Merced 860) In Casa Colorada, near the Plaza de Armas.

Sernatur (☎ 236-1416; Av Providencia 1550, Providencia) Chile's national tourist service with capable, well-informed staff. Other branches are at the airport and San Borja bus terminal.

Travel Agencies

Student Flight Center (☎ 335-0395, 800-340-034; www.sertur.cl in Spanish; Hernando de Aguirre 201, Oficina 401, Providencia) STA representative; bargains on air tickets.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Santiago is relatively safe, but petty crime exists. Be on your guard around the Plaza de Armas, Mercado Central, Barrio Brasil, Cerro Santa Lucía and Cerro San Cristóbal in particular. Don't be flashy with your belongings and watch your bag at sidewalk cafés. Stay aware out on a big night in Bellavista: organized groups can target drinkers, especially on Pío Nono. As with any big city you are safer in a pair or group late at night. Also pesky is Santiago's smog, which can make your eyes burn and throat hurt.

SIGHTS**Museums**

Most museums are free on Sunday and closed on Monday. Regular hours are usually from 10am to 6pm or 7pm Tuesday to Saturday and 10am to 2pm Sunday. Unless otherwise noted, admission is US\$1.

A must-see, **Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino** (Map pp424-5; Bandera 361; admission US\$3.50) chronicles a whopping 4500 years of pre-Columbian civilization throughout the Americas with breathtaking ceramics, gorgeous textiles and Chinchorro mummies (which predate their Egyptian counterparts by thousands of years).

The **Museo Histórico Nacional** (Map pp424-5; www.museohistoriconacional.cl in Spanish; Plaza de Armas 951), inside the Palacio de la Real Audiencia, documents colonial and republican history. Displays include indigenous artifacts, early colonial furniture and house fittings, and an interesting exhibit on 20th-century politics.

Modeled on the Petit Palais in Paris, Santiago's early-20th-century fine-arts museum, **Palacio de Bellas Artes** (Map pp424-5; JM de la Barra), near Av José María Caro, houses two museums: **Museo de Bellas Artes**, with permanent collections of Chilean and European art, and the **Museo de Arte Contemporáneo** (www.mac.uchile.cl in Spanish), hosting modern photography, design, sculpture and web-art displays.

Founded in celebration of Chile's socialist experiment, **Museo de la Solidaridad Salvador Allende** (Map pp420-1; Herrera 360, Barrio Brasil) houses works by Matta, Miró, Tapies, Calder and Yoko Ono. During the dictatorship the entire collection spent 17 years underground, awaiting the return of civilian rule.

Santiago's most glorious mansion, the 1871 **Palacio Cousiño** (Map pp420-1; Dieciocho 438; admission US\$3.50) was built on wine and coal and silver-mining fortunes. Highlights include the French-style art and one of the country's first elevators. Admission includes an informative guided tour in English.

La Chascona (Museo Neruda; Map pp424-5; Márquez de La Plata 0192; admission US\$5) Named for the snarled locks of his widow, Pablo Neruda's shiplike house shelters the poet's eclectic collections. Engaging tours are conducted in English.

If you have time, try the following:

Museo del Huaso (Map pp420-1; Parque O'Higgins; admission free) Rounds up an impressive poncho and hat collection.

Museo de Artes Visuales (Map pp424-5; Lastarria 307, Plaza Mulato Gil de Castro, Centro; admission US\$2) Spare, modern space showing contemporary Chilean sculptures.

Museo Nacional de Historia Natural (Map pp420-1; Parque Quinta Normal) Extensive butterfly and fossil collection.

Parks & Gardens

Once a hermitage, then a convent, then a military bastion, **Cerro Santa Lucía** (Map pp424-5) has offered respite from city chaos since 1875. At the southwest corner is the Terraza Nep-tuno, with fountains and curving staircases that lead to the summit.

North of the Río Mapocho, 870m **Cerro San Cristóbal** ('Tapahue' to the Mapuche) towers above Santiago and is the site of **Parque Metropolitano** (www.parquemropolitano.cl in Spanish), the capital's largest open space, with two swimming pools, a botanical garden, somewhat neglected zoo and art museum. Beam up to San Cristóbal's summit via the **funicular** (admission

US\$2; ☎ 1-8pm Mon, 10am-8pm Tue-Sun), which climbs 485m from Plaza Caupolicán, at the north end of Pío Nono in Bellavista. From the Terraza, the 2000m-long teleférico (cable-car; US\$2.50 round-trip) runs to a station near the north end of Av Pedro de Valdivia Norte, accessing most of the interesting sites in the park. A funicular/teleférico combo costs US\$4 or firm up those glutes with a rocky uphill hike.

The **Cementerio General** (☎ 737-9469; www.cementeriogeneral.cl), at the north end of Av La Paz, is a city of tombs with a woeful history lesson. A memorial honors the disappeared, and native sons José Manuel Balmaceda, Salvador Allende and diplomat Orlando Letelier are buried here. Walk 10 minutes from the northern end of Línea 2. Guided tours are available in English and are well worth it; call a day ahead.

ACTIVITIES

Outdoor access is Santiago's strong suit. A quick fix is to run, walk or peddle up Barrio Bellavista's Pío Nono to Cerro San Cristóbal (left).

Swimmers can get strokes in at the Parque Metropolitano's gorgeous pools (see left).

From October to March adventure-travel companies run Class III descents of the Maipo. One popular destination is Cascada de las Animas (p433). They also organize hiking and horse-trekking trips at reasonable rates.

Excellent skiing is within poles' reach of Santiago. The closest resort is El Colorado & Farellones (p432).

Wine enthusiasts should check out the easy day trips (see p432).

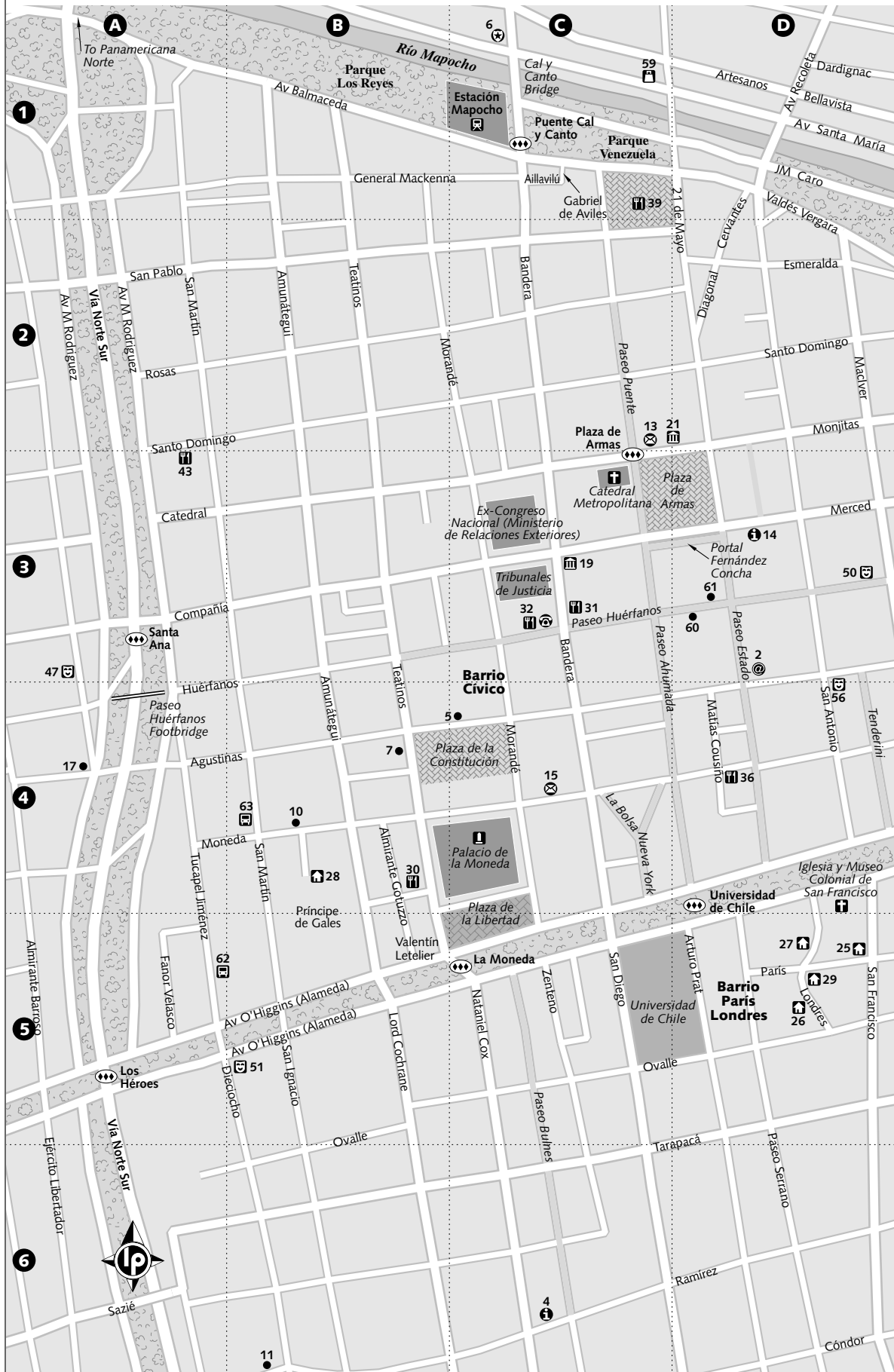
Sore backpackers can soak in hot springs **Baños Colina** (☎ 639-5266; per person US\$15). There's no public transportation but **Manzur Expediciones** (☎ 777-4284) go from Plaza Italia (near metro Baquedano), usually on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday.

WALKING TOUR

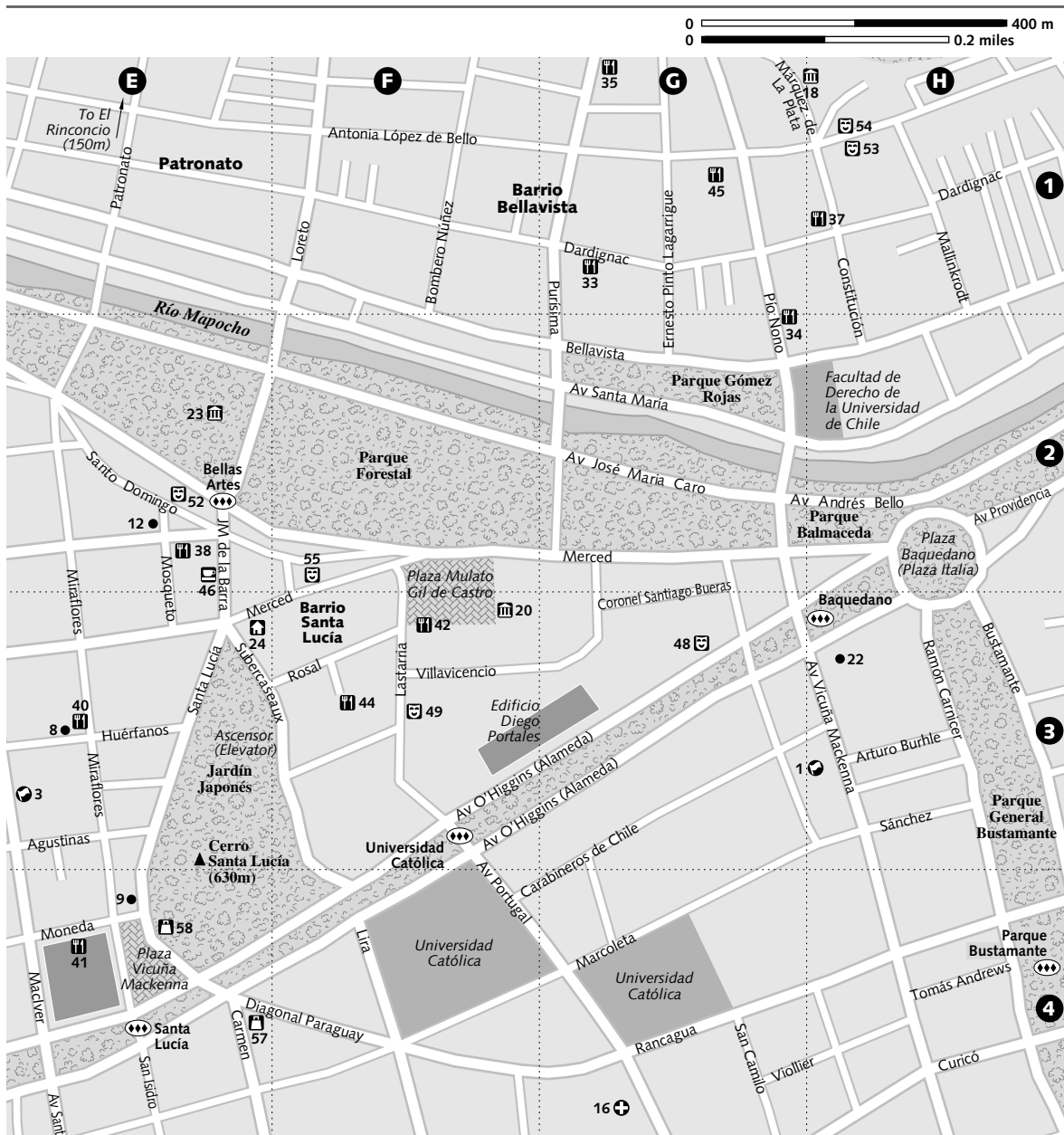
Kickstart with an espresso at the **Poema Café** (1; p428), in the 1924 Biblioteca Nacional. Walking east one block there's the **Centro Artesanal Santa Lucía** (2; p430), which can be broadly defined as outdoor craft stalls – among them are tattoo parlors.

Across the street a neoclassical archway announces **Cerro Santa Lucía** (3; left). Hike up the monumental staircase (daytime only) to the summit. Rest among the trysting lovers

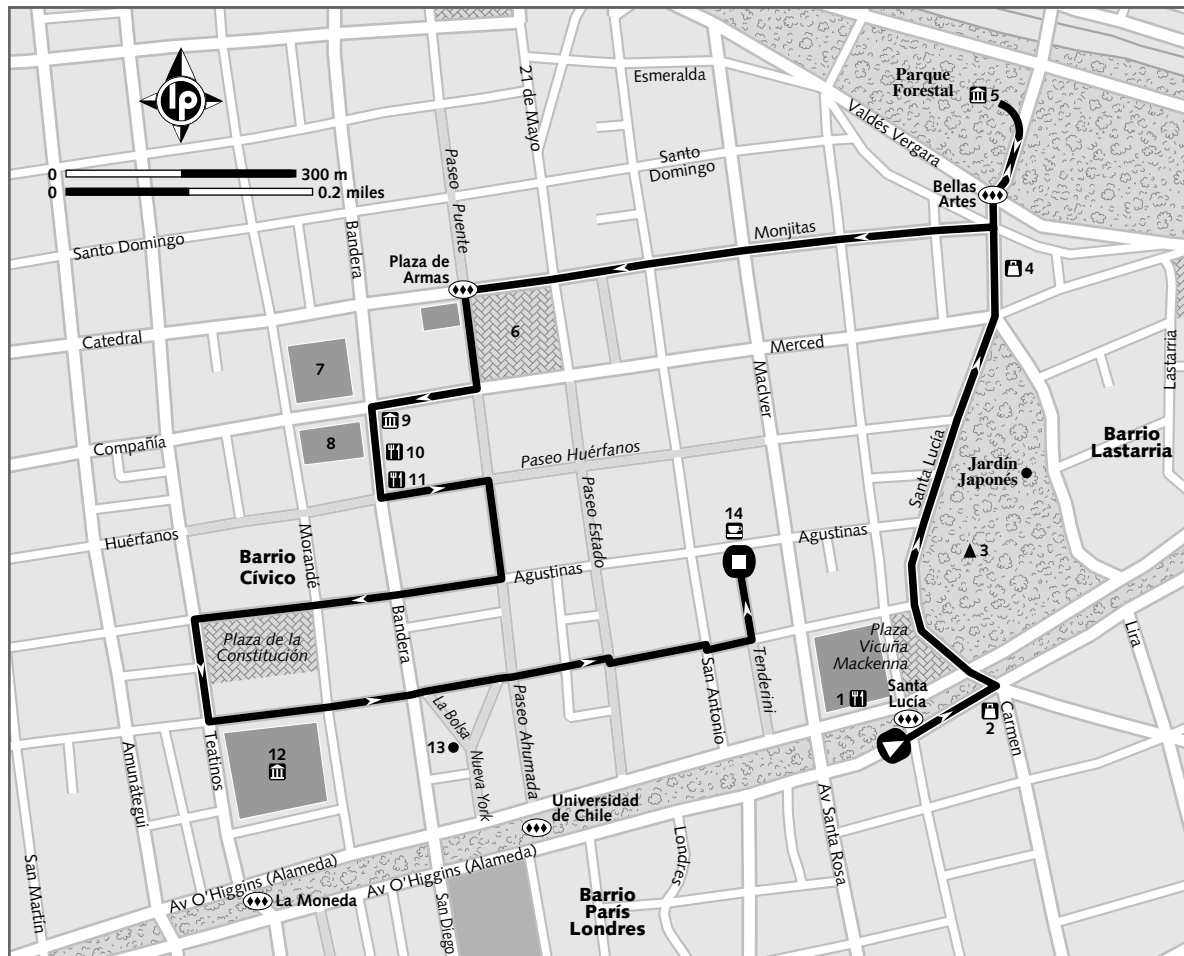
SANTIAGO CENTRO



CHILE



INFORMATION		SLEEPING		DRINKING	
Argentine Consulate.....	1 H3	Hotel Foresta.....	24 E3	Café Brainworks.....	46 E2
Acceso Internet.....	2 D3	Hotel París.....	25 D5	ENTERTAINMENT	
Brazilian Consulate.....	3 E3	Hotel Plaza Londres.....	26 D5	Café del Teatro.....	47 A3
Conaf.....	4 C6	Hotel Vegas.....	27 D5	Cine Alameda.....	48 G3
Departamento de Extranjería.....	5 C4	Residencia Tabita.....	28 B4	Cine El Biógrafo.....	49 F3
Dirección de Fronteras y Límites.....	6 C1	Residencial Londres.....	29 D5	Cine Hoyts.....	50 D3
Dirección de Fronteras y Límites.....	7 B4	EATING		Confitería Las Torres.....	51 B5
Feria Chilena del Libro.....	8 E3	100% Natural.....	30 B4	El Tunel.....	52 E2
Instituto Chileno-Británico.....	9 E4	Bar Nacional 1.....	31 C3	La Casa en el Aire.....	53 H1
Instituto Chileno-Norteamericano.....	10 B4	Bar Nacional 2.....	32 C3	La Feria.....	54 H1
Instituto Geográfico Militar (IGM).....	11 B6	Café Escondido.....	(see 44)	Teatro La Comedia.....	55 F2
Lavandería Autoservicio.....	12 E2	Donde La Elke.....	33 G1	Teatro Municipal.....	56 D4
Main Post Office.....	13 C2	El Antojito de Gauguin.....	34 G2	SHOPPING	
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La Chascona.....	18 H1	Pailas Blancas.....	(see 39)	Lan.....	60 D3
Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino.....	19 C3	Patagonia Restobar.....	40 E3	Sky.....	61 D3
Museo de Artes Visuales.....	20 F3	Poema Café.....	41 E4	Terminal Los Héroes.....	62 A5
Museo de Santiago (Casa Colorada).....	(see 14)	R.....	42 F3	Tur Bus.....	63 B4
Museo Histórico Nacional.....	21 D2	Restaurant Majestic.....	43 A3		
Natalis Language Center.....	22 H3	Rincón Español.....	44 F3		
Palacio de Bellas Artes.....	23 E2	Venezia.....	45 G1		



WALK FACTS

Start Biblioteca Nacional

Finish Barón Rojo

Distance 3km

Duration four to six hours

CHILE

before looping back. Go right on Santa Lucía (becomes JM de la Barra). On your right the **Clinic Bazar (4; JM de la Barra 463)** offers a joke shop run by the satirical newspaper of the same name. Buy your Pinochet mug-shot T-shirt here. Continuing north, the **Palacio de Bellas Artes (5; p55)** is set in the leafy Parque Forestal. Visit the portraits of lonely colonial girls and sun-blistered *huasos* or opt for the whimsical installations at MAC Contemporary Museum across the hall.

Take JM la Barra onto Monjitas for five blocks to the **Plaza de Armas (6)**. Cross the plaza and continue on Compañía to Bandera. You'll find the palatial 1876 **Ex-Congreso Nacional (7; Morandé 441; ☹ closed to public)** in front of the **Tribunales de Justicia (8; law courts; Compañía)**. Across the street the **Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino**

(9; p422) offers a dynamic pan-American perspective that shuns modern borders.

Stomach growly? Grab a quick *empanada* (baked or fried turnover filled with vegetables, egg, olive, meat or cheese) next door at **El Rápido (10; Bandera 347; empanadas US\$2)** or indulge in a *borgoña* (white wine and *chirimoya*) and lunch at local fave **Bar Nacional (11; p428)**.

Head left on Paseo Huérfanos for one block, then right on Paseo Ahumada, the main pedestrian *peatonal*. Keep on the lookout for local personalities. Every weekday at 2pm the tabloid *La Segunda* hits the streets and local news vendor **Rambo** roams firing imaginary rounds into the throngs. This seemingly cracked vet is in fact a beloved fixture of downtown culture; Rambo's disguise can flip to cowboy or presidential candidate, but the hair should be a dead giveaway.

Turn right onto Agustinas until Tatinos, reaching Plaza de la Constitución for views of the mighty late-colonial **Palacio de la Moneda (12; ☎ 690-4000, ext 4311; Morandé 130, Centro; admission free; ☹ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri)**. This presidential palace, the site of the bloody 1973 coup, was closed to the public during the entire dictatorship;

for Chileans its reopening in 2000 was a proud event (solicit visits a month in advance to visitas@presidencia.cl).

Continue to the temple of capitalism, the **Bolsa de Comercio (13)**; stock exchange; La Bolsa 64) to witness Chile's busy economy at work. Follow the businessmen out for a coffee break. *Cafés con piernas* are Chile's answer to its oppressive legacy of dictatorship and strict Catholic norms. While literally 'legs cafés,' these coffee shops have waitresses who often bare a bit more. At **Baron Rojo (14)**; Agustinas 717; ☎ 9am-6:30pm Mon-Fri) caffeine aficionados and the culturally inquisitive can get a US\$1.50 cup.

COURSES

Try one of the following language schools:

Escuela Violeta Parra (Map pp420-1; ☎ 735-8211; www.tandemsantiago.cl; Ernesto Pinto Lagarrigue 362-A, Bellavista) Two-week intensive courses cost US\$250. The school also arranges homestays and trips.

Instituto Chileno de la Lengua (Map pp424-5; ☎ 697-2728; www.ichil.cl; Riquelme 226, Barrio Brasil)

Natalis Language Center (Map pp424-5; ☎ 222-8721; www.natalislang.com; Av Vicuña Mackenna 6, 7th fl) Comes highly recommended by its alumni.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Festival del Barrio Brasil Exhibitions, theater, dance and music bring even more life to the lovely Plaza Brasil in January.

Feria Internacional del Aire y del Espacio (www.fidae.cl) Aeropuerto Los Cerrillos, southwest of town, is the site of this major international air show held in late March.

Gran Premio Hipódromo Chile Held at the end of April/beginning of May, at the Hipódromo Chile, this determines Chile's best three-year-old racehorses.

Feria Internacional de Artesanía Held in the Centro's Parque General Bustamante in November, this is the city's best crafts festival.

Feria Internacional del Libro Santiago's annual book fair in Estación Mapocho attracts authors from throughout the continent in the last week of November.

SLEEPING

The commotion of the Centro slows way down at night. Family-oriented *residenciales* (budget accommodations) lock up from 2am to 7am, so ask first before heading out to party.

Santiago Centro & Barrio París Londres

Barrio París Londres (metro Universidad de Chile) is an attractive, quiet cobblestone enclave south of the Alameda. Barrio Santa Lucía

(metro Santa Lucía), on the other side, is as quaint but swankier.

Residencia Tabita (Map pp424-5; ☎ 671-5700; www.residenciatabita.sitio.net; Príncipe de Gales 81; s without bathroom incl breakfast US\$10.30, d US\$26) A quirky, good-value place with faded decor and large rooms that are a bit nippy in winter. It's not clearly marked; look for the Hotel Familiar sign.

Residencial Londres (Map pp424-5; ☎ 638-2215; unico54@ctclinternet.cl; Londres 54; s/d without bathroom US\$12/23) Santiago's best budget accommodations, with parquet floors and antique furniture cozied up with a relaxed family feel. Reserve ahead.

Hotel Plaza Londres (Map pp424-5; ☎ 633-3320; www.hotelplazalondres.cl; Londres 77; s/d US\$27/37; (P) (Q)) Bland rooms by lovely cobblestone setting of Plazuela José Toribio Medina. Room 301 has views of the square.

Hotel París (Map pp424-5; ☎ 664-0921; París 813; r per person US\$35, without bathroom US\$28) A secure spot with ample rooms and courteous staff.

Hotel Foresta (Map pp424-5; ☎ 639-6262; fax 632-2996; Subercaseaux 353; s/d incl breakfast US\$36/48) A skip from great bars and restaurants, this cute and cozy score has private bathrooms and hot water.

Hotel Vegas (Map pp424-5; ☎ 632-2498; www.hotelvegas.net; Londres 49; s/d incl breakfast US\$43/53; (P) (Q) (R)) Decked-out and comfy digs in an architectural oasis. Ask for the *matrimonial* (supersize double rooms) on the 2nd and 3rd floors for the same price as normal doubles.

Barrio Brasil & Beyond

Sweet offerings fill this bohemian enclave, central to hip restaurants and other parts of the city. It's quiet and relatively safe. Metro stations are Los Héroes or Santa Ana.

La Casa Roja (Map pp420-1; ☎ 696-4241; www.lacasa.roja.cl; Agustinas 2113; dm/d US\$8/22; (Q)) A splendid 19th-century mansion brimming with backpackers – sound like *The Real World*? Lounge around the elegant living room, patios or back garden and communal kitchen.

Albergue Hostelling International (Map pp420-1; ☎ 671-8532; www.hisantiago.cl; Cienfuegos 151; members dm/s/d US\$9.50/27/40; (Q)) Backpacker central, this secure yet sterile 120-bed bunkhouse offers ample common areas, comfortable beds and cheap laundry service.

Happy House Hostel (Map pp420-1; ☎ 688-4849; www.happyhousehostel.cl; Catedral 2207; dm/s/d incl breakfast US\$15/40/50; (Q)) Relax in this early-20th-century mansion with gleaming details, run by

a friendly and informative staff. The roof terrace offers mountain views and a pool table. Long-term guests get discounts.

Hotel Los Arcos (Map pp420-1; ☎ 699-0998; Agustinas 2173; s/d US\$33/40) Decent value, with discounts for extended stays.

República

Some great budget finds lurk in university central, south of the Alameda and east of Estación Central. The closest metro is República.

SCS Habitat (☎ 683-3732; scshabitat@yahoo.com; San Vicente 1798; dm/d US\$5/7) A steal despite its end-of-the-earth location. From Estación Central it's a 20-minute walk or take *micro* 335 or 358 down Av Exposición (17 blocks). Get off at the plaza at the end of the street and walk left (east) three blocks to San Vicente; it's the last house.

Santiago Adventure (Map pp420-1; ☎ 671-5529; santiago_adventure@terra.cl; Cabo Arestey 2468; dm/d incl breakfast US\$13/15) A quiet haven offering communal kitchen, laundry, internet and traveler info. It's in an alley off Av España, one street west of República.

Residencial Mery (Map pp420-1; ☎ 696-8883; Pasaje República 36; r US\$19) Make the most of the peace in this quiet alley. Doors are locked at 2am.

EATING

Cheap lunches abound in the center; while Barrios Bellavista, Brasil or Providencia are better suited for dinner. Restaurants usually close after lunch and only reopen at around 8pm, forget Sundays. Bellavista eateries tend to be open until late every day.

Santiago Centro

Have lunch or *onces* (a snack) in the center, but don't expect to find much open for dinner. Along the southern arcade of the Plaza de Armas, vendors serve *completos* (hot dogs) and *empanadas*.

Patagonia Restobar (Map pp424-5; Paseo Huérfanos 609; sandwiches & snacks US\$3-6) Slip out of the hub-bub on Huérfanos and into this cabin refuge offering a long list of wines and sandwiches.

El Naturista (Map pp424-5; Moneda 846; mains US\$3.50-6) The central branch of a vegetarian chain with a toppling selection of pasta, salad and crêpe dishes. The upmarket version is at Av Vitacura 2751 in Las Condes.

100% Natural (Map pp424-5; Valentín Letelier 1319; mains US\$4-7) Green's the theme in this fruity fuel point for juices, salads and sandwiches.

Mercado Central (Map pp424-5; ☎ 6am-4pm Sun-Thu, to 8pm Fri, to 6pm Sat) Seek out the peripheral restaurants away from the tourist fly-traps. All-night Pailas Blancas (Local 87; mains US\$4 to US\$6) serves hard-core party people after a night of clubbing. Cross the bridge on 21 de Mayo to Mercado de Flores, a gorgeous produce market surrounded by basic *cocineras* (kitchens) serving simple meals of fried sea bass and *paila marina* (seafood stew).

Poema Café (Map pp424-5; Moneda 650; mains US\$5-8; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri) Sneak in a relaxed read while you deconstruct your literary-themed dish.

Bar Nacional (Map pp424-5; Bandera 317; mains US\$6-11) Caricatures and sepia photos adorn this adored soda fountain bustling with bow-tie clad waiters serving scrumptious *pastel de choclo* (maize casserole). There is a second branch at Paseo Huérfanos 1151.

Kintaro (Map pp424-5; Monjitas 460; meals around US\$6.50) Ignore the chintzy digs – the sushi is reasonable value and authentic.

Restaurant Majestic (Map pp424-5; Santo Domingo 1526; mains US\$9-17; ☎ 7:30pm-midnight) Exquisite Indian dishes, including tandoori and curries, are served in the opulent setting of the Majestic Hotel.

Barrios Santa Lucía & Bellavista

These neighborhoods are peak choices for dinner and drinks. Don't even bother trying to order dinner before 9pm. The Middle Eastern cafés on Merced in Santa Lucía serve excellent sweets, spinach *empanadas* and Turkish coffee.

El Rinconcito (cnr Manizano & Dávila Baeza; sandwiches US\$3) Hummus and falafel served in Recoleta, west of Bellavista.

El Antojito de Gauquín (Map pp424-5; Pío Nono 69; mains US\$4-9) Good for cheap, tasty Middle Eastern fare.

Galindo (Map pp424-5; Dardignac 098; mains US\$4-9) Obnoxiously popular, with dependable Chilean fare, meaty sandwiches and lots of beer.

Café Escondido (Map pp424-5; Rosal 346; mains US\$5) Next door to Rincón Español; serves cheap lager and decent snacks: try the *canapé de champiñones* (mushrooms in garlic sauce; US\$4.50).

El Caramaño (Map pp424-5; Purísima 257; mains US\$4.50-7) Ring the bell to enter this anonymous graffiti-spangled fave dishing out quality Chilean specialties.

Donde La Elke (Map pp424-5; Dardignac 68; set menu US\$5.40) This brilliant little café serves great set lunches.

Venezia (Map pp424-5; Pío Nono 200; mains US\$6-9) One of the few places in the main Pío Nono hub worth visiting, it offers classic Chilean cuisine in faded bohemian decor.

La Bohème (Map pp420-1; Constitución 124; mains US\$8-11) Convivial yet cozy, its sparkling French cuisine does the talking.

Rincón Español (Map pp424-5; Rosal Interior 346; mains US\$8-12) The boar's head cues that you're back in Spain, along with tasty tapas and paella.

Ali Baba (Map pp420-1; Santa Filomena 102; mains US\$8-13) Bedouin opulence, belly dancing and massive *tablas* (shared plates) make this hot spot worth the splurge. Vegetarian friendly.

R (Map pp424-5; Lastarria 307; mains US\$10-15) Romance somebody in this candlelit setting where original dishes (mainly fish) take on a Peruvian twist.

Barrio Brasil

Economax (Map pp420-1; cnr Ricardo Cumming & Compañía) Large supermarket.

Peperone (Map pp420-1; Huérfanos 1954; empanadas US\$2) A candlelit neighborhood café offering 20 kinds of *empanadas*; sample the cheese and asparagus.

N'aitun (Map pp420-1; Av Ricardo Cumming 453; specials US\$3.50) A musical venue to down cool daily lunch specials.

Plaza Café (Map pp420-1; Av Brasil 221; mains US\$4-6) Friendly and unfussy, with three-course lunches.

Las Vacas Gordas (Map pp420-1; ☎ 697-1066; Cienfuegos 280; mains US\$4-8) Everybody's favorite: 'the fat cows' offers expertly cooked steaks and kebabs, decent pastas and great service; call ahead.

Ocean Pacific's (Map pp420-1; Ricardo Cumming 221; mains US\$7-14) Fun, family-style seafood in deep-sea ambience.

Providencia

La Mia Pappa (11 de Septiembre 1351; menú US\$3) Elbow into the carbfest, offering OK all-you-can-eat pasta and lasagna.

Café del Patio (Providencia 1670, Local 8-A; mains US\$6-10) Step into this cute café for wok-prepared vegetables and other imaginative vegetarian fare.

La Pizza Nostra (Providencia 1975; pizzas from US\$6) A 30-year tradition of stone-cooked pizzas and service, open even on Sundays.

Liguria (Av Pedro de Valdivia Norte 047; mains US\$7-10) A Santiago legend, its simple recipe is cooking up a great menu at a surprisingly low price with a hefty dash of *bon vivant* and bustle. Don't come here if you don't want to be seen. There's also a branch at Av Providencia 1373.

El Huerto (Orrego Luco 054; mains from US\$8) Delve into the Vegetarian Planet dish (not named for us): spinach fettuccini with tofu cream sauce. Its adjacent café, La Huerta, has limited offerings but is kinder on the wallet.

DRINKING

Café Brainworks (Map pp424-5; JM de la Barra 454; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun) Ideal for a cup of joe or afternoon beer.

ENTERTAINMENT

Live Music

Confitería Las Torres (Map pp424-5; Alameda 1570) An 1879 old-world haunt where nostalgia buffs tango to live bands on weekends.

Club de Jazz (www.clubdejazz.cl in Spanish; Av Alessandri 85, Ñuñoa; admission US\$5; ☎ 10pm-3am Thu-Sat) The most established jazz venue in Latin America, housed in a large wooden building, within trumpeting distance of Plaza Ñuñoa.

La Casa en el Aire (Map pp424-5; www.lacasaenelaire.cl in Spanish; Antonia López de Bello 0125, Bellavista; ☎ 8pm-late Mon-Sun) An alt-venue where Wednesday means poetry and theater and live folk music rocks the rest of the week.

N'aitun (Map pp420-1; ☎ 671-8410; www.naitun.co.cl in Spanish; Av Ricardo Cumming 453, Barrio Brasil; ☎ 8pm-late Mon-Sat) This 1980s leftist gathering spot holds live acts on Friday, ranging from indie bands to bolero and tango duets.

Nightclubs

Clubs yawn to life at midnight. Many dance spots close their doors in February and move to Valparaíso and Viña del Mar.

Blondie (Map pp420-1; Alameda 2879, Barrio Brasil) A must for any indie kid, this striking old theater features a massive video screen looming over the main dance floor.

El Tunel (Map pp424-5; Santo Domingo 439; admission with drink US\$5; ☎ 10pm-4am Wed-Sat) A popular retro club where '70s classics inspire 'Grease Lightning' theatrics and everyone emerges perspiring but happy.

Havana Salsa (Map pp420-1; Dominica 142, Barrio Bellavista) A Cuban-inspired dance venue.

La Feria (Map pp424-5; Constitución 275, Barrio Bellavista) The house of techno and house.

Bokhara (Map pp420-1; Pío Nono 430, Barrio Bellavista) The hedonistic gay venue of choice; enjoy the mirrors and move to techno and house.

Cinemas

Many cinemas offer Wednesday discounts.

Cine Hoyts (Map pp424-5; ☎ 600-5000-400; www.cinehoyts.cl in Spanish; Paseo Huérfanos 735) Paseo Huérfanos, in the center, has a few multiplexes, including this one.

Art-house cinemas include the following:

Cine Alameda (Map pp424-5; Alameda 139)

Cine El Biógrafo (Map pp424-5; Lastarria 181, Barrio Santa Lucía; US\$3.50)

Cine Tobalaba (www.showtime.cl in Spanish; Providencia 2563, Providencia)

Performing Arts

Café del Teatro (Map pp424-5; ☎ 672-1687; Riquelme 226, Barrio Brasil; ☎ noon-2am) Today's 'it' bar. Check out events in the old theater out back, or mingle with the welcoming regulars among the bright wall canvases.

Estación Mapocho (Map pp424-5; ☎ 361-1761; cnr Bandera & Balmaceda) Passenger trains to Viña and Valparaíso have been replaced with Santiago's main cultural center, offering live theater, concerts, exhibits and a café.

Performing-arts venues include **Teatro Municipal** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 369-0282; www.municipal.cl in Spanish; Agustinas 794) and **Teatro La Comedia** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 639-1523; Merced 349), near Cerro Santa Lucía, featuring risqué comedies.

Sports

Estadio Nacional (☎ 238-8102; cnr Av Grecia & Marathon, Ñuñoa) Join the throngs chanting 'Chi-Chi-Chi-Lay-Lay-Lay.' International soccer matches usually pack a crowd. Tickets can be purchased from the stadium.

Horse racing takes place every Saturday from 2:30pm and on alternate Thursdays at **Hipódromo Chile** (Av Independencia 1715) in the *comuna* of Independencia; and every Friday from 2:30pm and on alternate Mondays and Wednesdays at **Club Hípico de Santiago** (Map pp420-1; Almirante Blanco Encalada 2540), south of the Alameda near Parque O'Higgins.

SHOPPING

For artisan crafts try the following:

Centro de Exposición de Arte Indígena (Map pp424-5; Alameda 499) Rapa Nui, Mapuche and Aymara crafts.

Centro Artesanal Santa Lucía (Map pp424-5; cnr Carmen & Diagonal Paraguay) On other side of Cerro Santa Lucía: lapis lazuli jewelry, sweaters, copperware and pottery.

Cooperativa Almacén Campesina (Purísima 303) In Bellavista; shawls and scarves, as well as pottery and jewelry.

Centro Artesanal de Los Dominicos (Av Apoquindo 9085; ☎ 11am-7:30pm) The city's largest crafts selection offers lots of woven goods and everything from jewelry to saddles at the Dominican monastery in Las Condes. Take the metro to Escuela Militar. Catch a taxi (US\$5) or bus (look for one marked 'Los Dominicos') along Av Apoquindo. *Micros* 235, 327, 343 and 344 will take you almost to the end of Apoquindo, where you will have a five-minute walk.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Aeropuerto Internacional Arturo Merino Benítez (☎ 601-1752, lost property 690-1707; www.aeropuerto.santiago.cl) is in Pudahuel, 26km northwest of downtown Santiago. Domestic carrier offices are **Lan** (☎ 600-526-2000; Centro Map pp424-5; Paseo Huérfanos 926; Providencia Av Providencia 2006) and **Sky** (☎ 353-3100; Andres de Fuenzalida 55, Providencia). Following are some approximate one-way fares.

Destination	Cost (US\$)
Antofagasta	188
Arica	195
Balmaceda	186
Calama	162-266
Concepción	98
Puerto Montt	150
Punta Arenas	215
Temuco	131

Bus

Bus transportation within Chile is typically reliable, prompt, safe and comfortable. Santiago has four main bus terminals, from which buses leave for northern, central and southern destinations. The largest and most reputable bus company is Tur Bus. A US\$5 club card can provide a 10% discount on one-way fares (if paying in cash), join at any Tur Bus office. Pullman Bus is also very good. In the south, Cruz del Sur is the best.

Terminal San Borja (Map pp420-1; ☎ 776-0645; Alameda 3250) is at the end of the shopping mall alongside the main railway station. The ticket booths are divided by region, with destinations prominently displayed. Destinations are

from Arica down to the *cordillera* (mountain range) around Santiago.

Terminal de Buses Alameda (Map pp420-1; ☎ 776-2424; cnr Alameda & Jotabeche) is home to **Tur Bus** (☎ 778-0808) and **Pullman Bus** (☎ 778-1185), both going to a wide variety of destinations north, south and on the coast. They are both similarly priced and equally reliable and comfortable.

Terminal de Buses Sur (Map pp420-1; ☎ 779-1385; btwn Ruiz Tagle & Nicasio Retamales, Alameda 3850) has the most service to the central coast, international and southern destinations (the Lakes District and Chiloé).

Terminal Los Héroes (Map pp424-5; Tucapel Jiménez), near the Alameda in the Centro, is much more convenient and less chaotic. Buses mainly head north along the Panamericana Highway, but a few go to Argentina and south to Temuco.

Fares can vary dramatically, so explore options. Promotions can reduce normal fares by half; student reductions by 25%. Discounts are common outside the peak summer season. Try bargaining if the bus is not full and is set to leave. Book in advance to travel during holiday periods. Fares between important destinations are listed throughout this chapter, with approximate one-way fares and journey times in the following table.

Destination	Duration (hr)	Cost (US\$): Pullman	Cost (US\$): Salón Cama
Antofagasta	18	44	75
Arica	28	61	n/a
Chillán	6	10	26
Concepción	8	11	30
Copiapó	11	32	56
Iquique	26	49	n/a
La Serena	7	17	30
Osorno	10	16	39
Puerto Montt	12	18	45
Temuco	8	13	32
Valdivia	12	14	36
Valparaíso	2	6	n/a
Villarrica	9	14	36
Viña del Mar	2	7	n/a

Train

All trains depart Santiago from the Estación Central (Map pp420-1). Tickets are sold at that **ticket office** (☎ 376-8500; Alameda 3170; ☎ 7am-9:45pm) and also at **Metro Universidad de Chile** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 688-3284; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat).

Faster and more efficient trains go south from Santiago, through Talca (US\$10, 2½ hours) and Chillán (US\$15, five hours) to Temuco (with connections to Puerto Montt). The **Empresa de Ferrocarriles del Estado** (EFE; ☎ 376-8500; www.efe.cl in Spanish) goes to Temuco at 10:30pm (US\$16.50, nine hours). There are two types of ticket: *salón* (the cheaper ticket) and *preferente*. Online bookings save 10%. Prices increase on weekends and holidays. Ten trains head south from the station daily.

There is also a local *metrotren* service that goes as far as San Fernando to the south.

GETTING AROUND

Bus

Santiago's cheap yellow exhaust-spewing *micros* are in the process of being replaced. Check the destination signs in their windows or ask other passengers waiting at the stop. Many buses now have signed, fixed stops, but may stop at other points. Fares vary slightly depending on the bus, but most are US\$70¢ per trip; hang on to your ticket, since inspectors may ask for it. The new green buses don't take bills, only coins.

Car

Renting a car to drive around Santiago is a sure-fire way to have a bad day. But if you must, here are some agencies. Most also have offices at the airport.

Automóvil Club de Chile (Acchi; ☎ 212-5702; Vitacura 8620, Vitacura)

Budget (☎ 362-3232; Bilbao 1439, Providencia)

First (☎ 225-6328; www.firstrentacar.cl; Rancagua 0514, Providencia)

Hertz (☎ 235-9666; www.hertz.com; Av Andrés Bello 1469, Providencia)

Lys (Map pp424-5; ☎ 633-7600; Miraflores 541) Lys also rents mountain bikes.

Colectivo

Quicker and more comfortable than buses, taxi *colectivos* carry up to five passengers on fixed routes. The fare is about US\$75¢ within the city limits, US\$4 to outlying suburbs. They look like regular taxis, but have an illuminated roof sign indicating their route.

Metro

Clean, quick and efficient, the metro operates from 6am to 10:30pm Monday to Saturday and 8am to 10:30pm Sunday and holidays. The three lines interlink to form a network to

most places of interest. Fares vary depending on time of day, ranging from US70¢ to US85¢. Tickets are single use, so purchase several to avoid the line. Some subterranean stations also have ticket offices for bus companies, call centers and quick eats.

Taxi

These black-and-yellow numbers are abundant and moderately priced. While most drivers are honest, courteous and helpful, a few take roundabout routes and a handful have 'funny' meters. *Bajar la bandera* (flag fall) costs about US40¢ and about US18¢ per 200m. There is also a system of radio taxis, which can be slightly cheaper. Hotels and restaurants are usually happy to make calls for clients.

AROUND SANTIAGO

SKI RESORTS

Chilean ski resorts are open from June to October, with lower rates early and late in the season. Most ski areas are above 3300m and treeless; the runs are long, the season is long, and the snow is deep and dry. Snowboarders are welcome at all the resorts. Three major resorts are barely an hour from the capital, while the fourth is about two hours away on the Argentine border.

El Colorado & Farellones (full-day lift ticket US\$37), 45km east of the capital, are close enough together to be considered one destination, with 18 lifts and 22 runs from 2430m to 3330m.

Centro de Ski El Colorado (☎ 02-246-3344; www.elcolorado.cl; Av Apoquindo 4900, Local 47, Las Condes, Santiago) has the latest information on snow and slope conditions. **Refugio Aleman** (☎ 02-264-9899; www.refugioaleman.cl; Camino Los Cóndores 1451, Farellones; dm/d incl breakfast & dinner US\$35/40) has friendly multilingual staff and a relaxed international crowd, which make this the pick of the budget accommodations. You can ski from the door to the slopes.

Only 4km from the Farellones ski resort, **La Parva** (full-day lift ticket US\$37, interconnected with Valle Nevado US\$54) has 30 runs from 2662m to 3630m. For the latest information, contact **Centro de Ski La Parva** (☎ 02-431-0420; www.skilaparva.cl; Isidora Goyenechea 2939, Oficina 303, Las Condes, Santiago).

Another 14km beyond Farellones, **Valle Nevado** (☎ 02-477-7700; www.vallenevado.com; Av Vitacura 5250, Oficina 304, Santiago; full-day lift ticket US\$29-38) can

entertain even cranky experts, with 27 runs from 2805m to 3670m, some up to 3km in length.

In a class of its own, **Portillo** (full-day lift ticket US\$37/29), 145km northeast of the capital on the Argentine border, has a dozen lifts and 23 runs from 2590m to 3330m, with a maximum vertical drop of 340m. The on-site **Inca Lodge** (per person per week low/high season full board US\$450/550) accommodates young travelers in dorms. Nothing will get between you and your powder day: boys and girls are separated. Tickets are included in the price and low season offers some screaming deals. Contact **Centro de Ski Portillo** (☎ 02-263-0606; www.skiportillo.com; Renato Sánchez 4270, Las Condes, Santiago) for the latest details.

Manzur Expediciones (☎ 02-777-4284) goes direct to the slopes on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday from Plaza Italia. Transportation, lunch and equipment rental costs US\$25.

SkiTotal (☎ 02-246-0156; www.skitotal.cl; Av Apoquindo 4900, Local 39-42, Las Condes, Santiago) arranges transportation (about US\$15) to the resorts, leaving at 8:45am and returning at 5:30pm. Its equipment rentals (US\$27 to US\$34 for the full package) are slightly cheaper than on the slopes.

WINERIES

As we write this, Chilean wine marketers are studying *Sideways* and revamping their tactics. But for now, wine tours are still considered an elite affair, including a tour of the grounds with didactic explanations followed by meager thimbles of the good stuff. Here are some accessible wineries:

Viña Concha y Toro (☎ 02-476-5269; www.conchaytoro.com; Virginia Subercaseaux 210, Pirque; tours in English US\$6; ☎ tours 11:30am & 3pm Mon-Fri, 10am & noon Sat) Chile's largest and most commercial winery. Browse the rolling grounds and homestead at Pirque. Reserve four days in advance. Take metro to Pirque from Paradero 14 at the exit of Bellavista de La Florida metro station.

Viña Cousiño Macul (☎ 02-351-4175; www.cousinomacul.cl; Av Quilín 7100, Peñalolén; tours & tasting US\$6; ☎ tours 11am Mon-Sat) Take bus 390 from the Alameda.

Viña De Martino (☎ 02-819-2062; www.demartino.cl; Manuel Rodríguez 229; ☎ English tour noon Mon-Sat) In Isla de Maipo, one hour southwest of Santiago, has excellent tours run by enologists. The basic tour at this Tuscan-style *vinoteca* costs US\$10. A tour and lunch with unlimited reserve wine costs US\$35. Reserve a tour at least a day in

advance. Buses for Isla de Maipo leave from Terminal San Borja in Santiago.

Viña Santa Carolina (☎ 02-511-5778; Rodrigo de Araya 1341; tours US\$12.50) An 1875 vineyard in Ñuñoa. Give two days' notice for an English-speaking tour.

Viña Undurraga (☎ 02-372-2865; www.undurraga.cl; Camino a Melipilla Km34; tours US\$7; 🚗 tours 10am, 11am, 2pm, 3:30pm Mon-Fri, 10am, 11:30am, 1pm Sat & Sun) Thirty-four kilometers southwest of Santiago on the old Melipilla road; take the bus to Talagante from Terminal San Borja and ask to be dropped off at the vineyard.

CAJÓN DEL MAIPO

Southeast of the capital, the Cajón del Maipo (Río Maipo canyon) is a major weekend destination for *santiaguinos*, who come to camp, hike, climb, bike, raft and ski. From September to April rafts descend the mostly Class III rapids of the murky Maipó in little over an hour. Full-day trips cost about US\$70, less if you provide your own transport and food.

Cascadas Expediciones (☎ 02-861-1777; www.cascada-expediciones.com; Cam Al Volcán 17710, Casilla 211, San José de Maipó) and **Altué Active Travel** (☎ 02-232-1103; www.chileoutdoors.com; Encomenderos 83, Las Condes, Santiago) arrange the fun.

Near the village of San Alfonso, **Cascada de las Animas** (☎ 02-861-1303; www.cascada.net; campsites/cabins US\$8/67) is a lovely 3500-hectare private nature reserve and working horse ranch. Riverside campsites are flat and woodsy; the four-person cabins have kitchens and log fires. A busy restaurant serves creative offerings on a terrace with views over the valley, *and* there's a large attractive pool of natural spring water, a sauna and massage facility. You can arrange any number of hiking, riding (US\$30) and rafting options here, too. This is a top out-of-the-city destination. Lodging and activities are discounted from May to September.

Only 93km from Santiago, 3000-hectare **Monumento Natural El Morado** (admission US\$2.50; 🚗 closed May-Sep) rewards hikers with views of 4490m Cerro El Morado at Laguna El Morado, a two-hour hike from the humble hot springs of Baños Morales. There are free campsites around the lake.

Refugio Lo Valdés (☎ 099-220-8525; www.refugio-lovaldes.com; per person incl breakfast US\$27), a mountain chalet run by the German Alpine Club, is a popular weekend destination. Rates include breakfast, with other meals available. Eleven kilometers from here is **Baños Colina** (☎ 02-209-9114; per person incl campsite US\$15), where terraced hot springs overlook the valley.

Buses San José de Maipó (☎ 02-697-2520; US\$1.20) leave every 30 minutes, from 6am till 9pm, from Terminal San Borja (but stopping at Parque O'Higgins metro station) for San José de Maipó. The 7:15am bus continues to Baños Morales daily in January and February and on weekends only from March to October.

Turismo Arpue (☎ 02-211-7165) runs buses (US\$7) on Saturday and Sunday beginning at 7:30am from Santiago's Plaza Italia (the Baquedano metro station) directly to Baños Morales; call to confirm departure times. From October to mid-May, **Buses Manzur** (☎ 02-777-4284) runs to the hot springs from Plaza Italia on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday at 7:15am. Try also **Buses Cordillera** (☎ 02-777-3881) from Terminal San Borja.

VALPARAÍSO

☎ 032 / pop 276,000

Valparaíso, or 'Valpo,' is a well-worn, frenetic port with houses stacked to gaping heights along the sea. Considered the cultural capital of Chile, this city, 120km northwest of Santiago, is a Unesco World Heritage site with reason. While the bohemian among us love it, its rough edges won't charm all. Tangled wires and debris scatter the backdrop. The congested center is known as El Plan, with lower-level streets parallel to the shoreline which curves toward Viña del Mar. An irregular pattern of streets leads into residential hills which are also connected by steep footpaths and Valparaíso's famous *ascensores* (elevators), built in its heyday between 1883 and 1916.

The leading merchant port along the Cape Horn and Pacific Ocean routes, Valparaíso was the stopover for foreign vessels, including whalers, and the export point of Chilean wheat destined for the California gold rush. Foreign merchants and capital made it Chile's financial powerhouse. Its decline began with the devastating 1906 earthquake and the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914. Today this V Region capital and home to the National Congress is in revival mode, with a number of hot nightspots, restaurants and B&Bs.

Information

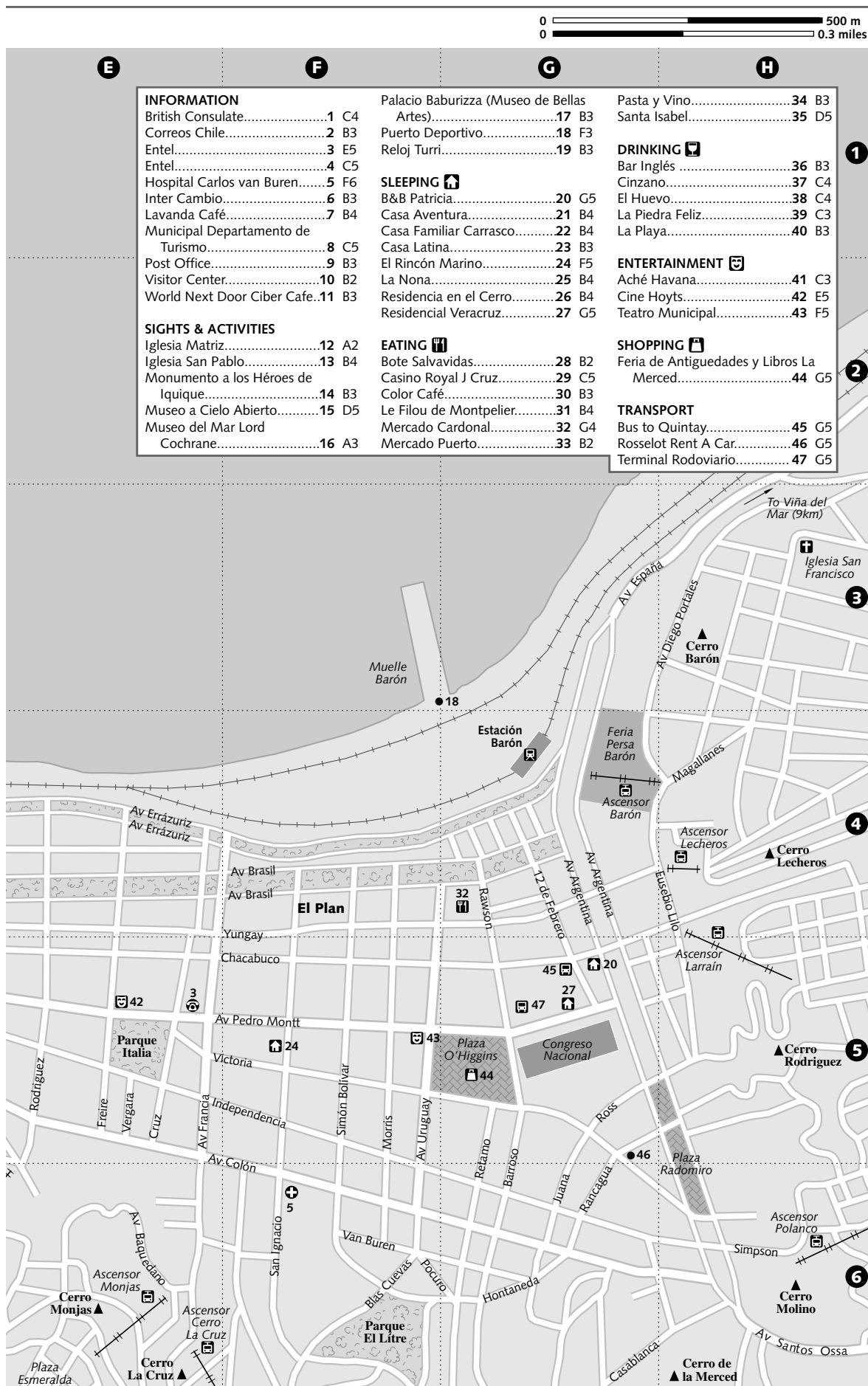
INTERNET ACCESS

Internet cafés are common. One of the nicest: **World Next Door Ciber Cafe** (Blanco 692; per hr US\$1; 🚗 8:30am-8pm Mon-Sat) This welcoming internet café has a superfast connection, student discounts and internet-based phone calls.

VALPARAÍSO



CHILE



CHILE

INTERNET RESOURCES

Check out the following Spanish-language resources:

B&B Valparaíso (www.bbvalparaiso.cl) Useful for extra accommodations options.

Capital Cultural (www.capitalcultural.cl) A roundup of restaurants, hotels and cultural offerings.

LAUNDRY

Most *hospedajes* (budget accommodations with shared bathroom) offer laundry service.

Lavanda Café (Av Almirante Montt 454) On Cerro Alegre; laundry and coffee.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Hospital Carlos van Buren (☎ 2204-000; Av Colón 2454) Located at the corner of San Ignacio.

MONEY

Inter Cambio (Plaza Sotomayor s/n) An exchange house.

POST

Post office (Prat 856)

TELEPHONE

Call centers are abundant in the center. Entel has offices at Condell 1495 and at the corner of Av Pedro Montt and Cruz.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Municipal Departamento de Turismo (☎ 2939-108; Condell 1490; ☎ 8:30am-2pm & 3:30-5:30pm Mon-Fri) Offers basic services.

Visitor center (☎ 2939-587; ☎ 10am-2pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri) On the pier near Plaza Sotomayor, with well-informed English-speaking personnel and free city maps.

Dangers & Annoyances

The area around the Mercado Central and La Iglesia Matriz has a reputation for petty street crime and muggings. Avoid flashy displays of wealth and keep a close watch on your belongings, as there are regular reports of opportunist theft. Still, most people wander Valparaíso's streets without any problem. With the usual precautions most areas are safe enough, at least during daylight. At night stick to familiar areas and go out accompanied.

Sights & Activities

The shutter-happy simply tremble at the city's picturesque possibilities. Start at **Muelle Prat**, at the foot of Plaza Sotomayor. It's lively on weekends, dare we say *touristy*. Watch your

stuff here. You can squeeze in a cheap harbor tour (US\$1.50), but photographing naval vessels is strictly prohibited. From here, clamber through Plaza Sotomayor, where the subterranean mausoleum **Monumento a los Héroes de Iquique** pays tribute to Chile's naval martyrs of the War of the Pacific.

Take **Ascensor Cordillera** west of the plaza to the well-poised 1842 **Museo del Mar Lord Cochrane** (Merlet 195; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun mid-Mar-mid-Sep, 10am-1pm & 3-8pm mid-Sep-mid-Mar), which housed Chile's first observatory. Back on the lower level take Serrano to Plaza Echaurren (stay on your guard as robberies happen here). A block north is the **Iglesia Matriz**, the site of four churches since 1559. Back by Plaza Sotomayor, near the Tribunales (law courts), **Ascensor El Peral** goes to Cerro Alegre, where on Paseo Yugoslavo the Art Nouveau **Palacio Baburizza** (1916) houses the **Museo de Bellas Artes** (admission free; ☎ 9:30am-6pm Tue-Sun); its gorgeous grounds and architecture alone justify a peek. From here, continue on Paseo Yugoslavo to Urriola to access Cerro Alegre and Cerro Concepción, the most well-known and typical of the hill areas. **Iglesia San Pablo**, on Pilcomayo and Templeman, has organ concerts Sunday at 12:30pm. Take **Ascensor Concepción (Turri)** down to reach **Reloj Turri** (cnr Esmeralda & Gómez Carreño), a landmark clock tower.

Further east, near Plaza Victoria off Aldunate, **Ascensor Espíritu Santo** accesses Cerro Bellavista, which has become an open-air museum of abstract murals, called **Museo a Cielo Abierto**. From here, take Av Ramos and then Ricardo Ferrari to get to Neruda's least-known house, **La Sebastiana** (☎ 2256-606; Ferrari 692; adult/student US\$3.75/2; ☎ 10:30am-2:30pm & 3:30-6pm Tue-Sun, till 7pm Jan & Feb). In this wind-whipped locale, the poet's eclectic taste, humor and his passion for ships come to life. Another way to get here is to take the Verde Mar bus 'O' or 'D' on Serrano north of Plaza Sotomayor, getting off on the 6900 block of Av Alemania, from where it's a short walk.

Paddle or sail out of the city with **Puerto Deportivo** (☎ 2592-852; www.puertodeportivo.cl; Muelle Barón; kayak rentals per hr US\$8), offering reasonable rentals as well as kayak and sailing lessons.

The cheapest tour of Valparaíso's hills can be had on the Verde Mar 'O' *micro* on Serrano near Plaza Sotomayor. It chugs to Viña del Mar (US\$50¢), passing La Sebastiana on the way.

Festivals & Events

Año Nuevo (New Year's) is a major event thanks to spectacular fireworks that bring hundreds of thousands of spectators to the city.

Sleeping

Valpo's gemstone digs are budget *hospedajes* perched in the hills. Make reservations or find listings at www.granvalparaiso.cl or www.bbvalparaiso.cl (both in Spanish).

Residencial Veracruz (☎ 2253-583; Av Pedro Montt 2881; s/d US\$8/16) For skinny wallets, this friendly family residence near the bus terminal offers pleasing common areas and kitchen access. It's great if you don't mind the street noise.

Casa Aventura (☎ 2755-963; www.casaventura.cl; Pasaje Gálvez 11, Cerro Concepción; per person incl breakfast US\$12) A friendly couple run this comfortable and airy *hostal*. Check out the hiking trips and Spanish courses. Breakfast includes fruit, homemade cheese and real coffee, and there's kitchen use.

B&B Patricia (☎ 2220-290; 12 de Febrero 315; s/d without bathroom incl breakfast US\$12/24) Gleaming and fresh, this high-ceiling option boasts accommodating owners and a location right in town.

Residencia en el Cerro (☎ 2495-298; Pasaje Pierre Loti 51 btwn Abtao & Pilcomayo, Cerro Concepción; s/d US\$12/24; 📺) Turn-of-the-century grandeur with soaring views and delectable breakfasts. You'll find it on a small alleyway bedecked in bougainvillea.

El Rincón Marino (☎ 2225-815; www.rinconmarino.cl; San Ignacio 454; s/d incl breakfast US\$12.50/25; 📺) Word on the street has popularized this busy nook with spacious rooms, wonderful owners and kitchen use.

Casa Familiar Carrasco (☎ 2210-737; www.casacarrasco.cl; Abtao 668, Cerro Concepción; r per person US\$13.50) Not that cheap – the rooms are clean but quite basic – the draw here are the delightful elderly owners and spectacular roof deck vistas. You'll know it by its unmistakable pink and green exterior.

Villa Kunterbunt (☎ 2288-873; villakunterbuntvalpo@yahoo.de; Quebrada Verde 92, Cerro Playa Ancha; r per person incl breakfast US\$16; 📺) Dig this colonial house, with fluffy pillows, claw-foot tub, hearty breakfast, a friendly family and backyard patio. Reserve the romantic tower room in advance. It's accessed by *colectivo* 150, 151 or bus 1, 2, 3, 5, 17 or 111 from the terminal.

La Nona (☎ 2495-706; www.bbblanona.com; Galos 660, Cerro Alegre; r per person US\$18) A reader-recommended

hospedaje where the owners will bend over backwards to make your stay great. Find directions and more on their excellent website.

Casa Latina (☎ 2494-622; Papudo 462, Cerro Concepción; s/d per person without bathroom incl breakfast US\$19/35; 📺) This lovely, newly refurbished *hospedaje* affords all the perks of a hotel with the cozy communal feel of a hostel.

Eating

On Sunday, most restaurants are open only noon to 4pm, unless noted.

Santa Isabel (Av Pedro Montt btwn Las Heras & Carrera; 🕒 9am-9pm) Supermarket with upstairs cafeteria.

Mercado Cardonal (cnr Yungay & Rawson) Get your goat cheese and olives on this block of crisp and colorful produce. Upstairs *cocinerías* serve *paila marina* for US\$3.50 or daily specials (US\$2.50).

Mercado Puerto (cnr Blanco & San Martín) This gruff and fishier market also offers meal deals.

Casino Royal J Cruz (Condell 1466; 🕒 2:30pm-4am) A delicious hodgepodge of antiques, tabletop graffiti and laissez-faire attitude. Go for the mountainous *chorrillana* (a plate of fries topped with spicy pork, onions and egg) while folk singers strum and serenade you.

Color Café (Papudo 526, Cerro Concepción; mains US\$4-9) A luminous literary nook with a planet of tea offerings, tasty vegetarian treats, coffee and velvety hot chocolate. Open late Sundays.

Le Filou de Montpellier (☎ 2224-663; Av Almirante Montt 382; set menu US\$5) Adorable and run by a mad Frenchman who prepares mouth-watering dishes: picture quiche Lorraine and roast turkey stuffed with prunes in a cognac and port sauce.

Bar Inglés (☎ 2214-625; Cochrane 851; mains US\$7-10; 🕒 noon-11pm Mon-Fri) Back in the day hustlers would use the back door to sneak out with the cash of gullible *santiaguinos* who paid advances for contraband. It's still ripe with memories and maritime atmosphere, decked out in dark wood and white tablecloths. On offer are steaks, conger eel and Spanish tortillas.

Bote Salvavidas (☎ 2251-477; Muelle Prat s/n; mains US\$9-13) The prices may be dear and the service slow, but this seafood spot offers prime views of a working port in action.

Pasta y Vino (☎ 2496-187; Templeman 352; mains US\$9-13) Innovative and interesting, this place fills up fast. We recommend the ravioli cooked with a hint of curry and coconut.

Drinking

Grab a friend and cruise the scruffy pub-lined street of Av Ecuador, including Mr Egg at No 50, or Leo Bar at No 24. Best not to go alone.

Cinzano (Plaza Anibal Pinto 1182; ☎ 10am-2am Mon-Sat) Drinkers, sailors, crooners and lovers have frequented this Valpo haunt since 1896. Photographs of sinking ships line the walls, and old boys with golden voices perform tango tunes in the evenings.

El Huevo (www.elhuevo.cl; Blanco 1386; admission US\$7) Rock and drink the night away at this happening venue for students and young people.

La Playa (Cochrane 568; ☎ 10am-past midnight) One long bar, cheap pitchers of beer and hedonistic touches make this one great outing.

La Piedra Feliz (www.lapiedrafeliz.cl; Av Errázuriz 1054; admission Tue-Sat US\$8.50) A class act with live jazz and tango on weekends.

Teatro Municipal (Av Uruguay 410) Hosts live theater and concerts.

Entertainment

Aché Havana (Av Errázuriz 1042; admission Thu-Sat US\$6, free Tue & Wed) *Mueve la cadera* (shake your hips) to pulsating salsa.

Cine Hoyts (☎ 2594-709; Av Pedro Montt 2111) Movie theater.

Shopping

Feria de Antiquedades y Libros La Merced (Plaza O'Higgins; tickets US\$6; ☎ Sat, Sun & holidays) One man's trash is another man's *feria*, but you'll find some standouts here, including second-hand books, and it's fun.

Getting There & Away

The **Terminal Rodoviario** (Av Pedro Montt 2800) is across from the Congreso Nacional. Bus service from Valparaíso is almost identical to that from Viña del Mar. Many buses go to points north and south, with fares and times similar to Santiago. On weekends, get your ticket to Santiago in advance; Tur Bus has the most departures (US\$4, two hours). Most buses to the north leave at night, while many to the south leave in the morning.

Fénix Pullman Norte (☎ 257-993) runs to Mendoza (US\$16, eight hours) as does **Tas Choapa** (in Valparaíso ☎ 2252-921, in Viña del Mar 032-882-258), which continues to San Juan and Córdoba. Buses stop in Viña del Mar, but bypass Santiago.

Buses to the lovely coastal town of Quintay run five times a day from the corner of Chacabuco and 12 de Febrero.

Getting Around

The most unique way to get around Valparaíso is by trolley car (US\$30¢), which still run throughout the city – despite much wear and tear. *Micros* (US\$50¢) run to and from Viña and all over the city, as do *colectivos* (US\$60¢). During the day, avoid the traffic to Viña by hopping on *Merval*, a commuter train that leaves from **Estación Puerto** (Plaza Sotomayor 711). Other stations are at Bellavista and Barón. Trains run till 10pm. Valpo's **ascensores** (from US\$20¢; ☎ 7am-8pm or 8:30pm) are considered both transport and entertainment. The oldest, Ascensor Cordillera, runs from 6am to 11:30pm.

Risk takers can consider renting a car to explore beach resorts to the north or south. For car hire, try **Rosselot Rent a Car** (☎ 352-365; Victoria 3013).

ISLA NEGRA

A stirring testament to imagination, whimsy and affection, Pablo Neruda's outlandish favorite **house** (☎ 035-461-284; admission with English-speaking guide US\$5.20; ☎ 10am-8pm Tue-Sun summer, 10am-2pm & 3-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-8pm Sat & Sun rest of year) sits atop a rocky headland 80km south of Valparaíso. It includes extraordinary collections of bowsprits, ships in bottles, nautical instruments and wood carvings. His tomb is also here alongside that of his third wife, Matilde. Reservations are advised in high season. Isla Negra is not, by the way, an island.

A visit here is an easy day trip. Pullman and Tur Bus (both US\$3, 1½ hours, every 30 minutes) buses go direct from Santiago's Terminal de Buses Alameda. Pullman Bus Lago Peñuelas (US\$2, 1½ hours, every 15 minutes) comes here from Valparaíso.

VIÑA DEL MAR

☎ 032 / pop 286,900

Trim green gardens and palm-fringed boulevards characterize this city on the sea. Known as the Garden City, for its many parks and flowers, or just Viña for short, this city beach resort has a scrubbed, modern feel that couldn't contrast more sharply with the personality of neighboring Valpo. After the railway linked Santiago and Valparaíso, the well-heeled flocked to Viña del Mar, building grand houses and mansions away from the congested port. Viña remains a popular weekend and summer destination for *santiaguinos*.

Viña's beaches can get very crowded during holidays and are subject to cool morning fogs. The chilly Humboldt current can also put off would-be swimmers. Summer is pickpocket-er's high season, so watch your belongings, especially on the beach.

Information

Afex (Av Arlegui 641) Can change traveler's checks and currency.

Central de Turismo e Informaciones (☎ 269-330; www.visitevinadelmar.cl; Av Marina s/n; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat summer, 9am-2pm & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm & 4-7pm Sat rest of year) Provides city maps and events calendars.

Horeb (Av Arlegui 458; per hr US\$0.80) Offers internet access.

Hospital Gustavo Fricke (☎ 680-041; Álvarez 1532) East of downtown.

Lavarápido (Av Arlegui 440; express service US\$7) You can do your laundry here.

Post office (Plaza Latorre 32) Sits at the northwest side of Plaza Vergara.

Sernatur (☎ 882-285; infovalparaiso@sernatur.cl; Av Valparaíso 507, 3rd fl; ☎ 8:30am-2pm & 3-5:30pm Mon-Fri) Tourist information is also available here, back off the main street.

Tecomp (Av Valparaíso 684) Offers cheap international calling.

Sights & Activities

Specializing in Rapa Nui archaeology and Chilean natural history, the small **Museo de Arqueológico e Historia Francisco Fonck** (4 Norte 784; admission US\$1.50; ☎ 9:30am-6pm Tue-Fri, till 2pm Sat & Sun) features an original *moai* (enormous stone sculpture from Rapa Nui), Mapuche silverwork, Peruvian ceramics, plus insects and stuffed birds. Two blocks east, the **Museo Palacio Rioja** (Quillota 214; admission US\$1; ☎ 10am-1:30pm & 3-5:30pm Tue-Sun) is a mansion hosting exhibits, movies and musical performances.

Once the residence of the prosperous Alvarez-Vergara family, now a public park, the grounds of the magnificently landscaped **Quinta Vergara** (☎ 7am-7pm), south of the railroad, showcase plants from many corners of the world. On-site is the Venetian-style **Palacio Vergara** (1908), which in turn contains the less inspiring **Museo de Bellas Artes** (admission US\$1; ☎ 10am-2pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun).

On the north side of the estuary is the overly glitzy **casino**; to the west is **Castillo Wulff**, built in 1880; and the fancy boat-shaped **Cap Ducal hotel**.

Festivals & Events

Viña del Mar's most popular event is the annual **Festival Internacional de la Canción** (International Song Festival), held every February in the amphitheater of the Quinta Vergara. Adored by Chileans, it attracts big names from the Latin American pop world and English-language has-beens.

Sleeping

Accommodations aren't as charming or competitively priced as in nearby Valpo. Prices following are the high summer rates, look for deep discounts off-season. The best quality budget options are on and around Av Agua Santa, just south of the railroad.

Residencial Agua Santa (☎ 901-531; Agua Santa 36; s/d US\$10/20) A tranquil blue Victorian shaded by trees.

Hospedaje Calderón (☎ 970-456; Batuco 147; per person US\$10) This homey (unmarked) family lodging offers basic, well-scrubbed rooms a skip from the bus terminal.

Hospedaje Toledo (☎ 881-496, Batuco 160; US\$10) Engage the owner in chitchat at this amenable, unmarked option near the bus terminal.

Residencial Clorinda (☎ 623-835; Diego Portales 47; s US\$12) Lounge about the outdoor patios with great views; laundry facilities and kitchen use round out the comforts of home.

Residencial La Nona (☎ 663-825; Agua Santa 48; s/d incl breakfast US\$13/26) A colorful building of simple yet comfortable rooms; those in the main house have private bathrooms. There is a very matronly and charming laundry service.

Hotel Asturias (☎ 711-565; www.hotelasturias.tk; Av Valparaíso 299; per person US\$13.50) Part of the Hostel International (HI) group, this tidy and friendly budget option is good for meeting fellow backpackers.

Hostal Mar (☎ 884-775; Alvares 868; s/d incl breakfast US\$23/33.50; ☎) Look for the willow tree and neon sign down a driveway marking the entrance to this characterful place. Decent rooms and a comfy communal area make it worth the slightly higher charge.

Residencial Villarrica (☎ 881-484; administracion@hotelvillarrica.com; Av Arlegui 172; s/d without bathroom US\$25/37) Upstairs rooms are the best at this light and spacious lodging with some nice antique touches. Book ahead on weekends.

Residencial 555 (☎ 739-035; 5 Norte 555; s/d incl breakfast US\$26/43) Our pick, this old gem with chandeliers and chintzy touches is situated on

CHILE

VIÑA DEL MAR

PACIFIC OCEAN

0 500 m
0 0.3 miles

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3 **SLEEPING**

- Hospedaje Calderón..... 15 F3
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4 **EATING**

- Anayak..... 24 D2
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DRINKING

- Row of Pubs..... 31 D3

a quiet tree-lined street. Rooms are spotless and simply lovely.

Eating & Drinking

The pedestrian area around Av Valparaíso is the best bet for a variety of cheap eats. Take a stroll down Paseo Cousiño to check out a string of convivial pubs, some featuring live music.

Jerusalem (Quinta 259; snacks US\$2-5) Pull up a stool and chat with the friendly owners while they whip up your falafel sandwich. There's other Middle Eastern fare but beware the *arak*, a potent Middle Eastern shot.

Don Giacomo (Villanelo 135, 2nd fl; mains US\$2.50-5) When the sun's up this salsa club serves inexpensive lunches, including lasagna or pasta dishes.

Anayak (☎ 680-093; Quinta 134; coffee & cake US\$3.50) Tuck into this big, bright café for coffee and cakes. The lunch menu is a little overpriced.

Panzoni (Paseo Cousiño 12-B; mains US\$4-9) Reels in the lunchtime diners with its mix of a warm welcome and fine, uncomplicated Italian food.

Samoiedo (Av Valparaíso 637; mains US\$7-11) This classic, old-boys' eatery has been banishing hunger for half a century. Attempt a lunchtime feast of *lomo a lo pobre* (literally 'poor man's beef').

Fellini (3 Norte 88; mains from US\$9) One of Viña's most renowned and popular restaurants with a bright, welcoming ambience. Try a simple pasta dish.

Divino Pecado (Av San Martín 180; mains US\$9-13; ☎ 12:30-3:30pm & 7-11:30pm) High rollers frequent this refined Italian restaurant to enjoy lovely dishes, such as the Easter Island tuna, with violins in the background.

Entertainment

For big nightlife head to Valparaíso.

Café Journal (cnr Santa Agua & Alvarez; ☎ until 4am Fri & Sat) Electronic music is mixed at this booming popular club with three heaving dance floors, beers on tap and walls plastered in yesterday's news.

Cine Arte (Plaza Vergara 142; tickets US\$6) Come here for movies.

Don Giacomo (☎ 961-944; Villanelo 135, 2nd fl; ☎ 10am-2am) This wood-furnished 1920 joint endured several earthquakes and now pulses to a salsa beat a few nights a week. Shy guys and left feet can shoot a few games of pool.

Teatro Municipal (Plaza Vergara) This grand building stages plays, chamber-music concerts and art-house movies.

Getting There & Away

Lan (☎ 600-526-2000; Av Valparaíso 276) runs a shuttle (US\$10) to Santiago's Pudahuel airport from the corner of Tres Norte and Libertad. Or take a bus toward Santiago and ask to be left at 'Cruce al Aeropuerto' to shave about an hour from the trip.

The **bus terminal** (cnr Av Valparaíso & Quilpué), four blocks east of Plaza Vergara, is less chaotic than Valpo's and served by most of the same buses.

For car hire, try **Rossetot** (☎ 382-888; Alvares 762). The **Automóvil Club de Chile** (Acchi; ☎ 689-505; 1 Norte 901) is just north of the Marga.

Getting Around

Running along Av Arlegui, frequent local buses marked 'Puerto' or 'Aduana' link Viña with Valparaíso (US50¢, five minutes). For easier connections to Valparaíso, the Metro Regional Valparaíso (Merval) has two stations, **Estación Miramar** (cnr Alvarez & Agua Santa) and **Estación Viña del Mar** (Plaza Sucre).

To get to the nearby beach resort of Reñaca, take bus 111 on the road leading north along the coast (US50¢, 10 minutes, every 10 minutes). Bus 1 goes on to Concón (25 minutes, every 10 minutes).

AROUND VIÑA DEL MAR

Coastal towns immediately north of Viña have better beaches but their quiet character has eroded with the piling on of suburbs and apartment buildings. **Concón**, 15km from Viña, is worth a trip for its unpretentious seafood restaurants. **Las Deliciosas** (☎ 903-665; Sv Borgoño 25370, Concón) does exquisite *empanadas*, including cheese and crab (US\$1.50).

Another 23km beyond Concón is **Quintero**, a sleepy peninsula with beaches nestled between rocks. **Hospedaje Garzas** (☎ 032-930-443; Av Francia 1341; s/d incl breakfast US\$10/20) is the town bargain, with an arty ambience and wood-paneled rooms with a panorama of the sea.

Further north, **Horcón** is a quaint fishing port turned hippie haven. On the main beach, **Hostería Arancibia** (☎ 032-796-169; s/d US\$25/42) boasts neat cabins with water views and a pleasant seafood restaurant. Before reaching the cove, a road on the right follows a rocky, crescent moon bay. Wild camping is possible, although sand gets into everything. At the far end is nudist beach 'Playa La Luna.' **La Negra** (☎ 032-796-213; Calle Principal; camping US\$4, r per person incl breakfast US\$14) offers a shady yard for your

tent or a room in the artsy, airy house. Kitchen use is available. Ask the bus driver to stop at 'Agua Potable'; La Negra is next door. **Santa Clara** (Pasaje La Iglesia; fish dishes US\$4-7) cooks up enormous and delicious fish platters; claim a 2nd-floor table for views.

Continue north 35km to reach **Zapallar**, the most exclusive of Chile's coastal resorts with still-unspoiled beaches flanked by densely wooded hillsides. Budget accommodations are not the norm in Zapallar but **Residencial Margarita** (☎ 033-741-284, Januario Ovalle 143; s/d US\$12/24) bucks the trend. Rooms are well kept and neat with reasonable bathrooms. Book ahead. Have a superb seafood lunch at **El Chiringuito** (Caleta de Pescadores; fish mains US\$8), with crushed shells underfoot and a wall of windows that peers to the sea.

Several bus companies call in at Zapallar direct from Santiago, including Tur Bus and Pullman. Sol del Pacífico comes up the coast from Viña.

NORTHERN CHILE

Traveling inland, the balmy coast of sunbathers and surfers shifts to cactus scrub plains and dry mountains streaked in reddish tones. Mines scar these ore-rich mammoths whose primary reserve, copper, is high-octane fuel to Chile's economic engine. But there's life here as well, in the fertile valleys producing *pisco* grapes, papayas and avocados. Clear skies mean exceptional celestial observation. Many international telescopic, optical and radio projects are based here. The driest desert in the world, the Atacama is a refuge of flamingos on salt lagoons, sculpted moonscapes and geysers ringed by snow-tipped volcanoes. In short, these places are an orgy for the senses and ripe for exploration.

Chile's 2000km northern stretch takes in Norte Chico, or 'region of 10,000 mines,' a semiarid transition zone from the Valle Central to the Atacama. Its main attractions are the beaches, La Serena, Valle Elqui and the observatories. The Atacama Desert occupies 'Norte Grande,' gained from Peru and Bolivia in the War of the Pacific. The stamp of ancient cultures is evident in enormous geoglyphs on barren hillsides. Aymara peoples still farm the *precordillera* (foothills of the Andes) and pasture llamas and alpacas in the highlands. Divert from the desert scenery to explore the

working mine of Chuquimaquata or brave the frisky surf of arid coastal cities.

Take precautions against altitude sickness in the mountains and avoid drinking tap water in the desert reaches. Coastal *camanchaca* (dense convective fog on the coastal hills of the Atacama desert) keeps the climate cool along the beach, while *altiplano* temperatures change drastically from day to night.

OVALLE

☎ 053 / pop 104,000

Chess rivals gather on the plaza of this unpretentious market town. Ovalle offers a glimpse of city life in the provinces and is the best base for Parque Nacional Fray Jorge or Valle del Encanto. The tourist kiosk sits at the corner of Benavente and Ariztia Oriente. **Tres Valles Turismo** (☎ 629-650; Libertad 496) organizes tours and exchanges money. ATMs can be found along Victoria, at the plaza.

In the grand old train station, **Museo del Limarí** (cnr Covarrubias & Antofagasta; admission US\$1, Sun free; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat & Sun) displays gorgeous ceramics that show trans-Andean links between the Diaguita peoples of coastal Chile and northwestern Argentina.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Quisco (☎ 620-351; Maestranza 161; s/d US\$17/22, without bathroom US\$9/18) With amenable staff and a quirky mix of furniture. Rooms with interior windows open to dark and narrow hallways. Close to bus terminal.

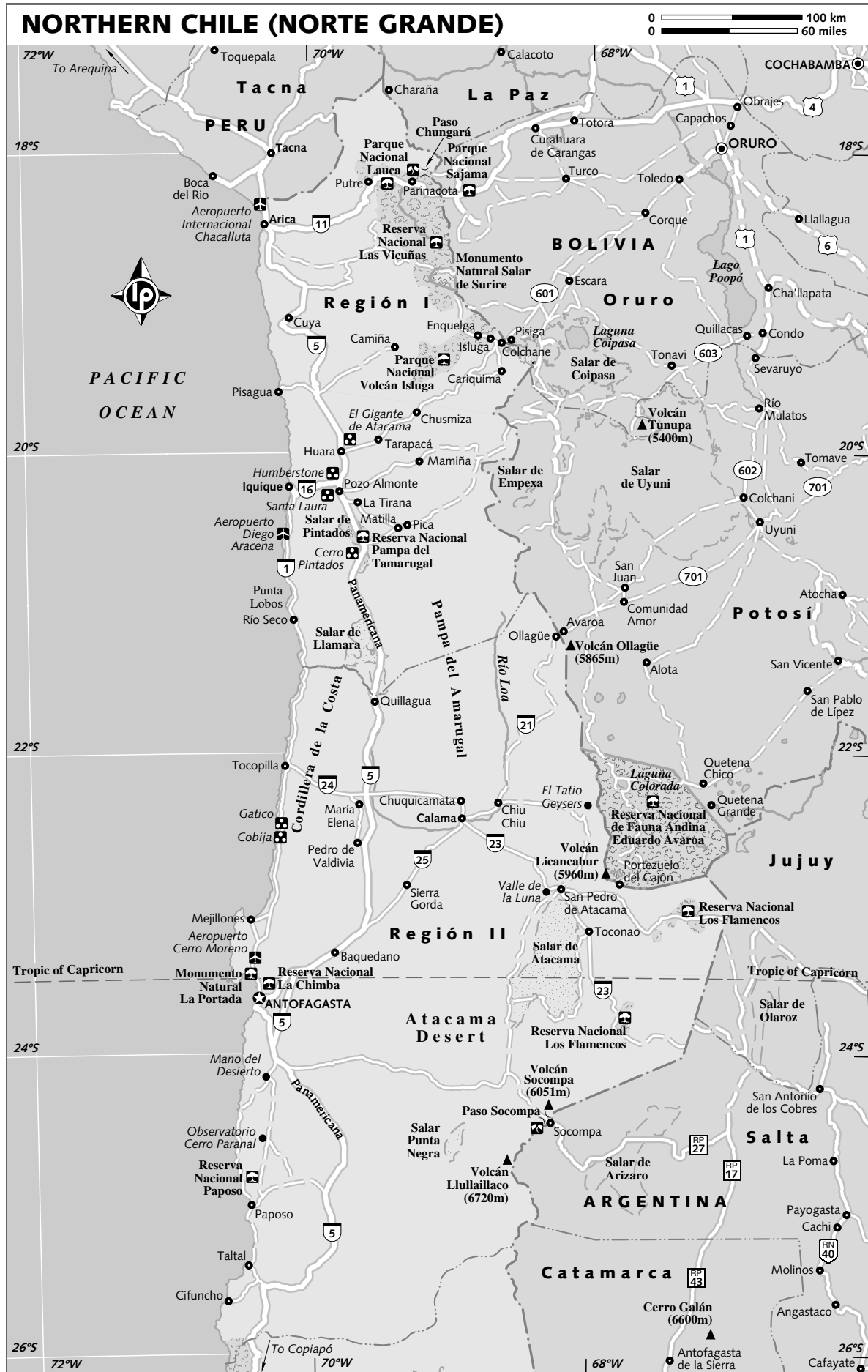
Hotel Roxy (☎ 620-080; Libertad 155; s/d/tr US\$15/23/31, without bathroom US\$11.50/17.50/21) Sun-drenched and serene, with lemon trees in the garden and checkered floors. The drawback is it's slightly unkempt.

Feria Modelo de Ovalle (Av Benavente; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon, Wed, Fri & Sat) A buzzing hive of market activity with scores of different fruit and vegetables.

Club Social Arabe (Arauco 255; set meals US\$2-3, mains US\$3.50-8) A lofty atrium serving superb stuffed grape leaves, summer squash or red peppers and baklava, in addition to Chilean specialties.

Drinking

Café Real (☎ 624-526; Vicuña MacKenna 419; ☎ 9am-2:30am Mon-Sat) Cheery and cosmopolitan, with young things knocking back espressos and cold Cristal. There's a pool table and occasional live music.



El Quijote (Arauco 295) A musty bar paying homage to literary and leftist Latin America.

Getting There & Away

From the **bus terminal** (cnr Maestranza & Balmaceda) plenty of buses go to Santiago (US\$6.50, five hours), La Serena (US\$2, 1¼ hours) and more northerly points. A faster way to La Serena (US\$3.25, 1¼ hours) is by **Agencia Tacto** (Aritzía Pontiente 159).

AROUND OVALLE

Petroglyphs, pictographs and ancient mortars cover the canyon at **Monumento Arqueológico Valle del Encanto**, 19km west of Ovalle in a rocky tributary of the Río Limarí. These dancing stick men and alienlike forms are remnants of the El Molle culture (AD 200–700). Visibility is best at midday when shadows are fewer. Visitors can camp and picnic. Taxis from town cost US\$25 round-trip or any westbound bus will drop you at the highway marker from where it's an easy 5km walk on a clearly marked road.

Parque Nacional Fray Jorge (admission US\$3; ☎ 9am–4:30pm Fri–Sun Dec 15–Mar 15, Sat & Sun only rest of year), 82km west of Ovalle, is an ecological island of lush and foggy Valdivian cloud forest in a semiarid region. Of its original 10,000 hectares, there remain only 400 hectares of this truly unique vegetation – enough, though, to make it a Unesco World Biosphere Reserve. **El Arrayancito** (campsites US\$14), 3km from the visitors center, has sheltered sites with fire pits, picnic tables, potable water and toilets. Bring your own food and warm, rain-protective clothing.

Reach the park by taking a westward lateral off the Panamericana, about 20km north of the Ovalle junction. There's no public transport, but agencies in La Serena and Ovalle offer tours. A taxi from Ovalle will cost about US\$45.

LA SERENA

☎ 051 / pop 160,150

Blessed with neocolonial architecture, shady streets and golden shores, peaceful La Serena turns trendy beach resort come summer. Founded in 1544, Chile's second-oldest city is a short jaunt from character-laden villages, sun-soaked *pisco* vineyards and international observatories for stargazing. Nearby **Coquimbo** is quite a bit more rough-and-tumble, but lives and breathes a hearty nightlife. Mornings in La Serena often stew in chilly fog.

Information

Banks with ATMs line the plaza.

Conaf (☎ 225-068; Cordovez 281) Supplies brochures on Fray Jorge and Isla Choros.

Entel (Prat 571) Make calls from here.

Gira Tour (Prat 689) Exchanges money.

Hospital Juan de Dios (☎ 225-569; Balmaceda 916) Has an emergency entrance at Larraín Alcalde and Anfiñón Muñoz.

Infernet (Balmaceda 417; per hr US\$2.60) A psychedelic cybercafé with booths and webcams.

Lavaseco (Balmaceda 851; per kg US\$4.50) Does laundry.

Post office (cnr Matta & Prat) Opposite the Plaza de Armas.

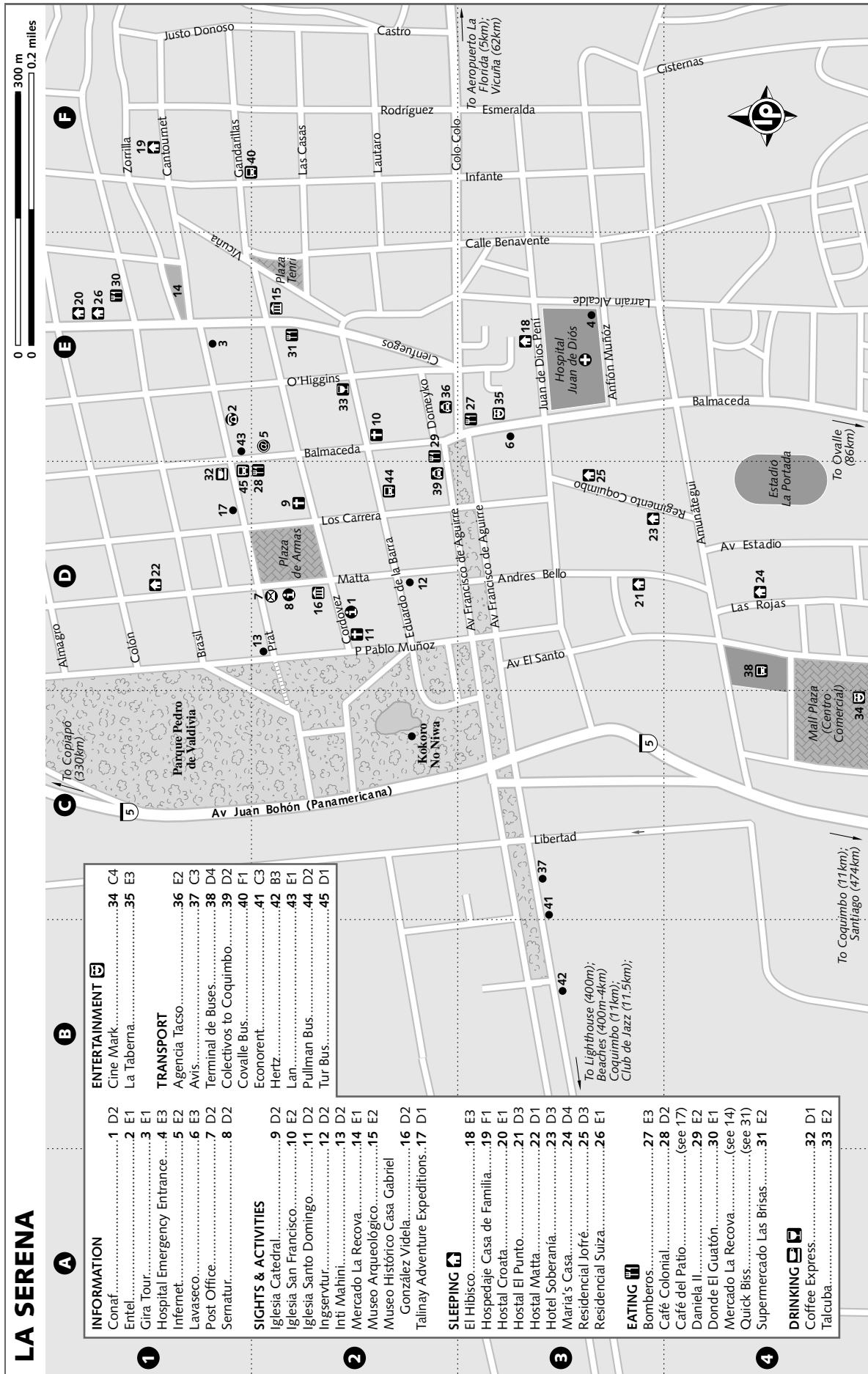
Sernatur (☎ 225-199; Matta 461) Is exceptionally attentive.

Sights & Activities

La Serena has a whopping 29 churches to its credit but relatively few takers. On the Plaza de Armas is the 1844 **Iglesia Catedral**, while a block west is the mid-18th-century **Iglesia Santo Domingo**. The stone colonial **Iglesia San Francisco** (Balmaceda 640) dates back to the early 1600s.

Museo Histórico Casa Gabriel González Videla (Matta 495; admission US\$1; ☎ 10am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–1pm Sat) is named after La Serena's native son and Chile's president from 1946 to 1952, who took over the Communist party, then outlawed it, driving Pablo Neruda out of the senate and into exile. Pop upstairs to check out the modern art. The eclectic **Museo Arqueológico** (cnr Cordovez & Cienfuegos; admission US\$1; ☎ 9:30am–5:50pm Tue–Fri, 10am–1pm & 4–7pm Sat, 10am–1pm Sun) houses Atacameño mummies, a *moai* from Rapa Nui, Diaguita artifacts and a map of the distribution of Chile's indigenous population. **Mercado La Recova** offers a jumble of dried fruits, rain sticks and artisan jewelry. Retreat into the ambience of trickling brooks, skating swans and rock gardens at **Kokoro No Niwa** (Jardín del Corazón; admission US\$1; ☎ 10am–6pm), a well-maintained Japanese garden at the south end of Parque Pedro de Valdivia.

Wide sandy **beaches** stretch from La Serena's nonfunctional lighthouse to Coquimbo. Avoid strong rip currents between the west end of Av Aguirre and Cuatro Esquinas. Choose the beaches marked 'Playa Apta' south of Cuatro Esquinas and around Coquimbo. A bike path runs about 4km by the beach. Local **bodyboarders** hit Playa El Faro, and Playa Totoralillo, south of Coquimbo, is rated highly for its surf breaks and **windsurfing** potential.



LA SERENA

A

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CHILE

Over in Coquimbo, **Cruz del Tercer Milenio** (Cross of the Third Millennium; admission US\$2.60; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 11am-8pm Sat & Sun) is a 96m-high concrete cross lit up at night. Take the elevator to the top (US\$2) for a dizzying view of the bay.

Agencies offer a plethora of excursions, from national-park visits to nighttime astronomical trips, *pisco*-tasting tours to New Age trips to UFO central, Cochiguaz. Traditional excursions include full-day trips through the Elqui Valley (US\$23 to US\$27), Parque Nacional Fray Jorge and Valle del Encanto (US\$35), and Parque Nacional Pingüino de Humboldt (US\$39 to US\$41). Agencies also provide transportation to observatories, including Observatorio Comunal Cerro Mamalluca (US\$19.50 to US\$25). The minimum number of passengers ranges from two to six.

Ingservtur (☎ 220-165; www.ingservtur.cl; Matta 611) Well-established with friendly English-speaking staff and discounts for students.

Inti Mahini (☎ 224-350; www.intimahinatravel.cl in Spanish; Prat 214) A youth-oriented agency offering standard tours plus useful advice on independent travel.

Talinay Adventure Expeditions (☎ 218-658; talinay@turismoaventura.net; Prat 470, Local 22) Has bilingual guides, standard and adventurous options, including mountain biking, climbing, kayaking, diving, horse-riding and sand-boarding. It also rents bikes (per hour/full day US\$1.75/14).

Festivals & Events

The **Festival de La Serena** attracts big-name Chilean musicians and comedians in early February. Around the same time the **Feria Internacional del Libro de La Serena** gathers prominent Chilean authors at the historical museum.

Sleeping

Backpackers' hostels abound by the bus terminal. Many taxi drivers receive commission from hotels, so stick with your choice or walk. The distances are short. Low-season rates may be lower.

Maria's Casa (☎ 229-282; Las Rojas 18; r per person US\$8) Enjoy the familial attention at these nine simple rooms around a grassy backyard. A cobbler on site makes Chile's cutest shoes.

Hospedaje Casa de Familia (☎ 213-954; hostel rosita@hotmail.com; Cantournet 976; s/d US\$9/18; (P) (Q)) Old neocolonial home with a relaxing patio and high-ceiling rooms. Bonuses include cable TV, laundry and kitchen access.

Hostal Croata (☎ 224-997; Cienfuegos 248; d US\$27, s/d without bathroom US\$9/17.50 all incl breakfast; (Q))

Central, intimate and extra safe (smile at the security cameras). Laundry and bike rental available.

El Hibisco (☎ 211-407; mauricioberrios2002@yahoo.es; Juan de Dios Peni 636; s/d incl breakfast US\$10/20; (P)) A simple family guesthouse with wooden floors, shared facilities, laundry and kitchen access. The delectable breakfast includes homemade jam (jars are often given as mementoes).

Residencial Jofré (☎ 222-335; hostaljofre@hotmail.com; Regimiento Coquimbo 964; s/d incl breakfast US\$10/20; (Q)) This is an old-school guesthouse with generic rooms, personable owner and kitchen privileges.

Hostal El Punto (☎ 228-474; www.punto.de; Andres Bello 979; dm/s/d incl breakfast US\$10.50/21/34, s/d without bathroom US\$16/21; (P)) A gorgeous guesthouse with florid colors, sunny terraces, book exchange and laundry. Run by a friendly German couple who speak English and provide traveling tips.

Hostal Matta (☎ 210-014; hostel_matta@hotmail.com; Matta 234; d US\$17.50, with bathroom US\$25; (Q)) Brightly furnished and beautifully maintained new *pensión*, with friendly young staff, attractive communal spaces and shipshape rooms. Breakfast is US\$1.75.

Hotel Soberanía (☎ 227-672; www.hotelsoberania.cl; Regimiento Coquimbo 1049; s/d incl breakfast from US\$22/33; (P) (Q)) A colonial-style family hotel with off-season deals. Though rooms are small and a little ragged around the edges, it's worthwhile value for the quiet.

Residencial Suiza (☎ 216-092; residencial.suiza@terra.cl; Cienfuegos 250; s/d incl breakfast US\$27/32; (P)) This central mustard-and-red guesthouse has house-proud owners and a dozen fresh, spotless and cheerfully decorated rooms.

Eating

Those coming from the north will rejoice in the culinary variety.

Supermercado Las Brisas (Cienfuegos 545) Large supermarket to satisfy all self-catering needs.

Mercado La Recova (cnr Cienfuegos & Cantournet) Cheap eats above the market including fresh seafood and chicken *cazuela* (stew).

Bomberos (cnr Av Francisco de Aguirre & Balmaceda; set meal US\$1.75; ☎ lunch) Join the brigade for a no-frills set lunch on the upper floor of the fire station. Singles can browse firemen mugshots upstairs.

Quick Biss (Cienfuegos 545, 2nd fl; self-serve lunch US\$2, mains US\$5) You can pick from fresh salads, piping-hot grills and accompaniments at this

veggie-friendly, surprisingly tasty self-service cafeteria.

Daniela II (Aguirre 456; mains US\$2.60-9) This plain-Jane knows Chilean comfort food. Locals dig the hearty portions and the seafood rocks.

Café Colonial (Balmaceda 475; breakfast US\$3.50-5, set lunch US\$4, mains US\$4-8; ☎ 9am-late) Stiff espressos, banana pancakes and burgers tempt the homesick traveler. Check out the live music on weekends.

Donde El Guatón (Brasil 750; mains US\$5-10) Sizzling *parrilladas* (grilled meats) are set aflame right before your hungry eyes. Ambience means flowers and chandeliers fashioned from bicycle wheels.

Trendy and top-end eateries line the beach toward Peñuelas.

Drinking

Nightclubs litter the seafront to Barrio Inglés Coquimbo; they're especially hopping during summer.

Coffee Express (cnr Prat & Balmaceda; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 10am-9pm Sat) Oversized coffee shop serving some of La Serena's best java.

Talcuba (Eduardo de la Barra 589; ☎ 5:30pm-late Mon-Fri, 7:30pm-late Sat & Sun) University students rub shoulders to rock and pop in this dimly lit little tavern. Cheap drinks explain the general thirstiness of the crowd. Try a papaya sour or Serena libre.

Entertainment

Cine Mark (☎ 212-144; www.cinemark.cl in Spanish; Mall Plaza, Av Albert Solari 1490; admission US\$4.60) Screens big-name movies.

Club de Jazz (☎ 288-784; Aldunate 739; cover US\$5) Located in Coquimbo, this ever-fashionable neoclassical house with marble stairs has live music on weekends from 11pm.

La Taberna (Balmaceda 824) This seedy-looking bar in a century-old house hosts regular acts, including Chilean folk music on weekends from midnight.

Café del Patio (Prat 470; set lunch US\$3-4, mains US\$4-7) A patio café-cum-wine bar featuring some of Santiago's best jazz musicians in summer. The local bands are also worth a listen.

Getting There & Away

AIR

La Serena's **Aeropuerto La Florida** (Ruta 41) is 5km east of downtown. **Lan** (☎ 600-526-2000; Balmaceda 406) flies three to five times daily to Santiago (US\$100, 50 minutes) and once a day to An-

tofagasta (US\$121, 1¼ hours). There's also an office with longer hours in Mall Plaza.

BUS

La Serena's **Terminal de Buses** (☎ 224-573; cnr Amunátegui & Av El Santo) has dozens of carriers plying the Panamericana from Santiago north to Arica, including **Tur Bus** (☎ 215-953; www.turbus.com in Spanish; Terminal or Balmaceda 437), **Pullman Bus** (☎ 218-252, 225-284; Eduardo de la Barra 435), **Pullman Carmelita** (☎ 225-240) and **Flota Barrios** (☎ 222-601).

Destination	Duration (hr)	Cost (US\$)
Antofagasta	13	18-45
Arica	23	27-52
Calama	16	24-39
Copiapó	5	7-9
Iquique	19	25-43
Los Vilos	4	7
Santiago	7	8-27
Vallenar	3	5.25

Via Elqui has frequent departures to Pisco Elqui (US\$3, two hours) and Monte Grande (US\$2.85, two hours) between 7am and 10:30pm. Buses Serenamar runs several buses a day to Guanaqueros (US\$2, 50 minutes), Tongoy (US\$2.25, one hour) and Andacollo (US\$1.40, 1½ hours).

For Argentine destinations, **Covalle Bus** (☎ 213-127; Infante 538) goes to Mendoza (US\$32, 12 hours) and San Juan (US\$35, 14 hours) via the Libertadores pass on Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday at 11pm.

COLECTIVO

Many regional destinations are more frequently and rapidly served by *taxi colectivo*. *Colectivos* to Coquimbo (US\$1.50, 15 minutes) leave from Av Francisco de Aguirre between Balmaceda and Los Carrera. **Agencia Tacso** (☎ 227-379; Domeyko 589) goes to Ovalle (US\$3.25, 1½ hours), Vicuña (US\$3, 1¼ hours) and Andacollo (US\$2.60, 1½ hours), and you can hire a *colectivo* for a day tour to Valle de Elqui for about US\$50.

Getting Around

Private taxis to Aeropuerto La Florida cost US\$4. **She Transfer** (☎ 295-058) provides door-to-door minibus transfer for US\$1.75.

For car hire, try **Avis** (☎ 227-171; laserena@avischile.cl; Av Francisco de Aguirre 063), also at the

airport; **Hertz** (☎ 226-171; Av Francisco de Aguirre 0225); or **Econorent** (☎ 220-113; Av Francisco de Aguirre 0135).

VICUÑA

☎ 051 / pop 24,000

Vicuña, 62km east of La Serena, is a snoozy adobe village nestled in the Elqui Valley. It's the best jump-off point to explore the valley or simply indulge in its treasure groves of avocado, papaya and other fruits. There's an impressive assortment of museums and access to Observatorio Mamalluca. Tourist services huddle around the Plaza de Armas: **Oficina de Información Turística** (Torre Bauer); Banco de Estado, which changes US cash or traveler's checks and has an ATM (better to change money in La Serena); post office; and the call centers and Entel. **Mami Sabina** (cnr Mistral & Infante) has internet (per hour US\$1) and bike rental.

Sights & Activities

Museo Gabriela Mistral (☎ 411-223; Av Gabriela Mistral; admission US\$1), near the eastern edge of town, pays homage to one of Chile's most famous literary figures. The small **Museo Entomológico y de Historia Natural** (☎ 411-283; Chacabuco 334; admission US\$1) showcases insects and kaleidoscopic butterfly collections.

Sweeping panoramas of the Elqui Valley make worthwhile the hot, dusty hike up **Cerro de la Virgen**, just north of town. The summit is less than an hour's walk from the Plaza de Armas. *Pisco* fans can hoof it 20 minutes to the vigorously marketed **Planta Pisco Capel** (☎ 411-251; www.piscocapel.com in Spanish; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm Jan & Feb, 10am-12:30pm & 2:30-6pm Mar-Dec), where a quick tour and skimpy samples might pique your thirst. To get there head southeast of town and across the bridge, then turn left.

Goggle the galaxies through the 30cm telescope at **Observatorio Cerro Mamalluca** (☎ 411-352; www.mamalluca.org; Av Gabriela Mistral 260; tour US\$6). Book a month in advance from September through April. Bring a warm sweater. Bilingual tours run every two hours from nightfall to 12:30am. Shuttles (US\$2.60), reserved in advance, leave from the administration office.

Sleeping & Eating

Residencial La Elquina (☎ 411-317; O'Higgins 65; s/d incl breakfast US\$19/32, without bathroom US\$9/17.50; (P)) Veiled in grapevines and fruit trees, this cramped and humble abode rocks out with patio swings and a hammock.

Hostal Rita Klamt (☎ 419-611; rita_klamt@yahoo.es; Condell 443; s/d incl breakfast US\$10.50/21; (P) (☎)) Tuck yourself into a cozy guest room in this tranquil home with a pool and motherly German-speaking hostess. Breakfasts include homemade jam and fresh coffee.

Casa Turística Colonial del Professor (☎ 411-637; Av Gabriela Mistral 152; s/d incl breakfast US\$10.50/21) Backyard brick housing attached to a handsome older building. Cats rule the scrubby gardens.

Hostal Valle Hermoso (☎ 411-206; Gabriela Mistral 706; s/d incl breakfast US\$12.50/21) Lacking fuss or space, this century-old adobe building has wood floors, basic bathrooms and a small courtyard.

Hotel Halley (☎ 412-070; Av Gabriela Mistral 542; d/ste/tr/f incl breakfast US\$52/64/72/98; (P) (☎)) A claret-colored colonial with airy rooms, crocheted bedspreads and iron bed frames. There's also a cool courtyard to sip a *pisco sour* (grape brandy with lemon juice, egg white and powdered sugar). The restaurant, open to the public, cooks up a wonderful roast goat, plentiful salads and Chilean classics (mains US\$4 to US\$10).

Solar Villaseca (☎ 412-189; set meal US\$4; ☎ 1-6pm Tue-Sun) If you thought a solar meal was frying an egg on the sidewalk, think again. This innovative eatery features Chilean dishes cooked in solar-powered ovens. Reservations are a must during summer. Take a *colectivo* from the bus station; it's 6km from Vicuña, beyond the Capel distillery,

Getting There & Around

A block south of the plaza, **bus terminal** (cnr Prat & O'Higgins) has frequent buses to La Serena (US\$2.25, one hour), Coquimbo (US\$2.50, 1¼ hours) and Pisco Elqui (US\$1.75, 50 minutes). A trip to Monte Grande takes 40 minutes and costs US\$1.50. Some companies have a daily service to Santiago (US\$9, 7½ hours), including **Pullman** (☎ 412-812).

Opposite the bus terminal is the **Terminal de Taxis Colectivos** (cnr Prat & O'Higgins), with fast *colectivos* to La Serena (US\$3, 45 minutes). Bike hire is available at **Mami Sabina** (☎ 419-594; cnr Av Gabriela Mistral & Infante).

VALLE DEL ELQUI

Big sky observatories, muscatel vineyards, *pisco* distilleries and papaya groves all call Elqui home. This fertile valley offers New Age fancy (centered on all that geomagnetic energy)

alongside farms and villages whose appeal is in their plainness. For visitors its a funky oasis worthy of kicking back in and exploring.

Pisco Elqui, a bucolic village cradled in the valley, is the most accessible base for exploring the area. Sample locally made *pisco* at **Solar de Pisco Elqui** (☎ 051-451-358; ☎ 11am-7pm), which produces the Tres Erres brand, or 3km south of town at the original '*pisquería*' Los Nichos.

Tucked below steeply rising hills is **Camping Rinconada** (☎ 051-198-2583; campsites per person US\$4), with dusty sites and hot-water showers by arrangement. Horse-riding is also available.

Hotel Elqui (☎ 051-451-083; O'Higgins s/n; r per person w breakfast US\$13) has artless accommodations spruced up with grapevines and swimming pools.

El Tesoro de Elqui (☎ 051-451-069; www.tesoro-elqui.cl; Prat s/n; d without/with bathroom incl breakfast US\$39/53; (P) (Q)) is a lovers' hideaway laced with lush gardens, lemon trees and flowering vines. Cabins come with hammocks; some also have a kitchen and skylights to stargaze. The restaurant is above par too (meals from US\$6). Low-season reduces doubles to as low as US\$32.

Jugos Naturales/Mandarino (Plaza de Armas; large pizzas US\$10-16; ☎ 9am-1:30am) offers gorgeous fruit juices and crispy pizzas amid sheepskin throws and indie music.

Buses Via Elqui run between Pisco Elqui and Vicuña (US\$3) throughout the day; catch one at the plaza. Occasional buses continue on to the hamlets of Horcón and Alcohuz.

COPIAPÓ

☎ 052 / pop 129,090

Welcoming Copiapó offers a handy base for the remote mountains bordering Argentina, especially the breathtaking Parque Nacional Nevado Tres Cruces, Laguna Verde and Ojos del Salado, the highest active volcano in the world. The discovery of silver at nearby Chañarcillo in 1832 provided Copiapó with several firsts: South America's first railroad and Chile's first telegraph and telephone lines. Copiapó is 800km north of Santiago and 565km south of Antofagasta.

Information

Añañucas (Chañarcillo) Has a drop-off laundry service. It's near Chacabuchas.

Cambios Fides (Mall Plaza Real, Colipí 484, Office B 123) Change money here or seek out one of many 24-hour ATMs.

Conaf (☎ 213-404; Juan Martínez 55) Has park info.

Sernatur (☎ 212-838; infoatacama@sernatur.cl; Los Carrera 691) At Plaza Prat; is helpful and well informed.

Sights

The must-see **Museo Mineralógico** (☎ 206-606; cnr Colipí & Rodríguez; adult US\$1; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3:30-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) is a loving tribute to the raw materials to which the city owes its existence, with more than 2000 samples, some of which glow in the dark.

The remains of Copiapó's mining heyday mark its center. Shaded by pepper trees, Plaza Prat showcases the early mining era with the elegant three-towered **Iglesia Catedral**, and the musty old municipal **Casa de la Cultura**. Beware the roving fortune-tellers, once they get started you'll have a hard time getting away.

Sleeping & Eating

Residencial Rocio (☎ 215-360; Yerba Buenas 581; s/d without bathroom US\$7/12.50) A plain guesthouse with youthful owners and a cool bamboo-shaded walkway.

Residencial Chañarcillo (☎ 213-281; Chañarcillo 741; s/d/tr without bathroom US\$8/16/24) Small but scrubbed rooms offered by a brisk *señora*.

Residencial Nueva Chañarcillo (☎ 212-368; Manuel Rodríguez 540; s/d without bathroom US\$11/17) You decide if the kitteny kitsch and plastic posies spell home.

Hotel La Casona (☎ 217-277; www.lacasonahotel.cl; O'Higgins 150; s/d incl breakfast from US\$43/51; (P) (Q)) A wonderfully homey guesthouse with a grassy garden and bilingual owners. The restaurant is exceptional.

Empanadopolis (Colipí 320; US\$1.25) This place offers mouthwatering takeaway *empanadas* with unusual flavors.

Don Elias (Los Carrera 421; set meal US\$2.60) Down-market diner with excellent value *almuerzos* (set lunches) and particularly good seafood.

Chifa Hao Hwa (Yerbas Buenas 334; mains US\$4-8; ☎ lunch & dinner) Cantonese options with snarling dragons and neon lights.

Di Tito (Chacabuco 710; mains US\$5-6) A welcoming and snug restaurant-cum-bar serving pizza and pasta dishes.

Getting There & Away

The brand-new Aeropuerto Desierto de Atacama is 40km northwest of Copiapó. **Lan** (☎ 600-526-2000; Mall Plaza Real, Colipí 484) flies daily to Antofagasta (US\$86, one hour), La Serena (US\$63, 45 minutes) and Santiago (US\$208,

1½ hours). A taxi costs US\$21; try **Radio Taxi San Francisco** (☎ 218-788). There's also a transfer bus (US\$9, 25 minutes).

Pullman Bus (☎ 212-977; Colipi 109) has a large terminal and a central **ticket office** (cnr Chacabuco & Chañarcillo). **Tur Bus** (☎ 238-612; Chañarcillo 680) also has a terminal and a **ticket office** (Colipi 510) downtown. Other companies include **Expreso Norte** (☎ 231-176), **Buses Libac** (☎ 212-237) and **Flota Barrios** (☎ 213-645), all located in a common terminal on Chañarcillo. Many buses to northern desert destinations leave at night. Sample fares: Antofagasta (US\$14 to US\$18, eight hours), Arica (US\$24 to US\$32, 18 hours), Calama (US\$21 to US\$28, 10 hours), Iquique (US\$24 to US\$35, 13 hours), La Serena (US\$7 to US\$10, five hours) and Santiago (US\$16 to US\$34, 12 hours).

PARQUE NACIONAL NEVADO TRES CRUCES

Teeming with wildlife and pristine peaks with rugged ascents, **Parque Nacional Nevado Tres Cruces** (admission US\$7) is undoubtedly an up-and-coming adventure destination. Flamingos, Andean geese, horned coots, large herds of *vicuñas* and guanacos fill this 61,000-hectare park. Some 140km east of Copiapó, international Hwy 31 curves through its northern sector. The Salar de Maricunga (3700m) covers some 8000 hectares. A few kilometers past the border control a road shoots 85km south to summer flamingo destination **Laguna del Negro Francisco**. Bring your own bed linen, drinking water and cooking gas to the **refugio** (dm US\$9) here. From the northern sector, Hwy 31 continues east, flanked by clusters of snow-capped volcanoes, passing the ultra turquoise **Laguna Verde** (4325m) before the border crossing at Paso de San Francisco.

South outside the park boundaries, 6893m **Ojos del Salado** is Chile's highest peak, a mere 69m shorter than Aconcagua, and the world's highest active volcano. *Refugios* are at the 5100m and 5750m levels. Climbers need permission from Chile's **Dirección de Fronteras y Límites** (☎ in Santiago 02-671-2725; Teatinos 180, 7th fl), which can be requested prior to arriving in Chile.

Mountain guide **Erik Galvez** (☎ 052-319-038; erikgalvez@latinmail.com) comes well recommended. Agency **Gran Atacama** (☎ 052-219-271; www.granatacama.cl; Mall Plaza Real, Colipi 484, Local B 122, Copiapó) goes to Parque Nacional Nevado Tres Cruces (all inclusive for two to three people US\$200) and offers a variety of other trips.

There is no public transportation; take a high-clearance vehicle, water and extra gas, and check with Conaf in Copiapó before departing.

CALDERA & BAHÍA INGLESA

Caldera's clear waters, abundant sun and seafood make this white-sand beach town, 75km west of Copiapó, bubble over with summer guests. The rest of the year it is a yawning retreat, and even though the weather is equally good the prices are slashed and the beach is nearly deserted. Locally harvested scallops, oysters and seaweed sweeten the culinary offerings.

The resort of Bahía Inglesa has white-shell beaches fronting a turquoise sea dotted with windsurfers. In Bahía Inglesa, **Domo Chango Chile** (☎ 052-316-168; www.changochile.cl; Av El Morro 610, Bahía Inglesa) organizes kite-surfing, surfing and 4WD excursions from US\$27. It also rents bikes for US\$3.50. **Camping Bahía Inglesa** (☎ 052-315-424; Playa Las Machas; campsites US\$32) has good facilities overlooking the bay, but come in low season when rates drop. Across from the plaza in Caldera, **Residencial Millaray** (☎ 052-315-528; Cousiño 331; r per person US\$9) is ramshackle though friendly, the best bargain you'll find. The most original option is surely **Domo Chango Chile** (d from US\$18; ☎), whose plastic dome tents will have you dream of being putted on the nine. It's opposite the waterfront.

In Caldera, gregarious little **El Plateao** (Av El Morro 756; set lunch US\$7-9; ☎ 11am-late) serves wonderful seafood and international specials, like sushi and Thai curries. Stroll around the seafront for other dining options.

Bus stations are in Caldera and served by **Pullman** (cnr Gallo & Vallejo), **Recabarren** (Ossa Varas s/n) and **Tur Bus** (Ossa Varas s/n). Buses and *colectivos* run between Caldera and Bahía Inglesa for US\$1. Buses to Copiapó cost US\$2.50 (one hour). Private taxis to Aeropuerto Desierto de Atacama cost US\$14.

PARQUE NACIONAL PAN DE AZÚCAR

The cold Humboldt current flows up the desert coastline, bringing with it its peppy namesake penguin and other abundant marine life. **Pan de Azúcar** (admission US\$6) has 44,000 hectares covering white-sand beaches, sheltered coves, stony headlands and cacti-covered hills. From the Conaf office in the park, it's an 8km hike to El Mirador and a 12km hike to Quebrada

Castillo. **PingüiTour** (☎ 099-743-0011; www.galeon.com/pinguitour in Spanish; per boat US\$54) runs boat tours to see penguins and other birdlife on an island. Off-season the fog rolls in and promotes hibernation.

Camping (3-/6-person site US\$9/17.50) is available at Playa Piqueros, Playa Soldado and Caleta Pan de Azúcar, with toilets, water, cold showers and tables. **Cabañas** (up to 6 people high/low season US\$80/50) in the park have kitchens; reserve with Conaf in Copiapó. The forgotten mining port of Chañaral offers the dingy **Hotel La Marina** (☎ 052-480-942; Merino Jarpa 562; s/d US\$6/10) and the homey and well-attended **Hostal Los Aromos** (☎ 052-489-636; www.hostallosaromos.cl; Los Aromos 7; s/d incl breakfast US\$16/27; **P**).

Flota Barrios (☎ 480-894; Merino Jarpa 567) and **Pullman Bus** (☎ 480-213; cnr Diego de Almeyda & Los Baños) serve Santiago (US\$27 to US\$53, 15 hours) and Copiapó (US\$4, 2½ hours). In the Pullman terminal you'll find minibuses that go to the park (one way US\$3.50, 25 minutes). A taxi costs about US\$25 one way.

ANTOFAGASTA

☎ 055 / pop 296,900

Antofagasta is a desert metropolis and port city whose rough-and-tumble mixture of concrete and gridlock put it low on travelers' lists. Still, the antiquated plaza and the nitrate-era buildings of the Barrio Histórico have appeal. Founded in 1870, the city earned its importance by offering the easiest route to the interior, and was soon handling the highest tonnage of any South American Pacific port. It exports most of the copper and other minerals found in the Atacama, and is a major import-export node for Bolivia, which lost the region to Chile during the War of the Pacific. The forlorn surrounding area features forgotten seaside ports and eerie deserted nitrate towns easily appreciated from a bus window.

Orientation

Antofagasta drapes across a wide terrace at the foot of the coastal range. Downtown's western boundary is north-south Av Balmaceda, immediately east of the modern port. The Panamericana passes inland, about 15km east of the city.

Information

Internet businesses south of Plaza Colón charge less than US\$1 per hour.

Cambio Ancla Inn (Baquedano 508) Change money.

Entel (Condell 2451) Has long-distance call facilities.

Hospital Regional (☎ 269-009; Av Argentina 1962)

Lave-Fast Laundry (14 de Febrero 1802) Charges about US\$6 a load for a wash, dry and fold.

Post office (Washington 2623) Opposite Plaza Colón.

Sernatur (☎ 451-818; infoantofagasta@sernatur.cl; Maipú 240) Has good listings.

Sights & Activities

Nitrate-mining heydays left their mark with Victorian and Georgian buildings in the **Barrio Histórico** between the plaza and old port. British influence is in the **Plaza Colón**, with its Big Ben replica **Torre Reloj**. In the former Custom House, **Museo Regional** (cnr Balmaceda & Bolívar; admission US\$1) is worth a peek. Sea lions circle Antofagasta's busy **Terminal Pesquero** (Fish Market), just north of the Port Authority.

The oft-photographed national icon **La Portada** is a gorgeous natural arch located offshore, 16km north of Antofagasta. To get there take bus 15 from Sucre to the *cruce* (junction) at La Portada, then walk 3km.

Sleeping

Camping Rucamóvil (☎ 223-929; Km11; campsites per person US\$6) With patchy shade and terraced ocean view. *Micro 2* from Mercado Central goes south to the campground.

Hotel Rawaye (☎ 225-399; Sucre 762; s/d/tr US\$7/10.50/15) Penny-pincher heaven with parchment-board walls and a busy street below.

Hotel Brasil (☎ 267-268; JS Ossa 1978; d US\$27) Fair value, with spacious, run-of-the-mill rooms and amenable hosts.

Hotel Frontera (☎ 281-219; Bolívar 558; d US\$27, s/d without bathroom US\$12.50/17) Courteous, clean and central. Rooms sport bright orange tiles and homey bedspreads.

Hotel San Marcos (☎ 251-763; Latorre 2946; s/d/tr incl breakfast US\$28.50/40/45; **P**) This stuffy matriarchal guesthouse has sparse old paisley furnishings but comfy beds.

Eating & Drinking

Líder (Antofagasta Shopping, Zentero 21) Large supermarket to spoil self-caterers; north of the center.

Mercado Central (Ossa btwn Maipú & Uribe, US\$2-6) Characterful place with cheap weekday fish and seafood lunches.

Pizzanté (Av JM Carrera 1857; US\$4-7) Goopy pizza choked with toppings.



CHILE

El Arriero (Condell 2644, mains US\$6-10) A snobby grillhouse with slabs of steak and piano-bar ambience after 9pm.

Club de Yates (☎ 485-553; Av Balmaceda s/n; set lunch US\$6; ☺ lunch & dinner) Swank and sizzling fish dishes alongside the ramshackle pier.

Wally's Pub (Antonino Toro 982; ☺ from 6pm Mon-Sat) Shoot a few games of pool at Antofagasta's only British pub.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Aeropuerto Cerro Moreno (airport) is 25km north of town. **Lan** (☎ 600-526-2000; Arturo Prat 445, option 8) has daily nonstop flights to Santiago (US\$188) and Iquique (US\$50 to US\$90, 45 minutes). Both **Sky** (☎ 459-090; Gral Velásquez 890) and **Aerolíneas del Sur** (☎ 228-779; Washington 2548) have discounted flights.

BUS

Nearly all northbound services now use coastal Ruta 1, via Tocopilla, en route to Iquique and Arica. Companies include **Flota Barrios** (Condell 2764), **Géminis** (Latorre 3055), **Pullman Bus** (Latorre 2805) and **Tur Bus** (Latorre 2751), with direct service to San Pedro de Atacama several times daily.

Destination	Duration (hr)	Cost (US\$)
Arica	11	14-23
Calama	3	3.50-8
Copiapó	7	14-21
Iquique	6	16-20
La Serena	12	23-41
San Pedro de Atacama	4	9
Santiago	19	30-55

Géminis goes to Salta and Jujuy, Argentina on Wednesday and Sunday at 7:30am (US\$38, 14 hours).

Getting Around

Aerobus (☎ 262-727; Baquedano 328) shuttles to/from Aeropuerto Cerro Moreno (US\$4). From the Terminal Pesquero, local bus 15 goes to the airport (US\$75¢), but only every two hours or so. Buses arrive at their individual terminals along Latorre, in the city center.

Micro 2 from Mercado Central goes south to the campgrounds. **Micro 14** covers downtown, accessing Lave-Fast laundry and Hotel Brasil. Cars can be rented at **Avis** (☎ 221-073; Balmaceda 2556) and **Hertz** (☎ 269-043; Balmaceda 2492).

CALAMA

☎ 055 / pop 138,000

Copper statues, copper wall etchings, copper reliefs and a copper-plated cathedral spire are unsubtle reminders of the current boom and *raison d'être* of Calama (altitude 2700m). For travelers this city 220km from Antofagasta makes a quick stopover before San Pedro de Atacama. Its existence is inextricably tied to the colossal Chuquicamata mine. With inflated service prices and *schops con piernas* (like *cafés con piernas*, but with beer) it caters to miners.

On March 23 the city and surrounding villages celebrate the arrival of Chilean troops during the War of the Pacific with a boisterous fair featuring crafts, food, music and farm animals.

Information

Centro de Llamadas (cnr Sotomayor & Vivar; per hr US\$50¢) Call center with a cheap broadband connection.

Hospital Carlos Cisterna (☎ 342-347; Av Granaderos & Cisterna) Five blocks north of the Plaza 23 de Marzo.

Lavaexpress (Sotomayor 1887) Offers a fast laundry service for US\$2 per kilo.

Moon Valley Exchange (Vivar 1818) Competitive rates for money exchange.

Municipal tourist office (☎ 345-345; Latorre 1689) Is very helpful and organizes tours to Chiu Chiu and the Tatio Geysers (via Atacameño towns) in summer.

Post office (Vicuña Mackenna 2167)

Sleeping

The local mining industry and its lodging needs spike the price of Calama's accommodations. Most budget places don't provide breakfast.

Casas del Valle (☎ 340-056; Francisco Bilbao 1207; campsites US\$8) For camping, there's this shady place behind the stadium.

Hotel Claris Loa (☎ 311-939; Av Granaderos 1631; s/d US\$7/14) Cheap and cheerless digs with saggy beds and bare light bulbs.

Residencial Toño (☎ 341-185; Vivar 1970; s/d US\$10.50/21) A warm welcome adds value to these tidy but unremarkable digs.

Hotel Atenas (☎ 342-666; Ramírez 1961; s/d without bathroom US\$12/23) In the middle of Calama's main strip, this cool, dark hotel has small rooms insulated from street noise.

Hotel El Loa (☎ 341-963; Abaroa 1617; s US\$28) An amiable, but average, spot with red curly iron-work outside and plain rooms inside.

Eating & Drinking

Mercado Central (Latorre; set meals US\$2-3.50) Meals are fast and filling at the *cocinerías* in this busy little market between Ramírez and Vargas. You'll be rubbing shoulders with local workers.

Café Viena (Abaroa 2023; dishes US\$2-4) An unpretentious diner with salads and heaping sandwich plates.

Pollo Scout (Vargas 2102; chicken from US\$2; ☎ lunch & dinner) Spit-roasted chicken and steaming *cazuela* are the staples at this cheapie.

Club Croata (Abaroa s/n; set lunch US\$5; ☎ lunch & dinner) For linen service and fixed-price lunches. The *pastel de choclo* is a hearty Chilean classic.

Bon Appetit (Sotomayor 2129; set lunch US\$5) Cappuccino and sticky pastries, anyone? There's also a tempting choice of set menus.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Lan (☎ 600-526-2000; Latorre 1726) flies four times daily to Santiago (US\$162 to US\$266) from Aeropuerto El Loa. **Sky** (☎ 310-190; Latorre 1497) sometimes has cheaper rates.

BUS

In the high season, buy tickets for long-distance trips a couple of days in advance. For frequent buses to Antofagasta or overnights to Iquique, Arica or Santiago, try **Tur Bus** (Ramírez 1802), **Pullman Bus** (Sotomayor 1808) and **Géminis** (Antofagasta 2239). Tur Bus and Pullman also have large terminals outside of town. Sample fares include the following: Antofagasta (US\$3.50 to US\$8, three hours), Arica (US\$14 to US\$23, 10 hours), Iquique (US\$12 to US\$16, 6½ hours), La Serena (US\$27 to US\$60, 16 hours) and Santiago (US\$32 to US\$75, 20 hours).

For San Pedro de Atacama (US\$2.30, one hour) head to **Buses Frontera** (Antofagasta 2041), **Buses Atacama 2000** (Géminis terminal) or Tur Bus.

For international destinations, make reservations as far in advance as possible. To get to Uyuni, Bolivia (US\$12 to US\$15, 15 hours) ask at Frontera and Buses Atacama 2000; services go twice weekly. Service to Salta and Jujuy, Argentina, is provided by Pullman on Thursday, Friday and Sunday at 8am (US\$45, 12 hours), and more cheaply by Géminis on Tuesday, Friday and Sunday at 10am (US\$35, 12 hours).

TRAIN

Climb into layers and keep your sleeping bag handy. The sole (unheated) passenger train

service in the north operates between Calama and Ollagüe, on the Bolivian border, with connections to Uyuni (US\$12.50, 18 hours). The train leaves every Wednesday at 11pm. Tickets are available at **Estación de Ferrocarril** (☎ 348-900; Balmaceda 1777; ☎ 8:30am-1pm & 3-6pm). Seats are rudimentary and temperatures drop below freezing. The café serves sandwiches, but you'll be thankful you brought your own.

Getting Around

From the airport, 5km away, taxis charge US\$5. Bus companies have large terminals just outside the town center. Ask to be left at their office in 'el centro' to avoid the taxi ride back.

Frequent taxi *colectivos* to Chuquicamata (US\$1.40, 15 minutes) leave from Abaroa, just north of Plaza 23 de Marzo.

Rental-car agencies include **Avis** (☎ 363-325; Aeropuerto El Loa) and **Hertz** (☎ 341-380; Av Granaderos 141). If heading to the geysers, you'll need a high-clearance jeep or pickup.

CHUQUICAMATA

This copper mine just north of Calama coughs a constant plume of dust visible for miles in the cloudless desert, but then everything here dwarfs the human scale. The mine itself is an open sore 4.5km long, 3.5km wide and 850m deep where some 630,000 tons of copper are extracted annually, making Chile the largest exporter of copper in the world. Young Che Guevara visited these great bleak slagheaps on his cross-continent journey, encountering a communist miner who marked a turn in his politics.

First run by the US Anaconda Copper Mining Company starting in 1915, the mine is now operated by state-owned **Corporación del Cobre de Chile** (Codelco; ☎ 055-327-469; visitas@codelco.cl; cnr Tocopilla & JM Carrera). Chuquicamata was once integrated with a well-ordered company town, but environmental problems and copper reserves beneath the town forced the entire population to relocate to Calama by 2004.

Arrange visits through Codelco or ask Calama's tourist office to make the reservation. Avoid the agencies in Calama, which charge considerably more. English and Spanish tours run weekdays. Report to the Codelco office 30 minutes before your tour; bring ID and make a voluntary donation. Tours are limited to 40 and demand is high in January and February,

so book several days ahead. The 50-minute tour begins at 2pm. Wear sturdy footwear (no sandals), long pants and long sleeves.

SAN PEDRO DE ATACAMA

☎ 055 / pop 4970

Oases attract flocks and there's no exception here. A once-humble stop on the trans-Andean cattle drive, San Pedro de Atacama (altitude 2440m) is now prime real estate. In one decade a proliferation of guesthouses, eateries, internet cafés and tour agencies have wedged their way into its dusty streets, molding it into a kind of adobe-*landia*. There are all the cons of fast development (steep prices, cranky tour operators and exaggerated offers) yet...there is incredible quiet, psychedelic landscapes, courtyard bonfires under star-scattered heavens and hammock-strewn hostels. If you can sometimes set your hours contrary to the rest of the sightseers, this is a damn-good place to kick back.

The town is near the north end of the Salar de Atacama, a vast saline lake, 120km south-east of Calama. Buses stop right near the plaza and the whole town can be explored on foot. San Pedro's water is not potable; most stores sell bottled water.

Information

Apacheta Café (cnr Toconao & Plaza de Armas; per hr US\$1.75) Internet.

ATM (Caracoles s/n; ☎ 9am-10pm) On the western side of the village, but it functions sporadically.

Café Etnico (Tocopilla 423; per hr US\$1.75) Internet.

Conaf (Solcor; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2:30-4:30pm) Two kilometers past customs and immigration on Toconao road.

Entel (Plaza de Armas)

Money Exchange (Toconao 492) You can exchange money here (at poor rates).

Oficina de Información Turística (Tourist Information Office; ☎ 851-420; sanpedrodeatacama@senatur.cl; cnr Toconao & Gustavo Le Paige; ☎ 9:30am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat)

Post office (Toconao s/n)

Posta Médica (☎ 851-010; Toconao s/n) The local health clinic, east of the plaza.

Viento Norte (Vilama 432-B) Charges about US\$2.60 per kilo of washing.

Sights & Activities

Stop in the 17th-century adobe **Iglesia San Pedro** (Gustavo Le Paige) where the floorboards creak and sigh and the massive doors are hewn from cardón cactus. North of the plaza you'll find

Paseo Artesanal, where you can chat up local vendors and peruse alpaca sweaters, thumb-sized dolls and trinkets galore.

Fascinating malformed skulls and mummy replicas will keep you glued to the glass at **Museo Archeológico Padre Le Paige** (Gustavo Le Paige; adult/student US\$3.50/1.75; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Sat & Sun). Visitors learn about the Atacameño culture and its developments through the Inca invasion and Spanish conquest. Equally interesting is the shamanic paraphernalia (ie hallucinogenic accessories of the ancients).

You can bike or walk to nearby desert sights, just be sure to bring a map and adequate water and sunblock. Equestrian types can ride the same routes and more. **Ruta Tropera** (☎ 851-960; www.rutatropera.cl in Spanish; Toconao 479; per hr US\$7) offers horse tours ranging from brief to epic multiday affairs. Ambitious peak-baggers can check out **Azimut 360** (☎ 851-469; www.azimut.cl; Caracoles 66), mountain specialists with prices starting at around US\$140 per person. It's just west of the center. Or try **Vulcano** (☎ 851-373; vulcanochile@terra.cl; Caracoles 317); its enthusiastic trekking tours include Sairecabur (6040m; US\$143), Lascar (5600m; US\$134) and Toco (5604m; US\$80).

Once tuckered out, cool off swimming at **Oasis Alberto Terrazas** (Pozo Tres; admission per day US\$4), 3km east off the road to Paso Jama. Oh, and did we mention that there's sandboarding on the dunes (half-day US\$18) as well as mountain biking (US\$5/9 per half-/full day)? Rent a bike from **H2O** (Caracoles 295A) or **Vulcano** (Caracoles 317) then peddle back to the hammock for a well-deserved nap. Stargazers won't want to miss the tour of the night sky, offered – where else? In the middle of desert-nowhere – by an ace astronomer at **Servicios Astronómicos Maury y Compañía** (☎ 851-935; www.spaceobs.com; Caracoles 166; 2½hr tours US\$16).

Tours

Note that prices do not include admission charges.

El Tatio geysers (US\$17.50-27) Leaves San Pedro at 4am to catch the geysers at sunrise, returning at noon. Exercise prudence when walking around – the extra curious and disobedient have fallen in. Includes thermal baths and breakfast.

Valle de la Luna (US\$5-9) Leaves San Pedro mid-afternoon to catch the sunset over the valley, returning early evening. Includes visits to the Valle de Marte, Valle de la Muerte and Tres Marías.

SAN PEDRO DE ATACAMA

<p>INFORMATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apacheta Café.....1 C3 ATM.....2 A3 Café Etnico.....3 B3 Entel.....4 C3 Money Exchange.....5 C4 Oficina de Información Turística.....6 C3 Post Office.....7 C3 Posta Médica.....8 C3 Viento Norte.....9 C3 	<p>SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cactus Tour.....10 A3 Cosmo Andino.....11 B3 H2O.....12 C3 Iglesia San Pedro.....13 B3 Museo Arqueológico Padre le Paige.....14 C2 Pachamama.....15 C3 Pamela Tours.....16 B3 Ruta Tropera.....17 C4 Servicios Astronómicos Maury y Compañía.....18 A3 Turismo Colque.....19 B3 Vulcano.....20 C3 <p>SLEEPING </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Camping Los Perales.....21 B4 Edén Atacameño.....22 C4 El Albergue de San Pedro.....23 C3 Hostal La Ruca.....24 C4 Hostal Sonchek.....25 A2 Hostal/Camping Takha Takha.....26 A3 Hotel Licancábur.....27 C4 Residencial Vilacoyo.....28 B3 <p>EATING </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Café Export.....29 C3 Café Sonchek.....(see 25) Cuna Restaurant.....30 B2 El Adobe.....31 B3 Food Stalls.....32 B2 La Estaka.....33 B3 Quitor.....34 A2 Todo Natural.....35 B3 <p>DRINKING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> H2O.....(see 12) <p>TRANSPORT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buses Atacama 2000.....36 C2 Géminis.....37 C3 Tur Bus.....38 A2
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CHILE

Altiplano lakes (US\$30-45) Leaves San Pedro around 7am to see flamingos at Laguna Chaxa in the Salar de Atacama, the town of Socaire, Lagunas Miñiques and Miscanti, Toconao and the Quebrada de Jere, returning 5pm.

Geysers and pueblos (US\$36-49) Leaves at 4am for the geysers, then visits Caspana, the Pukará de Lasana and Chiu-Chiu, finishing in Calama, or returning to San Pedro by 6pm.

Yuni, Bolivia (see opposite) Popular three-day 4WD tour of the remote and beautiful *salar* region.

For further guidance, the Tourist Information Office has a book of complaints with helpful and sometimes gripping accounts of various tour agencies. Agencies with the most positive feedback from travelers:

Cactus Tour (☎ 851-587; www.cactustour.cl; Caracoles 163-A) A small outfit frequently recommended for its excellent service, polite bilingual guides, comfortable vehicles and above-average food. Prices reflect quality.

Cosmo Andino (☎ 851-069; cosmoandino@entelchile.net; Caracoles s/n) Another small operation, with higher rates but has the most unblemished reputation in town.

Festivals & Events

Fiesta de San Pedro y San Pablo, held on June 29, is a religious festival celebrated with folk dancing groups, a rodeo and solemn processions.

Sleeping

Budget places might ask that solo travelers share a room in the summer high season, and few include breakfast in the price. Try

GETTING TO BOLIVIA

High-altitude lagoons tinged crimson and turquoise, simmering geysers, flamingos in flight and Uyuni's blinding salt flats are a dreamy and extreme three-day Jeep journey from San Pedro. Given the wild uncharted terrain, it's essential to take a tour and that's where the problems start. The reasonable going rate of US\$70 includes transport, lodging and meals. *Quality does not come at these prices.* Service can be inconsistent and amenities are bare-bones. It's possible to book a four-day tour and return to San Pedro, but you might find yourself stuck in Uyuni until the tour company collects enough travelers to fill a vehicle.

The success of the trip depends largely on a plucky, positive attitude and good driver. Scout out driver recommendations from other travelers. Think twice before booking a tour which overnights in a salt hotel – these accommodations don't properly manage waste and it will essentially be funneled back into the same salty crust you came to admire. Lodgings are at high altitudes: drink lots of water, avoid alcohol and bring an extra-warm sleeping bag and something for the thumping headaches.

Turismo Colque (☎ 851-109; cnr Caracoles & Calama) has most of the departures and its reputation runs all over the board. Other agencies to check out are **Pachamama** (☎ 851-064; Toconao s/n) and **Pamela Tours** (☎ 099-676-6841; Tocopilla 405). None get glowing reports.

bargaining in off-season. Given the scarcity of water, limit your bubble-bath time.

Camping Los Perales (☎ 851-114; Tocopilla 481; campsites per person US\$5) Basic, sprawling facilities with chatty hosts.

Camping Buenas Peras (☎ 099-510-9004; Ckilapana 688; campsites per person US\$6) Camp in a pear orchard but beware the abrupt droppings.

Camping Oasis Alberto Terrazas (☎ 851-042; Pozo Tres; campsites per person US\$7; 🚻) Favored for its ample sites shaded by tamarugo trees, BBQs, pool and picnic area. Families fill it on weekends. It's 3km on the road to Paso Jama.

Hostal/Camping Takha Takha (☎ 851-038; Caracoles 101-A; camping per person US\$7, s without/with bathroom US\$13/35, d US\$27/45; 📞 🚻) Rooms come stocked with candles, are simple but spotless and set around earthy gardens.

Residencial Vilacoyo (☎ 851-006; vilacoyo@sanpedroatacama.com; Tocopilla 387; per person US\$7; 📞) A snug spot with warm service and hammock-strewn gravel garden. Has kitchen access and luggage storage.

Hostal Sumaj-Jallpa (☎ 851-416; El Tatio 703, Sector Licancabur; dm/s/d US\$9/19.50/39; 📞 🚻) Pristine Swiss-Chilean hostel located 1km outside town.

Hostal La Ruca (☎ 851-568; hostallaruca@hotmail.com; Toconao 513; s incl breakfast US\$9; 📞 🚻) New backpacker haunt featuring a courtyard bar and outgoing staff. Showers are spotless and rooms comfortable. Luggage storage available.

Éden Atacameña (☎ 851-154; Toconao 592; hostaleden_spa@hotmail.com; Toconao 592; s/d US\$8/16, d with bathroom US\$32, all incl breakfast; 📞 🚻) Take a cue

from the Alsations basking on the patio in this relaxed spot with hammocks, communal outdoor kitchen and wash basins.

El Albergue de San Pedro (☎ 851-426; hostel sanpedro@hotmail.com; Caracoles 360; members dm/d/tr incl breakfast US\$9/27/35, nonmembers US\$11.50/32/43) Welcoming HI property stuffed with six-bedded dorms with three-level bunks. Staff speaks fluent English and organizes regular soccer showdowns. Services include on-site café, laundry, lockers, bike rental and sandboards.

Hostal Sonchek (☎ 851-112; soncheksp@hotmail.com; Calama 370; dm/d US\$10.50/43; 📞) Slovenian-run hostel with thatched roofs, adobe walls, and tasty smells wafting from the kitchen. English and French spoken.

Hotel Licancábur (☎ 851-007; Toconao s/n; s/d US\$21/45, without bathroom US\$11.50/23; 📞) Hotel Licancábur enjoys a friendly family atmosphere. Beds are firm enough but you will probably yearn for more water pressure. Breakfast costs US\$2.

Hostal Quinta Adela (☎ 851-272; Toconao 624; d/tr from US\$45/60; 📞) A kick-back introduction to *hacienda* life, this character-rich home is run by a very genteel old couple and its rooms about a sprawling orchard. Large breakfasts cost US\$3.50.

Eating & Drinking

While this oasis conjures up delectable culinary treats (with a variety that far outshines most of Chile), guests pay dearly for their veggie stir-fry or mozzarella-dribbled pizza.

Shops in town sell groceries but the produce is limp and the selection paltry.

Some restaurants flip on the dance tunes on weekend nights; all of them stop selling alcohol at 1am according to strict zoning ordinances. Still, the village is plenty social and the party scene in private homes isn't bad at all.

Standout places to eat:

Food stalls (parking lot; set lunch from US\$2) These rustic shacks behind the taxi stalls serve *empanadas*, *humitas* (corn dumplings) and soups.

Quitor (cnr Licancábur & Domingo Atienza; set meals US\$2.60-3.50; ☺ lunch & dinner) Tourists and locals unite under one thatched roof for *ajiacó* (beef stew) and other northern classics.

Café Sonchek (Calama s/n; breakfast US\$2-3, mains US\$3, set menu US\$4.50; ☺ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) Veggie-friendly meals are cooked up before your eyes in this popular budget spot inside the Hostal Sonchek.

Todo Natural (Caracoles 271; mains US\$3.50-6; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Wholegrain sandwiches, a lengthy salad list and fat flapjacks are on the menu at this cute little café. It's worth the wait.

Café Export (cnr Toconao & Caracoles; set menu US\$7, dishes with drink US\$5-10) Funky and candlelit with strong coffee, homemade pasta and decent pizzas.

Cuna Restaurant (Tocopilla 359; set meals US\$8; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Atacameño dishes spiced with a contemporary twist. Check out the lovely courtyard and friendly bar.

Other popular haunts with courtyard bonfires include **El Adobe** (Caracoles s/n; breakfast US\$4, set meals US\$5-8) and **La Estaka** (Caracoles s/n; breakfast US\$4, set meal US\$8; ☺ lunch & dinner).

H2O (Caracoles 295-A) is open all day and has bottled water.

Getting There & Away

Buses Atacama 2000 (cnr Licancábur & Paseo Artesanal) and Buses Frontera, a few doors down, run daily to Calama (US\$2.30) and Toconao (US\$1, 30 minutes). **Tur Bus** (Licancábur 11) has eight daily

buses to Calama, and from there onward to Arica (US\$17, one daily), Antofagasta (US\$7, six daily) and Santiago (US\$37, three daily).

AROUND SAN PEDRO DE ATACAMA

The crumbly 12th-century ruins of fortress **Pukará de Quitor** (adult/student US\$2.60/1.30), 3km northwest of town, afford great views of town and the oasis expanse. Another 3km on the right, **Quebrada del Diablo** (Devil's Gorge) offers a serpentine single track that most mountain bikers can only dream of. About 2km further north are the Inca ruins of **Catarpe**. Sunset on the rolling sand peaks at **Valle de la Luna** (adult/student US\$2.60/1.75), 15km west of town, is a San Pedro institution. Beat the mobs by hitting it at sunrise. Circular dwellings **Aldea Tulo** (admission US\$2), 9km south of town, are the ruins of a pre-Columbian Atacameño village. If biking or hiking to any of these places, make sure you take plenty of water, snacks and sunblock.

Pungent **Laguna Chaxa** (admission US\$3), 67km south of town, within the **Salar de Atacama**, hosts three species of flamingo (James, Chilean and Andean), as well as plovers, coots and ducks. Sunsets are gorgeous. **Lagunas Miscanti & Miñiques** (admission adult/student US\$3.50/1.75), 155km south of town, are sparkling azure lakes at 4300m above sea level. Check with Conaf about *refugios*.

The volcanic hot springs of **Puritama** (admission US\$10), 30km north of town, are in a box canyon en route to El Tatio. A restful place with good facilities, it's a 20-minute walk from the junction along an obvious gravel track. The temperature of the springs is about 33°C, and there are several falls and pools. Bring food and water. Transport is difficult and expensive; the options are a taxi or tour.

At an altitude of 4300m, **El Tatio Geysers** (95km north of town) is the world's highest geyser field, and tourists make pilgrimage to this dragon field every sunrise to gaze at the puffing fumaroles below. Tours depart at the ungodly hour of 4am in order to get to geysers by 6am. Most tour groups picnic after sight-seeing. Camping is possible but nights are freezing; tote your sleeping bag to the no-frills *refugio* 2km before the geysers.

TOCONAO

☎ 055 / pop 500

Tidy and tiny Toconao, 40km south of San Pedro, is a smart choice if you're looking for the authentic feel of the Atacama. It is known

GETTING TO ARGENTINA

Géminis (☎ 851-538; Toconao s/n) serves Salta and Jujuy, Argentina, leaving at 11.30am on Tuesday, Friday and Sunday (US\$35, 12 hours). See p417 for more details about the Argentina border crossing.

for its finely hewn volcanic stone called *laparita*. **Iglesia de San Lucas**, with a separate bell tower, dates from the mid-18th century. About 4km from town, **Quebrada de Jerez** (admission US\$1.75) is an idyllic oasis bursting with fruit trees, herbs and flowering plants. Several inexpensive *residenciales* and restaurants are near the plaza, such as **Residencial y Restaurant Valle de Toconao** (☎ 852-009; Calle Lascar 236; s/d/tr US\$8/16/24). Buses Frontera and Buses Atacama 2000 have bus services daily to/from San Pedro De Atacama (see opposite).

IQUIQUE

☎ 057 / pop 216,420

Jutting into the sea and backed by the tawny coastal range, Iquique sits like a stage and, in fact, is no stranger to drama. It first lived off guano reserves, grew lavish with 19th-century nitrate riches, since lost momentum, and now stakes its future on commerce and tourism, manifested in the duty-free megazone, the sparkly glitz of the casino and ubiquitous beach resort development. The real gems of this coastal character are the remainders of lovely Georgian-style architecture, Baquedano's fanciful wooden sidewalks, thermal winds and a ripping good surf.

Orientation

Iquique, 1853km north of Santiago and 315km south of Arica, is squeezed between the ocean and a desolation-brown coastal range rising abruptly some 600m. South of the center, Peninsula de Cavancha houses the casino, luxury hotels and an attractive rocky coastline.

Information

Internet services can be found in just about every block, and even right across from Playa Cavancha. Banks around Plaza Prat have ATMs; the Zona Franca (right) has more *casas de cambio*.

Afex Money Broker (Serrano 396) Changes cash and traveler's checks.

Entel (Gorostiaga 251) Phones.

Hospital Regional Dr Torres (☎ 422-370; cnr Tarapacá & Av Héroes de la Concepción) Ten blocks east of Plaza Condell.

Post office (Bolívar 458).

Sernatur (☎ 312-238; Anibal Pinto 436; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun Jan & Feb, 8:30am-1pm & 3-5pm Mon-Fri Mar-Dec) Offers free city maps and information.

Telefónica CTC (Ramírez 587) Phones.

Vaporito (Bolívar 505; per 2kg US\$3.50) For laundry service. It also has another branch at Juan Martínez 832.

Sights & Activities

Plaza Prat showcases the city's 19th-century texture, with the 1877 **Torre Reloj** (clock tower) and the 1890 neoclassical **Teatro Municipal**. At the northeastern corner, the Moorish 1904 **Casino Español** has elaborate interior tile work and *Don Quixote*-themed paintings. The 1871 **Edificio de la Aduana** (customs house; Av Centenario) now houses a small **Museo Naval** (☎ 517-138; Esmeralda 250; adult US\$35; ☎ 10am-1pm & 4-7pm Tue-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun).

A handsomely restored **tram** occasionally jerks its way down Av Baquedano in the tourist high season, passing an impressive array of Georgian-style buildings. The **Museo Regional** (☎ 411-214; Baquedano 951; admission free; ☎ 9am-5:30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun) features pre-Columbian artifacts, creepy animal fetuses, mummies and Tiwanaku skulls. Also on Baquedano is the grand **Palacio Astoreca**, housing the **Centro de Cultura** (☎ 425-600; O'Higgins 350; admission US\$70c), which exhibits paintings by local artists. **Harbor tours** (Muelle de Pasajeros; US\$3.50) chugs out to the sea lion colonies.

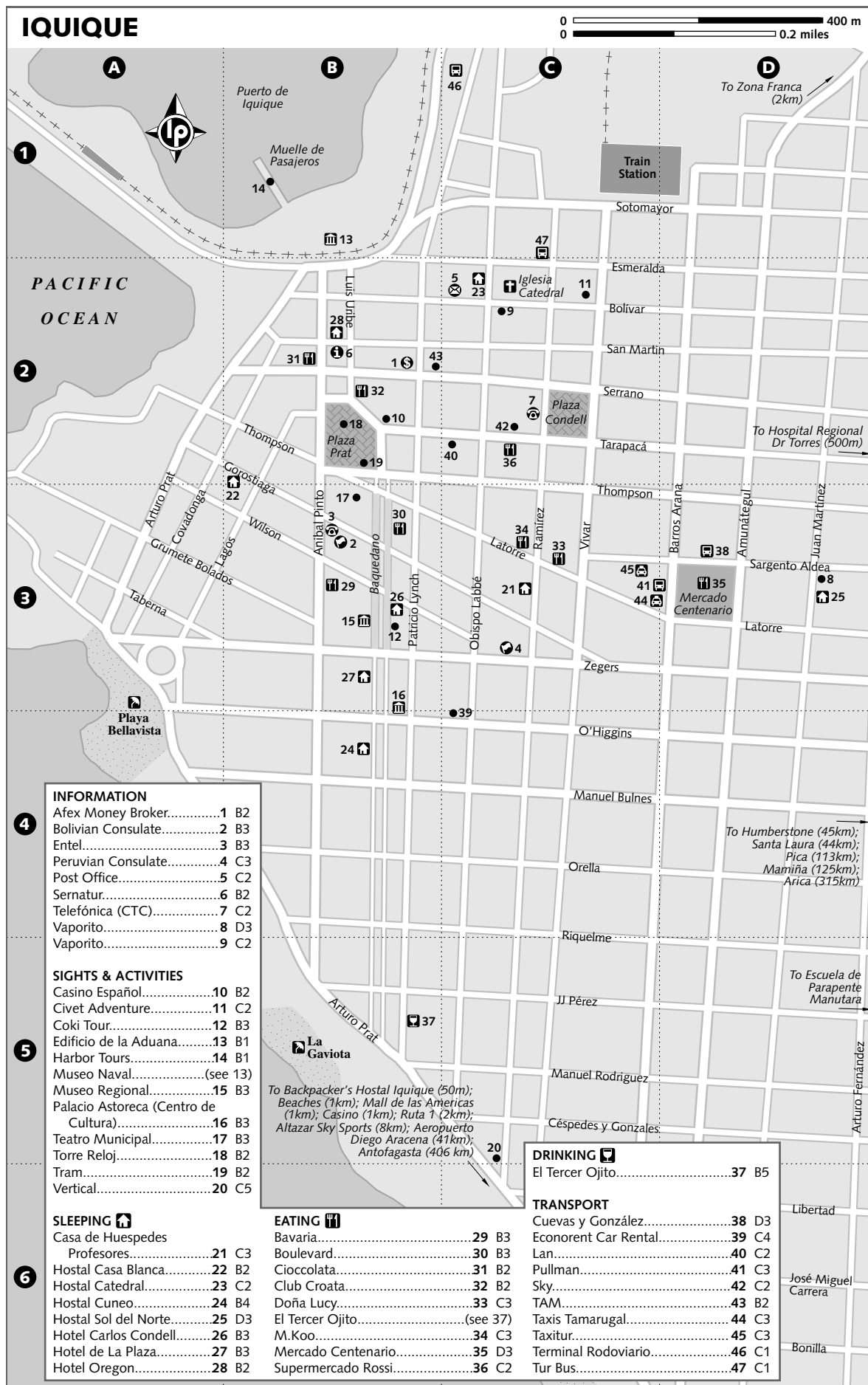
North of downtown, the **Zona Franca** (Zofri; ☎ 11am-9pm Mon-Sat) covers an exhausting 240 hectares of duty-free shops. Take any north-bound *colectivo* from downtown.

Playa Cavancha (cnr Av Arturo Prat & Amunátegui) is Iquique's most popular beach and worthy for swimming and bodysurfing. Further south, rip currents and crashing waves make the scenic **Playa Brava** better for sunbathing; take a *colectivo* from downtown or walk.

Surfing and body-boarding are best in winter, when swells come from the north, but are possible year-round (see p471). There's less competition for early morning breaks at the north end of Playa Cavancha. **Playa Huaiquique**, on the southern outskirts of town, is also an exhilarating choice but the sea is warmer further north near Arica.

Vertical (☎ 391-077; www.verticalstore.cl in Spanish; Prat 580) sells and rents surf equipment. Lessons start at US\$27. **Mormaii Escuela de Surf y Bodyboard** (☎ 099-450-3298; www.iquiquextreme.cl in Spanish) also offers surfing lessons; you'll dish out US\$17.50/53 for two/eight hours, including equipment. Sand-boarding trips to Cerro Dragón cost similar rates.

A paragliding mecca, Iquique's ideal conditions make you want to take a running leap.



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To Backpacker's Hostel Iquique (50m); Beaches (1km); Mall de las Americas (1km); Casino (1km); Ruta 1 (2km); Altazar Sky Sports (8km); Aeropuerto Diego Aracena (41km); Antofagasta (406 km)

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SPLURGE!

A flying leap into the abyss is one way to shake off a long bus ride. Paragliders adore Iquique's steep coastal escarpment, rising air currents and soft, extensive dunes – it ranks among the continent's top spots for paragliding. Beginners can brave a tandem flight for US\$45. Study up at www.parapenteiquique.cl (in Spanish) and check out French-run **Escuela de Parapente Manutara** (below) or **Altazor Skysports** at Playa Cavanha. Bring along a windbreaker, sun-block...and guts.

Try multilingual **Altazor Skysports** (☎ 380-110; www.altazor.cl in Spanish; Flight Park, Vía 6, Manzana A, Sitio 3, Bajo Molle). French-run **Escuela de Parapente Manutara** (☎ 418-280; manutarachile@hotmail.com; 18 de Septiembre 1512) also offers introductory flights and three-day courses (US\$160).

Tours

Public transportation to Humberstone, Mamiña and the geoglyphs is tricky, so tours are worth considering. Tours to Pica include the Cerro Pintados.

Avitours (☎ 099-139-5039; www.avitours.cl)

Civet Adventure (☎ 428-483; civetcor@ctclinternet.cl; Bolívar 684) Organizes small, fully equipped 4WD adventure tours to *altiplano* destinations, as well as landsailing and paragliding. German and English spoken.

Coki Tour (☎ 329-207; cokitouriqq@terra.cl; Baquedano 982) Offers tours in Spanish or, by prior arrangement, in English.

Sleeping

Taxi drivers earn commission from some *residenciales* and hotels; be firm or consider hoofing it. Wild camping is free on the beaches north of Iquique near Pisagua and Cuya.

The cheapest beds are around the Mercado Centenario, but they are no-frills, no smiles, no breakfast; one of these is the dark and boxy **Hostal Sol del Norte** (☎ 421-546; Juan Martínez 852; s/d US\$6/12.50; **P**).

Backpacker's Hostel Iquique (☎ 320-223; www.hositeliquique.cl; Amunategui 2075; members dm/s/d incl breakfast US\$8/11.50/19.50, nonmembers US\$9/12.50/21; **Q**) Steps from the beach, a top-notch hostel with English-speaking staff. In addition to weekly BBQs (US\$3.50) there are lockers, games, laundry and storage facilities, a kitchen and a tiny roof-terrace with sea views.

Casa de Huespedes Profesores (☎ 314-475; inostr ozafloresprop@hotmail.com; Ramírez 839; s/d incl breakfast US\$10/16; **Q**) An old, high-ceiling guesthouse with peeling floral wallpaper and affable treatment. Bike rental available.

Hostal Cuneo (☎ 428-654; Baquedano 1175; r US\$10, with bathroom US\$16) Front-side rooms are better quality in this family-run *hostal* with breakfast included.

Hostal Catedral (☎ 426-372; Obispo Labbé 253; r per person incl breakfast US\$10) Well located for early or late Tur Bus connections, this homey spot is plant-lined but somewhat stuffy.

Hotel Oregon (☎ 410-959, San Martín 294; r per person incl breakfast US\$12.50) A nostalgic hotel near the plaza with high ceilings, creaky wooden floors and a lofty old atrium.

Hotel de La Plaza (☎ 419-339; Baquedano 1025; s/d incl breakfast US\$16/25) This Georgian-style building has a darling courtyard but rooms could use a little more love. Singles are small, but bathrooms large.

Hostal Casa Blanca (☎ 420-007; Gorostiaga 127; s/d incl breakfast US\$17/27) This congenial guesthouse is a sedate spot with kindly service and a palette of pastel shades.

Hotel Carlos Condell (☎ 327-545; Baquedano 964; s/d incl breakfast US\$23/38; **P**) A beautiful 19th-century boomtown building with a choice location, this hotel's inherent charm is undermined by a lack of attentive maintenance.

Eating

Supermercado Rossi (Tarapacá 579) Offers variety and fresh produce.

Bavaria (Anibal Pinto 926) Has a tasty takeout deli.

Mercado Centenario (Barros Arana s/n) Frills-free set lunches can be had at the north side sandwich stalls or upstairs *cocinerías* featuring seafood.

M.Koo (Latorre 596; snacks US\$1.25-1.75) This is a simple corner-shop with exquisite *chumbeques* (sweet regional biscuits) and specials like steaming *humitas* and *pastel de choclo* to go.

Doña Lucy (Vivar 855; cakes US\$1.50; ☎ 9am-7pm) A fussy tea shop with ambrosial cream cakes and cappuccinos.

El Tercer Ojito (Patricio Lynch 1420; mains US\$4-8; ☎ lunch & dinner) Casual New Age place with excellent Peruvian fare, curries and the odd sushi. Its pleasant patio sports cacti, murals and even a terrapin in a bathtub.

Club Croata (Plaza Prat 310; mains US\$4-11) Simple staples of pasta and chicken are on offer

and the fixed-price lunch is the best on the plaza.

Ciocolata (Aníbal Pinto 487; set menu US\$5, sandwiches US\$4; ☎ 8:30am-10pm Mon-Sat, 5-10pm Sun) This is an upscale coffee shop with filling breakfasts, sandwiches, scrumptious cakes and yummy chocolates.

Boulevard (Baquedano 790; mains US\$7-15; ☎ lunch & dinner) Streetside café with rich fondues, pizzas, crêpes and enormous salads with zesty dressings.

Drinking

Look for the fun pubs and clubs clustered along the seafront south of town.

El Tercer Ojito (Patricio Lynch 1420) Offers a relaxed patio where you can knock back a cocktail after dark; happy hour is from 8pm to 10pm.

Entertainment

Mall de las Americas (Héroes de la Concepción) has a multiplex cinema. It's southeast of the center.

Getting There & Away

AIR

The local airport, **Aeropuerto Diego Aracena** (☎ 410-787), is 41km south of downtown via Ruta 1.

Lan (☎ 600-526-20002; Tarapacá 465) is cheaper the earlier you book. Daily flights include four to Arica (US\$39 to US\$77, 40 minutes), one to Antofagasta (US\$50 to US\$69, 45 minutes), seven to Santiago (US\$158 to US\$286, 2½ hours), and one to La Paz, Bolivia (US\$159 to US\$190, two hours).

Sky (☎ 415-013; Tarapacá 530) also goes to Arica (US\$36), Antofagasta (US\$54) and Santiago (US\$163) as well as further south in Chile.

Aerolíneas del Sur (☎ 420-230; cnr Thompson & Patricio Lynch) offers good rates including Antofagasta (US\$71 round-trip) and Santiago (US\$186 round-trip).

TAM (☎ 390-600; www.tam.com.py in Spanish; Ser-rano 430) flies three times weekly to Asunción, Paraguay (US\$309).

BUS & COLECTIVO

Most buses leave from the **Terminal Rodoviario** (☎ 416-315; Patricio Lynch); some companies have ticket offices along west and north sides of the Mercado Centenario. **Tur Bus** (☎ 472-984; www.turbus.cl in Spanish; Esmeralda 594) has a cash machine. Sample fares are listed in the table opposite.

Destination	Duration (hr)	Cost (US\$)
Antofagasta	8	12-20
Arica	4½	9
Calama	7	12-16
Copiapó	14	19-32
La Serena	18	21-41
Santiago	26	27-45

For faster *colectivos* to Arica (US\$15, 3½ hours), try **Taxitur** (☎ 414-815; Sargento Aldea 783). **Taxis Tamarugal** (☎ 419-288; Barros Arana 897-B) runs daily *colectivos* to Mamiña (US\$10.50 round trip).

To get to La Paz, Bolivia, **Cuevas y González** (☎ 415-874; Sargento Aldea 850) leaves Monday through Saturday at 10pm (US\$17.50 to US\$21, 20 hours), or head to Arica for better prices. To Jujuy and Salta, Argentina, Pullman leaves from the bus terminal Tuesday at 11pm (US\$65).

Getting Around

Aerotransfer (☎ 310-800) has a door-to-door shuttle service from the airport (US\$6), 41km south of town.

Cars cost from US\$44 per day. Local agencies often require an international driver's license. Try the airport rental stands or **Econorent Car Rental** (☎ 417-091; reservas@econorent.net; Obispo Labbé 1089).

AROUND IQUIQUE

Agencies in Iquique offer tours to the following sites, but they don't combine Pica and Mamiña in the same tour.

With the spark of the nitrate boom long gone cold, **Humberstone** (admission US\$1.50), 45km northeast of Iquique, remains a creepy shell. Built in 1872, this ghost town's opulence reached its height in the 1940s: the theater drew Santiago-based performers; workers lounged about the massive cast-iron pool molded from a scavenged shipwreck; and amenities still foreign to most small towns abounded. The development of synthetic nitrates forced the closure of the *oficina* by 1960. Today some buildings are restored, but others are unstable; explore them carefully. A Unesco World Heritage site, it makes their list of endangered sites for the fragility of the existing constructions. The skeletal remains of **Oficina Santa Laura** are a half-hour walk southwest. Eastbound buses can drop you off, and it's usually easy to catch a return

bus if you're willing to wait. Take food, water and a camera.

The whopping pre-Columbian geoglyphic **El Gigante de Atacama** (Giant of the Atacama), 14km east of Huara on the slopes of Cerro Unita, is, at 86m, the world's largest archaeological representation of a human figure. Representing a powerful shaman, its blocky head emanates rays and its thin limbs clutch an arrow and medicine bag. Experts estimate it dates to around AD 900. The best views are several hundred meters back at the base of the hill. Don't climb the easily eroded hill. To visit hire a car or taxi, or go on a tour.

Amid Atacama's desolate pampas you'll find straggly groves of resilient tamarugo (*Prosopis tamarugo*) lining the Panamericana south of Pozo Almonte. The forest once covered thousands of square kilometers until clearcutting for the mines nearly destroyed it. The trees are protected within the **Reserva Nacional Pampa del Tamarugal**, where you can also find 355 restored geoglyphs of humans, llamas and geometric shapes blanketing the hillside at **Cerro Pintados** (admission US\$1.75), nearly opposite the turnoff to Pica. Pass by the derelict railroad yard, a dust-choked but easy walk from the highway, about 1½ hours each way. A Conaf-operated **campground** (camping per person US\$8, guesthouse bed US\$11) has flat, shaded sites with tables and limited space in cabins. It's 24km south of Pozo Almonte.

The oasis of **Pica** is a chartreuse patch on a dusty canvas, 113km southeast of Iquique. Its fame hails from its pica limes, the key ingredient of the tart and tasty *pisco sour*. Day-trippers can enjoy splashing around the freshwater pool, **Cocha Resbaladero** (Gral Ibáñez; ☎ 8am-9pm; admission US\$1.75), fresh fruit drink in hand. The shadeless **Camping Miraflores** (☎ 057-741-338; Miraflores s/n; campsites per person US\$2) gets mobbed on weekends. The historic 1906 **El Tambo** (☎ 057-741-041; Gral Ibáñez 68; r per person US\$6, 4-person cabin US\$32) has rickety rooms ripe with character.

Mamiña, 125km east of Iquique (not on the same road to Pica) is a quizzical terraced town with thermal baths, a 1632 church and a pre-Columbian fortress, **Pukará del Cerro Inca**. Plunk into a deck chair and plaster yourself with restorative mud at **Barros Chino** (☎ 057-751-298; admission US\$1.75; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Sun), a kind of budget 'resort.' Similarly priced soaks in individual concrete tubs are had at **Baños Ipla** (☎ 8am-2pm & 3-9pm) or **Baños Rosario**, below

Refugio del Salitre. **Cerro Morado** (campsites per person US\$4) serves up fixed-price lunches and offers backyard camping. You'll find a few basic *residenciales* in town. All places offer full board. To splurge, check out **Hotel Los Cardenales** (☎ 057-517-000; r per person incl full board US\$43; P ☎), the coziest place in town, with springwater pool, Jacuzzis and gardens. The Lithuanian owners are multilingual. See Iquique (see opposite) for transport details.

ARICA

☎ 058 / pop 185,270

Summery days of ripping big surf and warm sea currents bless this otherwise drab city, flush against Peru. Arica is an urban beach resort, with long swaths of sand reaching the knobby headland of El Morro. You'll find Aymara people peddling their crafts at stalls, an iron church and a few other architectural gems bringing sparkle to an otherwise homely city center. For most travelers Arica serves as the springboard to the gaping heights of Parque Nacional Lauca.

Orientation

Traveler services are staked out in the commercially chaotic center between the coast and Av Vicuña Mackenna. A pedestrian mall is on 21 de Mayo and the best beaches are south of the *morro* (headland) and north of Parque Brasil. The bus terminals are on Diego Portales, just after Av Santa María, accessible by bus or taxi *colectivo*. The *colectivos* are faster and more frequent. Take *colectivo* 8 (US50¢) along Diego Portales to get to the city center. It's about a 3km walk.

Information

Internet cafés and calling centers fill 21 de Mayo and Bolognesi. There are numerous 24-hour ATMs along the pedestrian mall (21 de Mayo). *Casas de cambio* on 21 de Mayo offer good rates on US dollars, Peruvian, Bolivian and Argentine currency, and euros.

Automóvil Club de Chile (☎ 252-678; 18 de Septiembre 1360) Maps and road information. It's west of the center.

Ciber Tux (Bolognesi 370; per hr US70¢; ☎ 10am-midnight) Internet café.

Conaf (☎ 201-200; tarapaca@conaf.cl; Av Vicuña Mackenna 820; ☎ 8:30am-5:15pm Mon-Fri) Has some information on Región I (Tarapacá) national parks. To get there, take bus 12 from downtown (US35¢).

Departamento de Extranjería (☎ 250-377; Angamos 990) Replaces lost tourist cards and extends visas.

CHILE

ARICA

1 Puerto de Arica

2 Plaza General Baquedano

3 El Morro de Arica

4 To Automóvil Club de Chile (150m); Peruvian Consulate (200m); Panamericana Sur (2km); Museo Arqueológico San Miguel de Azapa (12km)

A Estación Ferrocarril Arica-Tacna

B Parque Brasil

C To Playa Chinchorro (1km); Sunny Days (1km); Playa Las Machas (3km); Sumaki (5km); Tacna (40km); Parque Nacional Lauca (160km); Panamericana Norte

D To Terminal Rodoviario (1km); Terminal Internacional (1km); Doña Inés (2km); Aeropuerto Internacional Chacalluta (18km)

E Cemetery

F To Museo Arqueológico San Miguel de Azapa (12km)

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Hospital Dr Juan Noé (☎ 229-200; 18 de Septiembre 1000)

Info Arica (www.infoarica.cl) For information on Arica in English and Spanish.

La Moderna (18 de Septiembre 457; per kg US\$3) Wash your clothes.

Post office (Prat 305) On a walkway toward Pedro Montt.

Raices Andinas (☎ 233-305; www.raicesandinas.com; Sotomayor 195) A respectable little Aymara-run outfit, recommended for encouraging better understanding of the local people. Tours into the mountains last from two days (around US\$84) to four (around US\$232); prices vary according to the number of participants.

Sernatur (☎ 252-054; infoarica@sernatur.cl; San Marcos 101; ☎ 8:30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun Dec-Feb, 8:30am-5:20pm Mon-Fri Mar-Nov) A helpful locale with brochures on Tarapacá and other Chilean regions.

Dangers & Annoyances

Petty thievery is a problem, especially at bus terminals and beaches. Take just the essentials. Strong ocean currents make some beaches more dangerous than others.

Remember to change your watches: Chile is two hours ahead of Peru from October 15 to March 15 and one hour ahead otherwise.

Sights & Activities

The imposing tawny hunk of rock looming 110m over the city, **El Morro de Arica** is reached by the footpath from the south end of Calle Colón. Its museum commemorates the June 7, 1880 battle between Peru and Chile (a tender subject for both nationalities). Alexandre Gustave Eiffel designed the Gothic-style 1875 **Iglesia San Marcos** on Plaza Colón and the **Aduana de Arica**, the former customs house at Parque General Baquedano (before landfill, it fronted the harbor). Both buildings were prefabricated in Eiffel's Parisian studios; the church, minus the door, is entirely cast iron. **Plazoleta Estación** houses a free railroad museum. **Feria Agro**, 6km from downtown at the junction with Panamericana Sur, is an animated produce market with heaps of variety. Take any *micro* or *colectivo* marked 'Agro.'

Museo Arqueológico San Miguel de Azapa (☎ 205-555; admission US\$2; ☎ 9am-8pm Jan & Feb, 10am-6pm Mar-Dec), 12km east of Arica, is home to some of the world's oldest mummies. There are superb local archaeological and cultural heritage displays and well-written guide booklets in English. Taxi *colectivos* (US\$1.25) at the corner of Chacabuco and Patricio Lynch provide transport.

South of town, along Av Comandante San Martín, the best beaches for swimming and lounging around are **Playa El Laucho**, just past the Club de Yates, followed by the comely, sheltered **Playa La Lisera**, with changing rooms and showers. Take bus 8 from 18 de Septiembre or the northeast corner of Av General Velásquez and Chacabuco. About 7km south you'll smell a fishmeal processing plant, nearby is **Playa Corazones**, with wild camping and a kiosk. Check out the trail just past the beach steering past caves, cormorant colonies, crashing waves, tunnels and a sea lion colony. No buses serve Corazones: hire a cab or bike it.

Arica's treacherous tubes host high-profile surf championships. July sees the biggest breaks (see p471). The beaches north of downtown are rougher but cleaner, reached by bus 12 at the corner of Av General Velásquez and Chacabuco. **Playa Chinchorro**, 2km away, features pricey eateries, treat shops and jet-ski rental. As well as **Playa Las Machas**, several kilometers further north, expert surfers also hit the towering waves of El Gringo and El Buey at Isla de Alacrán, south of Club de Yates. Surf shops include **Huntington Surf Shop** (☎ 232-599; 21 de Mayo 493) and **Solari Surf Shop** (☎ 233-773; 21 de Mayo 160).

Festivals & Events

Carnaval Ginga Held in mid-February, this features the traditional dancing and musical skills of regional *comparsa* groups.

Semana Ariqueña (Arica Week) Early June.

Sleeping

Camping is free at the dark-sand **Playa Corazones** (Av Comandante San Martín), 7km south at the end of Av Comandante San Martín, but sites are unkempt and packed; bring water. The established **Sumaki** (camping per person US\$3), 5km north of Arica, near Playa Las Machas, has a volleyball court, baths and showers. Sernatur runs a cheap youth hostel from December to February; check the office for location, which changes every season.

Taxi drivers earn commission from some *residenciales* and hotels; be firm in your decision. Besides those listed, cheapies line Prat and Velásquez, while you'll find better-quality options on Sotomayor.

Residencial Real (☎ 253-359; Sotomayor 578; r per person US\$7) Quiet, clean and friendly; top-floor rooms are the best bet.

Residencial Arica (☎ 255-399; 18 de Septiembre 466; r per person US\$8) Central and clean, with huge shared bathrooms. There's no breakfast or kitchen use.

Hostal Roca Luna (☎ 264-624; Diego Portales 861; r per person shared/private bathroom US\$8/12) For convenience to the bus terminal, consider this place.

Doña Inés (☎ 226-372; casadehuespedes@hotmail.com; Manuel Rojas 2864; dm incl breakfast members/non-members US\$10.50/14, s/d US\$17.50/25) A hip little HI property with contemporary rooms, a cozy hammock patio, Ping-Pong, and blank wall for graffiti artists. It's a 20-minute walk to downtown or take taxi *colectivo* 4 from neighboring Av Chapiquiña.

Sunny Days (☎ 241-038; www.sunny-days-arica.cl; Tomas Aravena 161; dm US\$10.50, s without/with bathroom incl breakfast US\$10.50/12.50, d US\$21/25; (P) (Q)) This warm and welcoming hostel run by a Kiwi-Chilean couple is convenient to the buses and the beach. Offers laundry, storage, bike rental and communal kitchen.

Hotel MarAzul (☎ 256-272; www.hotelmarazul.cl in Spanish; Colón 665; s/d/tr incl breakfast US\$12.50/25/37.50; (Q)) Excellent value with banana trees, outdoor pool and chirping songbirds. Touches of mildew and cramped singles are the only drawbacks.

Hotel Mar Azul II (☎ 233-653; Patricio Lynch 681; r per person incl breakfast US\$12) Isn't as soundproof, but smells better. Good breakfasts to be had at both places.

Hostal Raissa (☎ 251-070; San Martín 281; s/d incl breakfast US\$12.50/25) Peaceful interior courtyards house ripening mangos and chattering parakeets. Raissa has a guest kitchen, rooms with private bathroom and cable TV. Independent apartments may be available. Bike rental and laundry.

Hostal Jardín del Sol (☎ 232-795; Sotomayor 848; r per person US\$14) Travelers revel in the relaxed atmosphere which includes interior gardens, open-air mezzanine, private bathroom, fans and breakfast.

Hotel D'Marie – Jeanne y David (☎ 258-231; Av General Velásquez 792; s/d incl breakfast US\$16/30; (P)) Run by a helpful French-Chilean couple, this is an immaculate oasis with frangipani and hibiscus trees, large rooms with fans, TV and maid service, great showers and basic breakfasts.

Eating & Drinking

Tap water here is laden with chemicals. Buy bottled and benefit from the many fresh fruit-juice stands.

Supermercado Azul (18 de Septiembre & Baquedano) Large supermarket.

Govinda (Blanco Encalada 200; set meals US\$1.75; ☎ 12:30-3:30pm Mon-Fri) You don't have to be Hare Krishna or vegetarian to love the living-room atmosphere and imaginative three-course lunch menus with organic ingredients (served on a single metal platter). Tucked in a residential area.

Mercado Colón (Colón & Maipú; set menu US\$2-3.50, fish dishes US\$3-5; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Small-time restaurants offer cheap and freshly fried *corvina* (sea bass), *cojinova* (Spanish hake) and soups in this bustling covered market.

Naif (Sangra 365; breakfast US\$2.50-3.50, set lunch US\$4; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) is a funky café-bar with curly ironwork chairs, sharp art and occasional live music.

La Bomba (Colón 357; set menu US\$3, mains US\$3-6; ☎ lunch & dinner) The scream of the station siren at noon will alert you to the cheap fixed-price lunches at this unpretentious place, part of the fire station.

Canta Verdi (Bolognesi 453; sandwiches & small pizzas US\$4-6; ☎ lunch & dinner) Invigorating and young restaurant and bar overlooking a colorful artisans' alley. Superb for gringo rendezvous and pizzas, bar snacks, pitchers of beer and cocktails. Tucked into a pedestrian alley. Happy hour runs from 8pm to 11pm.

Coffee Berry (21 de Mayo 423; coffees US\$1-2) This place serves up coffee concoctions topped with syrups, sprinkles and creams, and home-made chocolates.

Altillo Pub (21 de Mayo 260, 2nd fl; ☎ 6pm-late Mon-Sat) Offers candlelit tables and a teeny balcony that spies the pedestrian mall.

Entertainment

Barrabás (18 de Septiembre 520) Revelers dig the deep lounge areas and youthful vibe at Barrabás, with live music or DJs.

In summer, discos along Playa Chinchorro charge about US\$5 cover.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Lan (☎ 600-526-2000, option 8; 21 de Mayo 345) has several daily flights to Santiago (US\$195, 3½ hours) and one daily to La Paz, Bolivia (US\$120, three to five hours), coordinated with **Lloyd Aéreo Boliviano** (☎ 251-919; Bolognesi 317): ask here for onward connections in Bolivia. **Sky** (☎ 251-816; 21 de Mayo 356) has cheaper and less frequent domestic flights.

GETTING TO PERU

The border crossing at Challuca/Tacna is open daily from 8am to 12am and 24 hours from Friday to Sunday. Buses with international routes simply cross, although long-distance routes are best booked in Tacna, where you'll find lower prices. Have your passport and tourist card on hand and eat any stowaway fruits or vegetables before crossing. From October to February, Peruvian time is two hours behind Chilean time. The rest of the year it is one hour behind Chilean time.

For information on travel in the opposite direction see p856.

Chacalluta airport is 18km north. **Radio Taxi Chacalluta** (☎ 254-812; Patricio Lynch 371) has taxis (US\$9) and *colectivos* (US\$4.50 per person).

BUS & COLECTIVO

The area around the terminals is notorious for petty thievery so keep an eye on your stuff. At **Terminal Rodoviario** (☎ 241-390; cnr Diego Portales & Santa María) many bus companies serve several destinations, including several daily departures to Iquique (US\$9, 4½ hours), Antofagasta (US\$16 to US\$35, 13 hours) and Santiago (US\$35 to US\$70, 28 hours). For Calama (US\$15 to US\$23, 10 hours), Géminis has direct buses with connections to San Pedro de Atacama (US\$41, three weekly). On all southbound buses you will go through a regional border inspection.

For La Paz, Bolivia (US\$13 to US\$21, nine hours), Cuevas y González and Chilebus depart daily in the morning. There are more services to La Paz from the shabbier Terminal Internacional, just to the east. Hop on these buses at Lago Chungara; enquire about arrival

GETTING TO BOLIVIA

The most popular route to cross into Bolivia is via Parque Nacional Lauca, crossing from the Chilean town of Chungara to Tambo Quemado. Most international buses have morning departures. Immigration is open from 8am to 9pm. Have your passport and tourist card on hand. You can also cross into Buses with international routes simply cross.

times there. Also from this terminal are Tacna *colectivos* (US\$4). Peruvian *colectivos* leave from outside the terminal and have longer inspection delays, Chilean ones leave from inside. Give the driver your passport to deal with the border formalities.

For Putre, **La Paloma** (☎ 222-710; Germán Riesco 2071) has a direct bus at 6:30am (US\$3.50, 1½ hours), leaving from Germán Riesco 2071. To get to the bus terminals, hop on *colectivo* 1, 4 or 11 from Maipú or number 8 from San Marcos.

CAR

If driving to Peru, check with the consulate about the latest required forms. You'll need multiple copies of the Relaciones de Pasajeros form, found in most stationery stores, allowing 60 days in Peru; no charge. To Bolivia, take extra gas, water and antifreeze.

TRAIN

Trains to Tacna (US\$1.75, 1½ hours) depart from **Ferrocarril Arica-Tacna** (☎ 231-115; Máximo Lira 889) at 10am and 7pm, Monday to Saturday.

Getting Around

Rental cars are available at **Cactus** (☎ 257-430; Baquedano 635, Local 36) or **Klasse** (☎ 254-498; www.klasserentacar.cl; Av General Velásquez 762, local 25). Prices start at just US\$27 per day. Mountain bikes with double shocks are available at **Bicircuitos** (Estación Ferrocarril Arica-La Paz) for US\$13 per day or US\$4 per hour.

RUTA 11 & PUTRE

The barren slopes of the Lluta Valley host hillside geoglyphs; **Poconchile** and its quake-ridden 17th-century church, candelabra cacti (consider yourself blessed if you see it in bloom, which happens one 24-hour period per year); and the chasm-side ruins of 12th-century fortress **Pukará de Copaquilla**.

Ancient stone-faced terraces of alfalfa and fragrant oregano encircle Putre (population 1980; altitude 3530m). This Aymara village 150km northeast of Arica is an appealing stop for visitors to acclimatize. Take advantage of the excellent hikes and tranquil village ambience of this former 16th-century *reducción* (Spanish settlement established to control the indigenous population). Colonial architecture is abundant, most notably the restored adobe **Iglesia de Putre** (1670). There's a frivolously fun **Carnaval** in February, where

exploding flour balloons and live music rule the day.

There's a post office and call center in town. Baquedano is the main strip.

Tour Andino (☎ 099-011-0702; www.tourandino.com in Spanish; Baquedano s/n) is a one-man show whose local guide, Justino Jirón, comes warmly recommended. Alaskan biologist Barbara Knapton offers expensive but high-quality birding and natural-history excursions in English or Spanish at **Alto Andino Nature Tours** (☎ messages 058-300-013; www.birdingaltoandino.com; Baquedano 299). Make reservations well in advance.

Hostal Cali (Baquedano s/n; s/d US\$6/10.50) is the cheapest spot in Putre, with a concrete courtyard and lodging resembling interrogation rooms.

Residencial La Paloma (☎ 099-197-9319; Baquedano s/n; s without/with bathroom US\$9/14; 📍) is an established *residencial* and restaurant slots thin-walled rooms around concrete courtyards.

Travelers flock to **Pachamama** (☎ 099-286-1695; ukg@entelchile.net; dm/s/d US\$9//17.50/35; 📍), a pleasing hostel with a generous communal kitchen, floral courtyard and knowledgeable young staff.

Kuchu-Marka (Baquedano 351; 🍽️ lunch & dinner) dishes up delicious quinoa soup, alpaca steaks, vegetarian options and drinks. Folk musicians visit for tips and Gloria, the owner, has information on lodging in private homes. Open late.

Buses La Paloma (Baquedano 301) has daily departures for Arica at 2pm (US\$3.50, 1½ hours). Buses to Parinacota, in Parque Nacional Lauca, pass the turnoff to Putre, 5km from the main highway.

PARQUE NACIONAL LAUCA

At woozy heights with snow-dusted volcanoes, remote hot springs and glimmering lakes, Lauca, 160km northeast of Arica, is an absolute treasure. Herds of *vicuña*, *vizcachas* and bird species including flamingos, giant coots and Andean gulls inhabit the park (138,000 hectares; altitude 3000m–6300m) alongside impressive cultural and archaeological landmarks.

At 22km from Putre, Termas de Las Cuevas has a small rustic thermal bath, accessed along a winding path strewn with *vizcachas*. The next photo op comes 4km east, where domestic llamas and alpacas graze on emerald pastures among the clear lagoons filled with *guallatas* (Andean geese) and ducks.

The Aymara village of **Parinacota** sits 20km away and 5km off the highway. Amid the whitewashed adobe and stone streets stands a lovely 18th-century church. Check out its surrealistic murals, reminiscent of Hieronymus Bosch, and museum. A local fable says the table tethered down here once escaped into the neighborhood. Where it stopped a man died the following day. Sounds like a Tom Robbins novel... Hikes are plenty (even a table may take advantage). Ask at the Conaf ranger station in town for details.

The twin **Payachata volcanoes** – Parinacota (6350m) and Pomerape (6240m) – are dormant. At their feet is **Lago Chungará**, at 4500m, one of the world's highest lakes. Just to the south Volcán Guallatire smokes ominously.

Adapt to the altitude gradually; do not exert yourself at first, and eat and drink moderately. Herbal tea remedies *chachacoma*, or *mate de coca* help combat altitude sickness. Both are available from village vendors. Pack sunblock, shades and a hat.

Tours

Skip the one-day blitzkriegs to Lago Chungará offered by many Arica agencies and you'll save yourself a screaming headache, known locally as *oroche* (altitude sickness). Take your time to savor the landscape. Tours lasting 1½ days (US\$55 to US\$60) include a night in Putre, allowing more time to acclimatize; and a three-day circuit to Lauca, the Monumento Natural Salar de Surire, Parque Nacional Volcán Isluga and Iquique (US\$200) returns to Arica late the third night. English-speaking guides are scarce, arrange one in advance. Since departures are limited, flexibility and shoe leather are helpful. Check out complaints about subpar operators at the Sernatur office.

Latinorizons (Arica ☎ 058-250-007; www.latinorizons.com; Bolognesi 449) Reliable Belgian-run operator with regular trips into the mountains, and an irregular trip on the old Arica–La Paz railway line as far as Poconchile.

Parinacota Expeditions (Arica ☎ 058-256-227; www.parinacotaexpediciones.cl in Spanish; cnr Bolognesi & Thompson) In addition to the standard 1½- to three-day options, this small agency offers longer volcano ascents and mountain biking along llama trails.

Sleeping

Conaf (☎ 058-201-225; amjimene@conaf.cl; dm US\$10) Has *refugios* for the hard-core at Las Cuevas, Parinacota and Lago Chungará, the latter hav-

ing the best accessibility and most beds (six). Camping costs US\$8 per tent. Bring enough food and a warm sleeping bag.

Hostal Terán (☎ 058-228-761; Parinacota opposite church; per person US\$4) Wrap yourself in crocheted blankets to battle the drafts in this *refugio*. *Señora* Morales prepares meals, or you can use the sunken kitchen (toasty against the night chill). Breakfast/dinner is US\$1/2.

Getting There & Away

The park straddles the paved Arica–La Paz Hwy. See Arica (p467) for bus details. If you are renting a car, or have your own, carry extra fuel and antifreeze.

MIDDLE CHILE

The heartland home of Chilean rodeo and vineyards is oft skipped over by travelers scrambling further afield. But if this region existed anywhere else in the world, it would be getting some serious attention. The abundant harvests of the fertile central valley fill grocer's bins from Anchorage to Tokyo. Don't even mention the contribution of Chilean wine to a lively *sobremesa* (dinner conversation). Wine country is accessible by day trips from Santiago, as is great skiing. Not much further you'll find respectable surfing and the unspoiled parks of Reserva Nacional Radal Seite Tazas or Parque Nacional Laguna de Laja.

Historically this area was a bonanza for the Spaniards, who found small gold mines, good farmland and a large potential workforce south of Concepción. The tenacious Mapuche forced the Spanish to abandon most of their settlements by the mid-17th century.

RANCAGUA

☎ 072 / pop 214,300

The industrial sprawl of Rancagua goes cowboy annually with the national **rodeo** championship held in late March. The competition among *huasos* is a serious, no-smiles affair, followed by *cueca* dances and merrymaking. Just 86km south of Santiago, the area makes a good day trip for hot springs **Termas de Cauquenes** (www.termasdecauquenes.cl; admission US\$6) and its underappreciated **Reserva Nacional Río de los Cipreses** (☎ 297-505; admission US\$2.90).

Traveler services include **Sernatur** (☎ 230-413; Germán Riesco 277), money-changer **Afex** (Campos

363, Local 4; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Fr) and **Conaf** (☎ 204-600; rancagua@conaf.cl; Cuevas 480) for enthusiastic park guidance.

Barebones **Hotel Rosedal de Chile** (☎ 230-253; Calvo 435; r per person with breakfast US\$9) is located a couple of blocks from Tur Bus. **Casino Carabineros en Retiro** (Bueras 255; lunch US\$3) serves huge portions at good prices. **Torito** (Zañartu 323; mains US\$6–11) grills fat steaks in a warm family atmosphere. Live music is played on weekends.

Two buses go from Rancagua's bus terminal to the hot springs daily; call the hotel to confirm because the timetable changes frequently. Long-distance buses also use the **terminal** (Dr Salinas 1165) north of the Mercado Central. **Tur Bus** (cnr Calvo & O'Carroll) and **Buses al Sur** (O'Carroll 1039) have their own terminals. Buses to Santiago (US\$2.40, one hour) leave every 10 or 15 minutes. From the **train station** (☎ 230-361; Av Estación s/n) the Metrotren commuter goes to Santiago hourly (US\$2.50, one hour) and EFE travels to points south, including Chillán (US\$16, 3½ hours) and Temuco (US\$20, eight hours, 11:23pm daily).

SANTA CRUZ

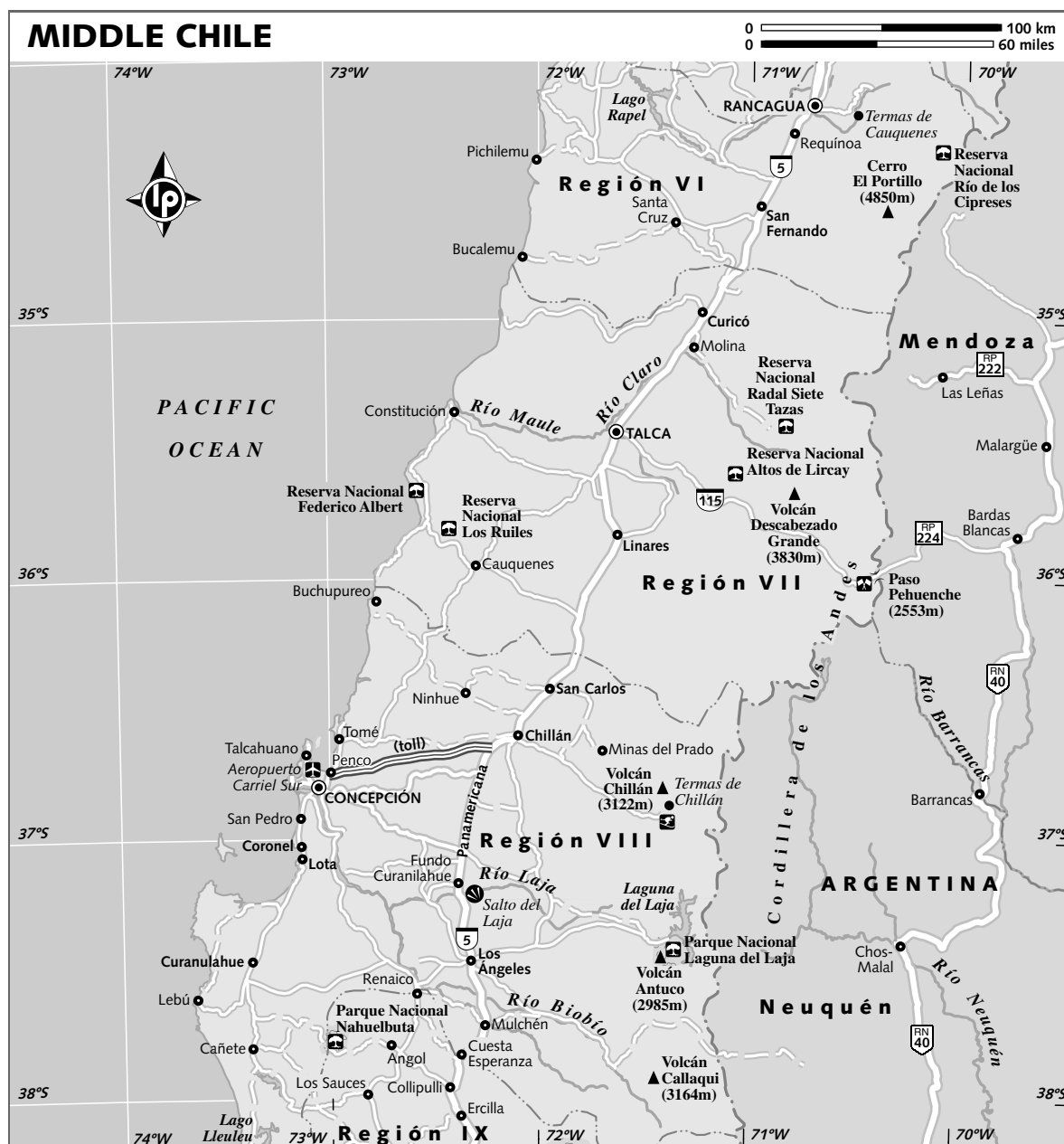
☎ 072 / pop 32,400

Thanks to the generous investments of a former arms dealer, lovely and picturesque Santa Cruz just gleams. The nexus of area winemaking and the first in Chile to create tours, its big moment is the lively **Fiesta de la Vendimia** (grape-harvest festival), in the plaza at the beginning of March. Worth exploring is Chile's largest private museum, **Museo de Colchagua** (☎ 821-050; www.museocolchagua.cl; Errázuriz 145; admission US\$5; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sat), with labyrinthine collections of unusual fossils; amber-trapped insects; Mapuche textiles; pre-Columbian anthropomorphic ceramics; exquisite gold work; conquistador equipment, *huaso* gear, documents and maps. The **bus terminal** (Rafael Casanova 478) is about four blocks west of the town plaza. Catch buses to Pichilemu (US\$3, two hours) and Santiago every half-hour or so.

PICHILEMU

☎ 072 / pop 12,400

Lusty left-break waves make dusty and ramshackle 'Pichi' a hot surf spot. With bohemian *buena onda* (good vibes) and more expats every day, it isn't a bad strip of sand to kick back on.



The **tourist office** (☎ 842-109; Municipalidad, Angel Gaete 365) also has a **kiosk** (cnr Angel Gaete & Aníbal Pinto; ☽ summer).

Hire a board and wetsuit at **Escuela de Surf Manzana 54** (☎ 099-574-5984; Costanera s/n; half-day board hire US\$6) on La Puntilla beach. Its surf courses (individual two-hour lessons US\$17) are apt for newbies. To get there, walk to the beach end of Av Ortúzar and continue for a few minutes along the Costanera road. More challenging breaks come in to Punta de Lobos, while rocky Infiernillo to the west is lower key and good for fishing.

Pichilemu hosts the **Campeonato Nacional de Surf** (National Surfing Championship) each summer at Punta de Lobos, 6km south of town.

Pequeño Bosque (☎ 842-071; cnr Santa Teresa & Paseo del Sol; 4-person sites US\$16) is beach-accessible with full campground amenities. Lots of *residenciales* pop up along Aníbal Pinto in season, but close again in low season. Head here for the bargains. Surfers crash at **Hotel Chile España** (☎ 841-270; Av Ortúzar 255; s/d without bathroom incl breakfast US\$12/20), a simple and happy-go-lucky spot with wood stoves and a rocking chair. **Cabañas Buena Vista** (☎ 842-638; www.343sur.com; Av Pichilemu; per person US\$12.60) offer spacious log cabins with gaping ocean views. There's a 10-guest maximum. Arrange transport with Will, the English owner or walk 20 minutes from town center toward the cross. Mountain bikes are on loan and fly-fishing tours are offered.

THAT'S THE BREAKS – CHILE'S TOP FIVE SURF SPOTS

Chile's backyard offers 4300km of rumbling surf – so there should never be a dull moment!

- **The Classic Wave:** from January through February pilgrims crowd Pichilemu's 'Punta de Lobos,' a perfect left break.
- **One with the Surf:** pitch a tent in view of Puertecillo's gnarly curlers. This wilderness surf paradise isn't signposted; ask the Pichilemu locals to tag along.
- **The Urban Surf Myth:** Iquique's shallow reef break is known to jump newcomers, shake them up and steal their wallets. Falling is part of the initiation, if not in 'El Colegio' (High School), definitely in 'La Intendencia' (Bureaucratic Office). Booties can spare you from the sea urchins.
- **The Serious Wave:** Arica's 'El Gringo' is shallow, top heavy and unfriendly to its namesakes.
- **The Bunny-slope of Surf:** beginners head to La Puntilla in Pichilemu. Seek out a surf school and a nice thick wetsuit.

Grilled and marinated fish at tables facing the surf make Mediterranean-style **Costa Luna** (Costanera 879; ☑ daily summer, Wed-Sun winter) easily the best cuisine in town.

From the **Terminal de Buses** (cnr Av Millaco & Los Alceres) on Pichilemu's outskirts, buses run frequently to Santa Cruz (US\$2, two hours) and San Fernando (US\$3, three hours) where there are connections north and south.

CURICÓ

☎ 075 / pop 119,600

Convenient to local vineyards, laid-back Curicó sports a postcard-perfect **Plaza de Armas** shaded by evergreens, palms and monkey-puzzle trees and a wrought-iron bandstand on stilts.

In summer, **Sernatur** (Plaza de Armas) has an information kiosk. **Forex** (Carmen 477) is the only *casa de cambio*; there are many ATMs.

The unruly **Festival de la Vendimia** (grape-harvest festival) lasts three days in mid-March. The **Miguel Torres** (☎ 564-100) vineyard, 5km south of town, conducts tours by reservation only. Its chic restaurant dishes up Franco-Chilean cuisine (lunch US\$20). Take *colectivos* going to Molina and ask to be dropped off.

Residencial Rahue (☎ 312-194; Peña 410; r per person US\$11), across the street, is a florid and broken-in alternative to the old-world charm of **Hotel Prat** (☎ 311-069; Peña 427; s/d incl breakfast US\$13.50/27), which is embodied in its shady grape arbor, chilly rooms and bowing bed frames. On the 1st floor of the cultural center, **Refugio Restaurant** (Merced 447; daily special US\$3.50; ☑ 12:30-4pm & 6-11pm Mon-Sat) successfully fuses European and Latin American cuisine.

The **Terminal de Buses** (cnr Maipú & Prat) and the **Estación de Ferrocarril** (☎ 310-028; Maipú 657)

are four blocks west of the Plaza de Armas. There are eight trains a day north to Santiago (US\$10, two hours), and 10 trains south to Chillán (US\$11, 2½ hours). The bus company **Buses Bravo** (☎ 312-193) has services to the windsurfing spot of Llico (3:30pm daily). **Buses Hernández** (☎ 491-179) goes to Radal Siete Tazas National Park (US\$2, two hours). **Buses Díaz** (☎ 311-905) heads to the scenic Lago Vicuquén (US\$3, 2½ hours) at 3:20pm daily. Buses to Santiago (US\$5, 2½ hours) leave about every half-hour; try **Bus Pullman Sur** (Camilo Henríquez), three blocks north of the plaza or **Tur Bus** (Manso de Velasco 0106).

RESERVA NACIONAL RADAL SIETE TAZAS

This **reserve** (admission US\$2.50) marks the transition from drought-tough Mediterranean vegetation to moist evergreen forest where the upper Río Claro pours over seven basalt pools, ending at the 50m **Cascada Velo de la Novia** (Bridal Veil Falls). Hiking trails abound, longer ones lead to Cerro El Fraile, Valle del Indio, and Altos del Lircay. **Parque Inglés** sports a lovely setting and hearty lodge meals.

Camping Los Robles (up to 6 people US\$13.50) within the park has hot showers and a BBQ area. Try visiting off-season to avoid the circus atmosphere. Rustic campsites with cold running water are available at **Radal** (☎ 099-333-8719; 5-person sites US\$21).

Bring food from Molina.

To get to Parque Inglés, first take the *micro* bus from Av San Martín in Curicó to Molina (50km away). You'll find provisions for the park here. From November to March, there are five buses daily from Terminal de Molina on Maipú, between 8am and 8pm (US\$2, two

hours). The rest of the year, there's one bus a day, at 5:30pm, returning at 8:30am.

TALCA

☎ 071 / pop 201,800

Talca boasts a thriving university atmosphere and savvy wining and dining that caters to gringos on the wine country trail. Located 257km south of Santiago, it has good access to national reserves, and offers better long-distance bus connections than nearby towns. Traveler services include **Sernatur** (1 Poniente 1281), **Conaf** (3 Sur & 2 Poniente) and **Forex Money Exchange** (2 Oriente 1133). Occupying the house where Bernardo O'Higgins signed Chile's declaration of independence in 1818, **Museo O'Higgins y de Bellas Artes** (1 Norte 875; admission free; ☎ 10am-7pm Tue-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun) features pastoral scenes in oil and *huaso* portraits.

Sleeping & Eating

Casa Chueca (☎ 099-419-0625; www.trekkingchile.com/Casachueca/; dm US\$11, s/d/tr with bathroom & breakfast US\$22/30/36; ☎ closed Jun-Aug; 📷) Backpackers adore these rustic cabañas set in gardens with views to the gurgling river. The owners have loads of information about the region and lead hiking trips. Grab a bike to explore many nearby wineries. To get there, call first from Talca terminal, then take the Taxutal 'A' *micro* toward San Valentín to the last stop in Taxutal, where you will be picked up.

Hostal del Puente (☎ 220-930; 1 Sur 411; s/d US\$25/43)

The best in town, these riverside accommodations branch off a hacienda-style colonnade, with friendly English-speaking management, a pretty garden and cozy rooms.

The cheapest belch-inducing frankfurters are consumed along 5 Oriente.

Las Brisas supermarket (cnr 1 Norte & 5 Oriente)

Open until 10pm.

Mercado Central (btwn 1 Norte, 5 Oriente, 1 Sur & 4 Oriente) Cheap *cocinerías*.

Entrelíneas (1 Sur 1111; ☎ 10am-8:30pm Mon-Fri; sandwiches US\$2.50) A hip café-bookstore offering a side of live poetry with your espresso.

Rubín Tapia (2 Oriente 1339; mains US\$5-9; ☎ 10am-midnight Mon-Sat) A tower of wine choices and tasty green curry or Thai prawns grab the attention of eager taste buds.

Getting There & Away

Most of the north-south buses stop at Talca's main **bus station** (12 Oriente) or there's **Tur Bus** (3 Sur 1960). Sample fares and times are:

Chillán (US\$6, four hours), Puerto Montt (US\$18, 11 hours) and Temuco or Valparaíso (US\$13, six hours). Buses Vilches (US\$1.50, 1½ hours) leaves the main station three times daily at 7am, 1pm and 4:50pm for the village of Vilches and beyond, turning around at the entrance to Reserva Nacional Altos del Lircay.

The **train station** (11 Oriente 1000) is at the eastern end of 2 Sur. There are five trains a day to Chillán (US\$8.50, 1¾ hours), Curicó (US\$7, 45 minutes), Santiago (US\$10, 2¾ hours) and Temuco (US\$13.50, 6½ hours). A narrow-gauge train chugs to the duneswept coastal resort of Constitución. Service (US\$2, 2½ hours) runs at 7:30am daily and 4pm weekdays, returning at 7:15am daily and 4pm weekdays.

RESERVA NACIONAL ALTOS DE LIRCAY

In the Andean foothills, 65km east of Talca, this **national reserve** (admission US\$2.50) offers fabulous trekking amid a burgeoning population of *trichahues* and other native parrots. Those up for a strenuous 12-hour slog venture to **El Enladrillado**, a unique basaltic plateau with stunning views. At 10-hours, the hike to **Laguna del Alto** gets you off easier. Trekkers can loop to Radal Siete Tazas, but a guide is needed as the trail is unmarked. Take a guided hike with the seasoned operator **El Caminante** (☎ 099-837-1440, 071-197-0097; www.trekkingchile.com) or **Expediciones Rapel** (☎ 071-228-029, 099-641-5582).

The **Conaf campground** (camping for 5 people US\$13) is a one-hour hike from the bus stop; you can also camp at backcountry sites. From Talca, Buses Vilches goes directly to the park entrance at 7am, 1pm and 4:50pm daily, though the schedule is subject to change. The fare is US\$1.50.

CHILLÁN

☎ 042 / pop 161,950

Battered by earthquakes and Mapuche sieges, resilient Chillán is still the most intriguing stopover between Santiago (407km north) and Temuco (270km south). Chillán Nuevo replaced the old town in 1835. When another quake in 1939 destroyed the new city, the Mexican government donated the still-operating **Escuela México** (Av O'Higgins 250; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun). At Pablo Neruda's request, Mexican artist David Alfaro Siqueiros and Xavier Guerrero painted spectacular murals honoring indigenous and

post-Columbian figures in history; donations are accepted (and encouraged).

A tumbling sprawl of produce and crafts (leather, basketry and weaving), the **Feria de Chillán** is one of Chile's best. On Saturday it fills the entire Plaza de la Merced and spills onto adjacent streets.

A short bus or cab ride from downtown, **Chillán Viejo** is the original town and Bernardo O'Higgins' birthplace. A 60m-long tiled mosaic illustrates scenes from the petite liberator's life.

Information

Banco de Chile (cnr El Roble & 5 de Abril) Has an ATM.

Centro Tur (☎ 221-306; 18 de Septiembre 656) Travel agency that sells train tickets.

Hospital Herminda Martín (☎ 212-345; cnr Constitución & Av Argentina) Seven blocks east of the plaza.

Post office (Libertad 505)

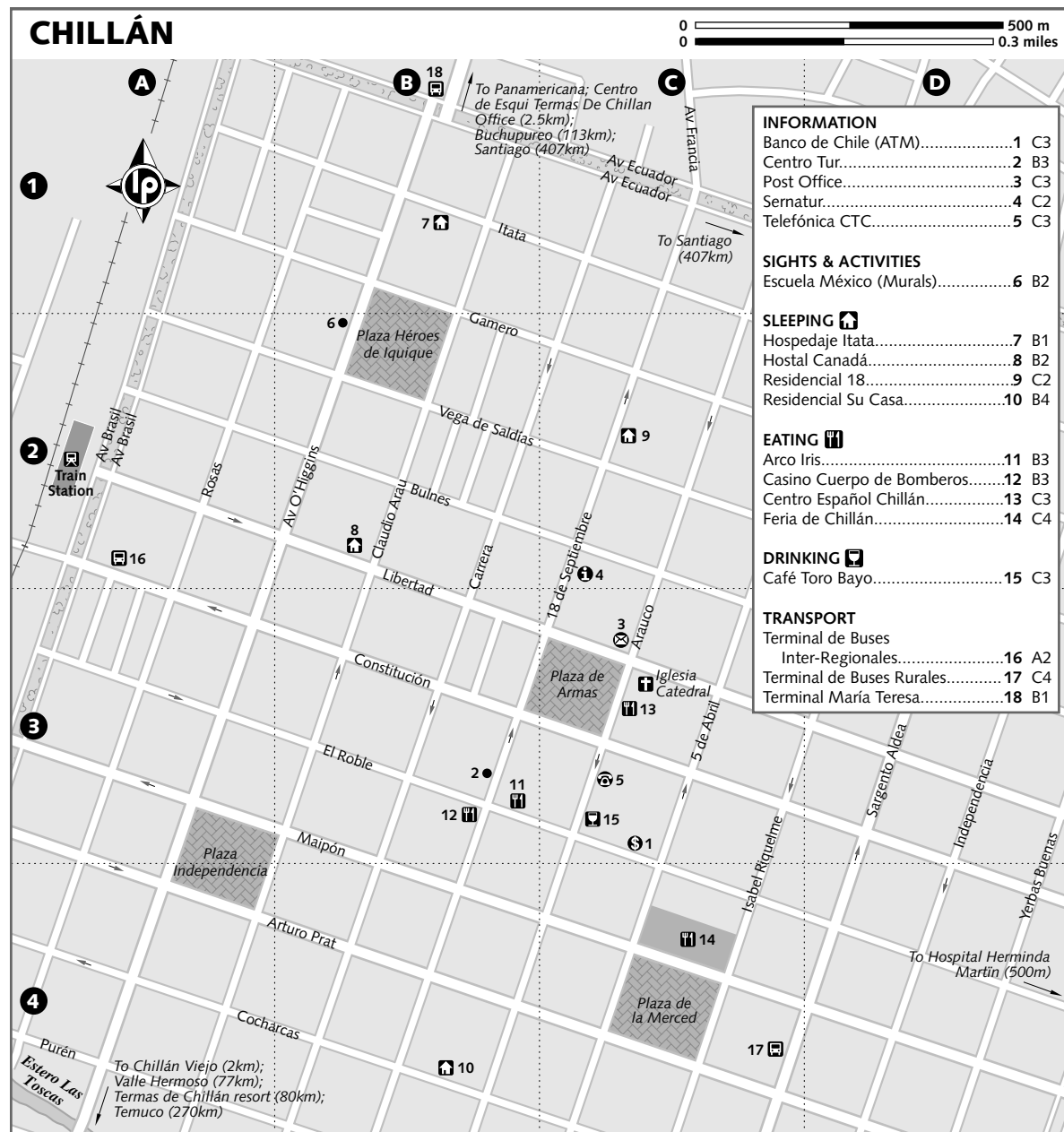
Sernatur (☎ 223-272; 18 de Septiembre 455) Located half a block north of the plaza.

Telefónica CTC (Arauco 625)

Sleeping

Hospedaje Itata (☎ 214-879; Itata 288; s/d incl breakfast US\$6.50/13) Cheap and tattered, the Itata's best feature is the motherly hostess who can whip up a feast for a little extra.

Residencial 18 (☎ 211-102; 18 de Septiembre 317; r per person US\$7.50) Book far ahead to nab your spot in this popular home where guests are made to feel like family.



CHILE

Hostal Canadá (☎ 234-515; Libertad 269; s/d US\$8.50/17) Character is not limited to this *hostal* but extends to its host. The rooms are impeccable.

Residencial Su Casa (☎ 223-931; Cocharcas 555; r per person US\$9) Cramped but cozy and leafy green, run by a friendly *señora*.

Eating

Mercado Central (Maipón btwn 5 de Abril & Isabel Riquelme) Cooks up cheap *paila marina* and *longaniza* (pork sausage) in *cocinerías* set by the butchers' stalls.

Casino Cuerpo de Bomberos (El Roble 490; colación US\$2) Stride past the staring locals and pool hustlers to find no-frills Chilean eats.

Arco Iris (El Roble 525; buffet US\$6) Twinkly wind chimes accompany serious vegetarian fare at this hippie hangout, a godsend for nonmeat eaters.

Café Toro Bayo (Arauco 683, Local 4; ☎ 3pm-2am Mon-Sat) A student watering hole overflowing with happy revelers. Escudos and *piscos* are sunk deep into the night.

Centro Español Chillán (Arauco 555; mains US\$6-10; ☎ closed Sun) Bow-tied waiters dish out fragrant paella and other Spanish specialties at this elegant haunt overlooking the Plaza de Armas.

Getting There & Away

Most long-distance buses use **Terminal María Teresa** (Av O'Higgins 010), just north of Av Ecuador. The other is the old **Terminal de Buses Inter-Regionales** (cnr Constitución & Av Brasil), from which you can catch Tur Bus (also at María Teresa) and Línea Azul, with the fastest service to Concepción. Local and regional buses use **Terminal de Buses Rurales** (Sargento Aldea), south of Maipón.

Destination	Duration (hr)	Cost (US\$)
Angol	2¾	4
Concepción	1½	2
Los Angeles	1½	2.20
Puerto Montt	9	12
Santiago	6	9
Talca	3	4
Temuco	5	6
Termas de Chillán	1½	2.50
Valdivia	6	8.50
Valle Los Trancas	1¼	3

Trains between Santiago and Temuco use the **train station** (☎ 222-424; Av Brasil) at the west end of Libertad.

Renta-car (☎ 212-243; 18 de Septiembre 380) offers rentals for about US\$35 a day. If heading to the ski slopes, you may need rental chains (US\$13.50) for the wheels.

AROUND CHILLÁN

The **Termas de Chillán resort** (☎ 042-434-200; www.termaschillan.cl, daily ski lift adult/child US\$32/22, low season US\$26/18.50), also known for its **thermal baths** (adult/child US\$29/20), boasts fresh tracks through long tree-lined slopes. The setting is magnificent. There are 32 runs, maxing out at 1100m of vertical and 2500m long. One of the 11 lifts is the longest in South America. The season attempts to run mid-June to mid-September, but potential visitors should check the website or call ☎ 02-366-8695 first. Ski hire is available on-site from about US\$25 a day.

Soaks for skimpy spenders can be found at Valle Hermoso, where you'll find a **campground** (campsites US\$14.50) selling food supplies and public **thermal baths** (admission US\$3.50; ☎ 9am-5pm). It's down a turnoff between Valle Las Trancas and the posh hotels.

Hostelling Las Trancas (☎ 042-243-211; www.hostellingastrancas.cl; Camino Termas de Chillán Km73.5; per person incl breakfast US\$13.50) is a bit removed from the action, but its reasonable price and crackling-fire ambience provide compensation. There's also a restaurant and bar. Buses Línea Azul in Chillán goes to Valle Las Trancas year-round at 8am (returning at 4pm) for US\$3, continuing to Termas de Chillán in summer.

Coastal villages northwest of Chillán invite exploration. Surfers and fishers alike head to **Buchupureo**, 13km north of Cobquecura (about 100km from Chillán), where papayas grow, oxen clog the road and the little houses are sheathed in local slate. One good option is **Camping Ayekán** (☎ 042-197-1756; www.turismoayekan.cl; campsites US\$15), open only in high season. Once you get to Buchupureo Plaza de Armas, turn left and the campsite is well signposted. **Cabañas Mirador de Magdalena** (☎ 042-197-1890; aochoa_3000@hotmail.com; La Boca s/n; 4-person cabaña US\$37), run by charming Don Angel, are pristine cabins overlooking a river delta that twists into the sea.

CONCEPCIÓN

☎ 041 / pop 216,050

The addictive hustle and bustle of Chile's second-most populous city, teeming with industry, port services and universities make 'Conce' worthy of a touchdown. While attrac-

tive it isn't – earthquakes in 1939 and 1960 obliterated the historical buildings – downtown has pleasant plazas, pedestrian malls and guzzling nightlife, owed to the student population.

Orientation

Concepción sits on the north bank of the Río Biobío, Chile's only significant navigable waterway. The scenic Cerro Caracol hill blocks any easterly expansion. Plaza Independencia marks the center.

Information

ATMs abound downtown.

Afex (Barros Arana 565, Local 57) Offers money exchange.

Conaf (☎ 2248-048; Barros Arana 215, 2nd fl) Has good information.

CyberPass (Barros Arana 871, Local 2; per hr US\$1) Internet.

Intel (Barros Arana 541, Local 2)

Hospital Regional (☎ 2237-445; cnr San Martín & Av Roosevelt) Eight blocks north of Plaza Independencia.

Laverap (Caupolicán 334; per kg US\$2) Fast laundry.

Portal (Caupolicán 314; per hr US\$1) Internet.

Post office (O'Higgins 799)

Sernatur (☎ 2227-976; Aníbal Pinto 460; ☎ 8:30am-8pm daily in summer, 8:30am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri in winter) Has good information.

Sights & Activities

On January 1, 1818, O'Higgins proclaimed Chile's independence from the city's **Plaza Independencia**. On the grounds of the Barrio Universitario, the **Casa del Arte** (cnr Chacabuco & Larenas; admission free; ☎ closed Mon) houses the massive mural by Mexican Jorge González Camarena, *La Presencia de América Latina* (1965). On the edge of Parque Ecuador, the **Galería de Historia** (Av Lamas & Lincoyán; admission free; ☎ closed Mon) features vivid dioramas that create a sense of life as a preconquest Mapuche or pioneer. Upstairs an art gallery features local work.

Once the epicenter of Chile's coal industry, the hilly coastal town of **Lota**, south of Concepción, offers fascinating tours (www.lotasorprensente.cl) to its mines and shantytowns. Mine **Chiflón del Diablo** (Devil's Whistle; ☎ 2871-565; ☎ 9am-6:30pm) functioned until 1976, but now former coal miners guide tourists into its chilly depths (US\$7 to US\$14 depending on tour length). Ask the *micro* bus driver to drop you off at Parada Calero. Go down Bajada Defensa Niño street and you'll

see a long wall sporting the name. Those more aesthetically inclined can visit the magnificently landscaped 14-hectare **Parque Isidora Cousiño** (admission US\$2.50; ☎ 9am-8pm), complete with peacocks and a lighthouse.

Sleeping

Catering more to businesses than backpacks, lodging can be slim pickings, especially during the school year when university students fill up many *residenciales*.

Residencial Metro (☎ 2225-305; Barros Arana 464; s/d incl breakfast US\$11/20) Offers well-kept rooms in a ramshackle building above a central arcade.

Hostal Antuco (☎ 2235-485; Barros Arana 741 Depto 33; r per person incl breakfast US\$12) An efficient, nicely kept *hostal*; ignore its unappealing location above a shopping gallery. The buzzer is at the gate to the stairs, entering the arcade.

Residencial San Sebastián (☎ 2242-710; Barros Arana 741, Depto 35; s/d US\$12/22) Down the hall from Antuco; just about the same, with slightly nicer rooms.

Eating & Drinking

When in Conce be sure to take *once* (tea-time) at one of the many cafés including **Café Haití** (Caupolicán 511; cake US\$2) with prime people-watching on the plaza.

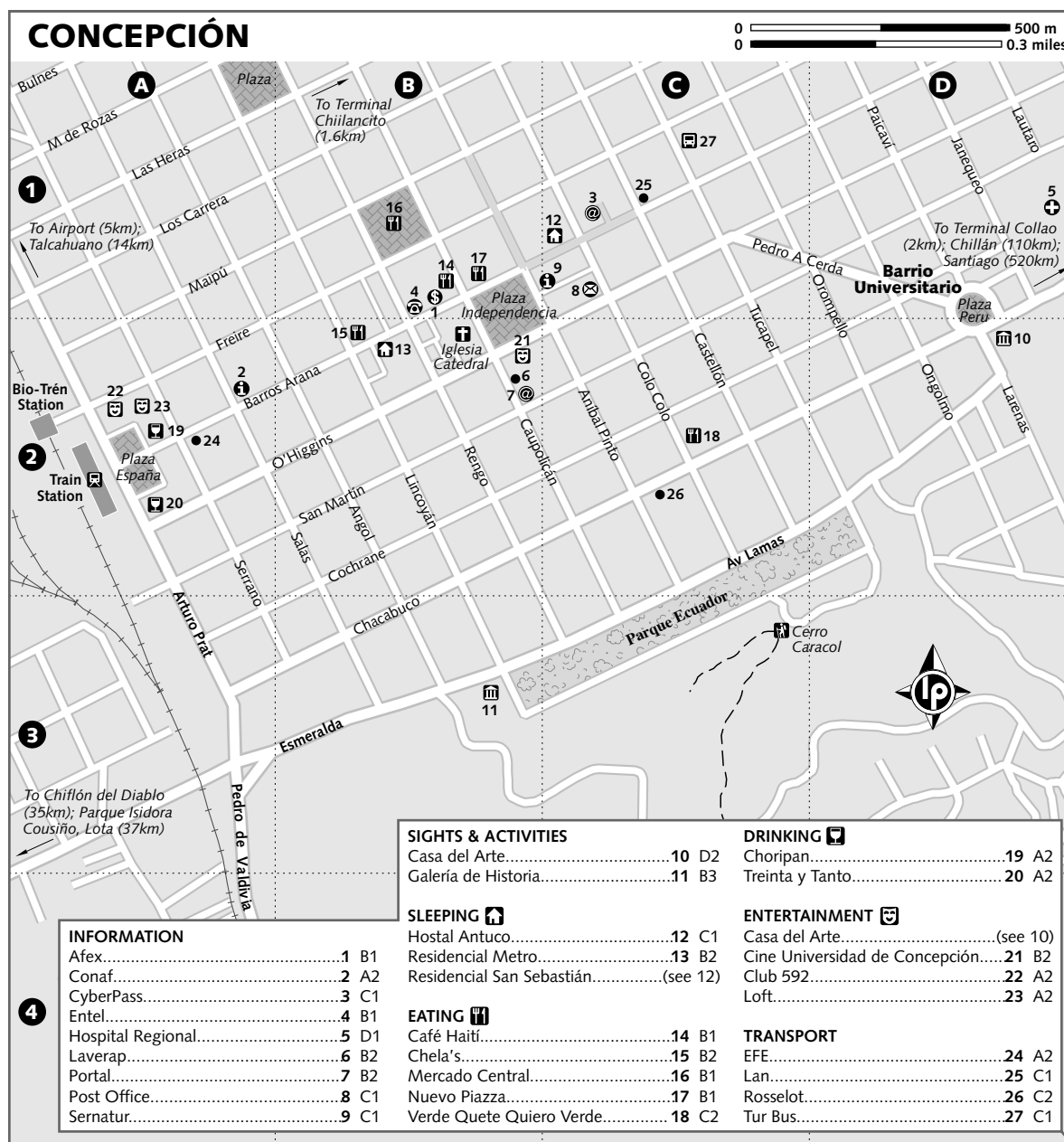
Mercado Central (btwn Caupolicán, Maipú, Rengo & Freire) Head to the market, with its pickled onions, chilies and seaweed bundles amid cheap eateries. While the waitresses ferociously compete for your patronage, the offerings are about the same throughout.

Chela's (Barros Arana 405; mains US\$3.50-7) A cheerful café whose *chorillana* (a mountainous pile of chips and onions with bits of sausage, US\$6.50) should come with Tums.

Verde Quete Quiero Verde (Colo Colo 174; mains US\$4-8; ☎ closed Sun) Spot-on service and tasty fare including spinach lasagna and hearty sandwiches. Wash it down with a glass of apple-mint juice. Upstairs out the back, a gallery and artists' studios are sometimes open for visits.

Nuevo Piazza (Barros Arana 631, 2nd fl; mains US\$6-10; ☎ closed Sun) The cuisine is reasonable, but the real appeal is the fishbowl view to Plaza Independencia below. It's in the Galería Universitaria.

West of Plaza Independencia, across from the train station, the area known as Barrio Estación is home to several popular pub/restaurants (open from dinner onwards),



CHILE

including **Treinta y Tanto** (Arturo Prat 404; empanadas US\$2-3), offering over 30 kinds of steaming *empanadas* and *vino navegado* (mulled wine), and funky **Choripan** (☎ 253-004; Arturo Prat 542; ☎ 7:30pm-late), where a youngish crowd gathers for pitchers of beer, live music and lively conversation.

Entertainment

Club 592 (Arturo Prat 592; ☎ 4pm-3am Wed-Sat) Ravers and rockers can live large here.

Loft (Barros Arana 37; ☎ from 11:30pm Mon-Sat) Those who prefer Latin rock can salsa over to Loft.

Cine Universidad de Concepción (☎ 2227-193; O'Higgins 650) Movie buffs should check out this theater, where art-house movies play every Tuesday.

Casa del Arte (☎ 2234-985; cnr Chacabuco & Larenas) In the Barrio Universitario; screens movies and puts on plays. Call for show times.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Aeropuerto Carriel Sur lies just outside Concepción. **Lan** (☎ 600-526-2000; Barros Arana 600) flies from there to Santiago (US\$160), and also has a downtown office.

BUS

There are two long-distance bus terminals: **Collao** (☎ 2316-666; Tegualda 860), on the northern outskirts, and **Terminal Chillancito** (☎ 2315-036; Camilo Henríquez 2565), the northward extension of Bulnes. Most buses leave from Collao, and

many bus companies also have downtown offices. **Tur Bus** (ticket office Tucapel 530) and other companies run frequent departures to Santiago and Viña del Mar/Valparaíso.

Destination	Duration (hr)	Cost (US\$)
Angol	1½	5
Chillán	2	1.50
Los Ángeles	2	3
Lota	½	70¢
Puerto Montt	7	10.50
Santiago	7	8
Talca	4	5
Temuco	4	7
Valdivia	6	9.50
Valparaíso/Viña del Mar	8	13

TRAIN

For trains north, EFE has a bus transfer service leaving from Plaza España in Barrio Estación. Buy your tickets at the **EFE** (☎ 2226-925; Barros Arana 164) office. Travelers to Santiago or Temuco suffer the inconvenience of transferring to Chillán first via bus.

Getting Around

Aerovan (☎ 2248-776) runs airport minibuses for about US\$5 that will take you directly to your hotel.

Micros from the bus station run constantly to the center along San Martín (US40¢). *Micros* to Talcahuano (US50¢) run continuously down O'Higgins and San Martín or take the commuter train Bio-Trén (US60¢) at the end of Freire, leaving every half-hour.

Concepción has several car-rental agencies to choose from. One of the best value is **Rossetlot** (☎ 2732-030; Chacabuco 726), which has cars from US\$30 a day.

LOS ÁNGELES

☎ 043 / pop 166,500

This unprepossessing agroindustrial center is base camp for jaunts into Parque Nacional Laguna del Laja and upper Biobío. The best information can be found at **Automóvil Club de Chile** (Ricardo Vicuña 684). **Inter Bruna** (Caupolicán 350) changes money and rents cars. The **Museo de la Alta Frontera** (cnr Caupolicán & Colón; admission free; ☎ 8:15am-2pm & 2:45-6:45pm Mon-Fri) houses extraordinary Mapuche silverwork.

In town, **Hotel Oceano** (☎ 342-432; Colo Colo 327; s/d with breakfast US\$18/35) is unpretentious and colorful. You can eat or sleep very well at **Hotel**

Don Lucho (☎ 321-643; Lautaro 579; s/d incl breakfast US\$20/23.50), a fantastic, old-fashioned rambler dating from 1907. Try the *pulmay desencondado* (US\$4), a shellfish, sausage and poultry stew favored by locals. The best digs in the region are at **Hospedaje El Rincón** (☎ 099-441-5019; elrincon@cvmail.cl; Panamericana km 494; d incl breakfast US\$28), where German owners lavish weary backpackers with tranquility, comfy rooms and homemade grub. Arrange intensive Spanish courses, bike rentals and guided hikes to Laguna del Laja here. A substantial breakfast is included. Call to arrange a pickup from Los Ángeles or Cruce La Mona.

Other eats include **Café Prymos** (Colón 400; sandwiches US\$3), whose sandwiches impress, and **Julio's Pizza** (Colón 452) for generous Argentine-style pizza and pasta. Shoppers can head to **Las Brisas supermarket** (Villagrán).

Long-distance buses leave from the **Terminal Santa María** (Av Sor Vicenta 2051), on the northeast outskirts of town. **Tur Bus** (Av Sor Vicenta 2061) is nearby. Antuco-bound buses leave from **Terminal Santa Rita** (Villagrán 501).

PARQUE NACIONAL LAGUNA DEL LAJA

This **park** (admission US\$1.40) protects the mountain cypress (*Austrocedrus chilensis*), the monkey-puzzle tree and other uncommon tree species sheltering pumas, foxes, vizcachas and Andean condors.

The park's namesake laguna formed by lava from 2985m Volcán Antuco damming the Río Laja, but hydroelectric projects have sapped its majesty. The park itself, however, is ruggedly beautiful, its most striking feature Antuco's symmetrical cone. Trails are suitable for day hikes and longer excursions; the best is the circuit around Volcán Antuco, which provides views of both the glacier-bound Siererra Velluda and the lake.

Antuco and the national park became synonymous with tragedy in 2005, when 45 soldiers died on a training exercise in blizzard conditions. The incident remains a sobering reminder of the unpredictable destructive power of the mountains.

Near the park entrance, at km 90, is **Camping Lagunillas** (☎ 043-321-086; 5-person sites US\$12). **Refugio Digeder** (☎ 041-229-054; dm US\$10; ☔ winter) is operated by Concepción's Dirección General de Deportes y Recreación, at the base of Volcán Antuco. Take buses from Los Ángeles to Antuco (US\$2, 1¼ hours). Buses also leave for Abanico (US\$2.30, two hours) every two

hours. Conaf's administrative offices and visitors center at Chacay is an 11km walk.

PARQUE NACIONAL NAHUELBUTA

Pehuéns, up to 50m tall and 2m in diameter, cover the slopes of **Parque Nacional Nahuelbuta** (admission US\$3.20), one of the tree's last non-Andean refuges. Conaf's **Centro de Informaciones Ecológicas** is at Pehuenco, 5km from the park entrance. From Pehuenco, a 4km trail winds through *pehuén* forests to the granite outcrop of **Piedra del Aguila**, a 1379m overlook with views from the Andes to the Pacific. **Cerro Anay**, 1450m above sea level, has similar views; the trail, reached via Coimallín, is short and teeming with wildflowers and huge stands of araucarias.

The park is open all year, but snow covers the summits in winter. Pop your tent at **Camping Pehuenco** (campsites US\$9), with water and flush toilets or the more rustic **Camping Coimallín** (campsites US\$9), 5km north of Pehuenco.

From Angol, 35km to the east, the **Terminal Rural** (llabaca 422) has buses to Vegas Blancas (US\$1.70, one hour), 7km from the entrance, Monday to Saturday at 6:45am, returning in the evening at 4pm and 6pm. Buses Angol gives tours (US\$4.20) to Parque Nacional Nahuelbuta in summer. Check with the tourist office to confirm departure times.

THE LAKES DISTRICT

The further south you go, the greener it gets, until you find snow-bound volcanoes rising over verdant hills and lakes. This bucolic region makes a great escape to a slower pace. The Araucanía, named for the monkey-puzzle tree, is the center of Mapuche culture. Colonized by Germans in the 1850s, the area further south is a provincial enclave of stocking-clad grannies, *küchen* (cake) and lace curtains. So perfectly laid-back, you'll start to feel a little *sueño* (sleepy). Don't. Outside your shingled dwelling tens of adventures wait: from rafting to climbing, from hiking to hot-springs hopping, from taking *onces* in colonial towns to sipping mate with the local *huasos*. Hospitality is the strong suit of *sureños* (southerners), take time to enjoy it.

Rural roots still mark most city dwellers (about half the population), who split wood and make homemade jams as part of their daily routine. Unfortunately, the rocket-

growth of Temuco and Puerto Montt creates an atmosphere of crowded consumption. Seek out the green spaces bursting beyond the city limits. The isolated interior (from Todos los Santos to Río Puelo), settled in the early 1900s, maintains pioneer culture thanks to its isolation, but road building signals inevitable changes. This section takes in the IX Region and part of the X, including Puerto Montt, gateway to the Chiloé archipelago and Chilean Patagonia.

TEMUCO

☎ 045 / pop 250,000

One of Chile's fastest growing cities, Temuco is a center for regional business and a transportation hub. Developed and fast paced, it has few attractions, although it is the childhood home of Pablo Neruda. It's also the market town for surrounding Mapuche communities.

Orientation

Temuco is 675km south of Santiago via the Panamericana, on the north bank of the Río Cautín. Cerro Ñielol sits north of the city center. Residential west Temuco is a more relaxed area with upscale restaurants.

Information

Internet centers are cheap (US\$1 per hour) and ubiquitous, as are ATMs.

Casa de Cambio Global (Bulnes 655, Local 1) Change your traveler's checks.

Conaf (☎ 298-100; Bilbao 931, 2nd fl) Offers park information.

Entel (cnr Prat & Manuel Montt)

Hospital Regional (☎ 212-525; Manuel Montt 115) Six blocks west and one block north of the plaza.

Lavandería Autoservicio Marva (Manuel Montt 415) Soak your skivvies.

Post office (cnr Diego Portales & Prat)

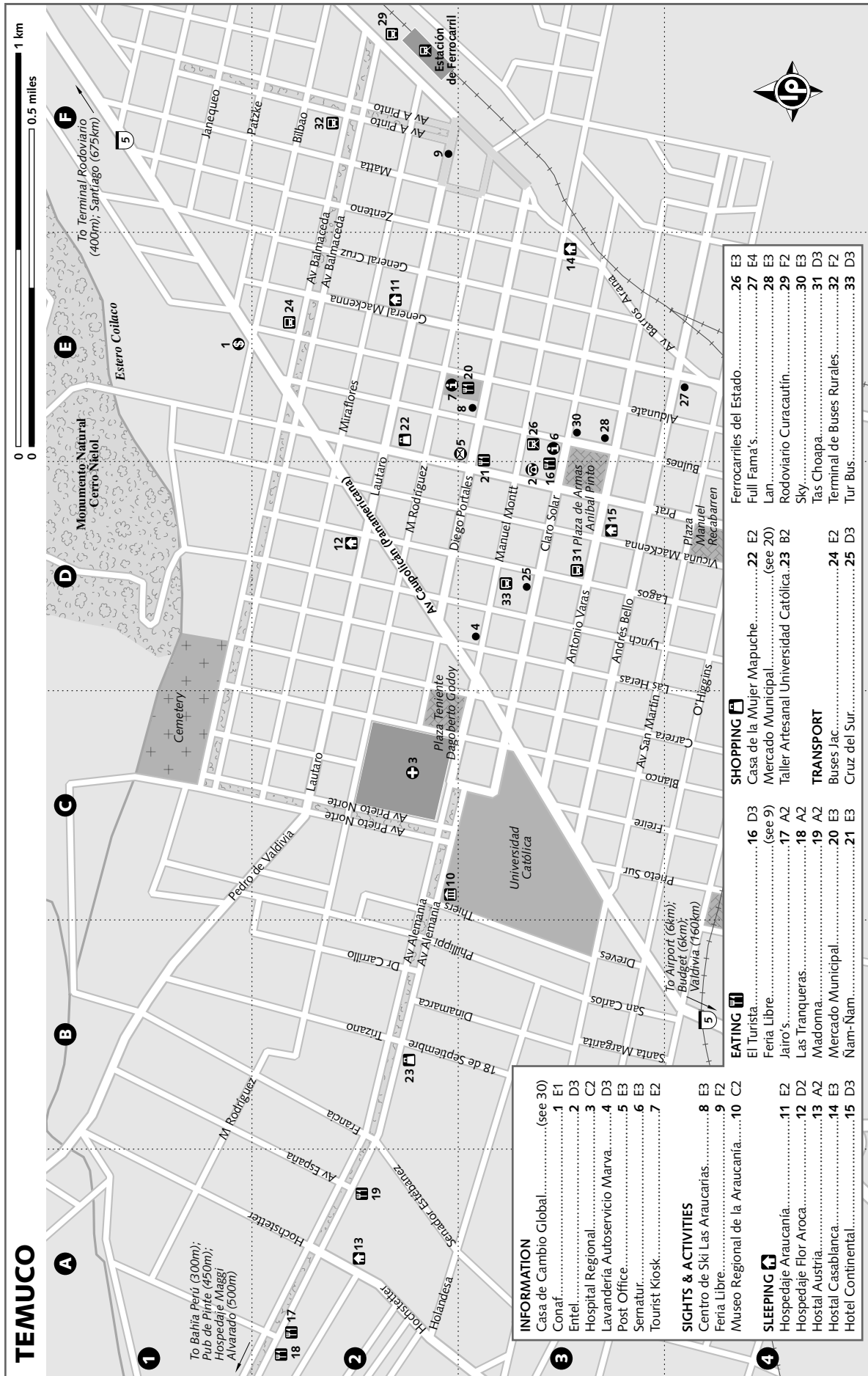
Sernatur (cnr Claro Solar & Bulnes) Helpful.

Tourist kiosk (Mercado Municipal) Has city maps and lodgings lists.

Sights & Activities

Feria Libre (Av Barros Arana; ☎ 8am-5pm) is a dynamic and colorful Mapuche produce and crafts market. **Museo Regional de la Araucanía** (Av Alemania 084; admission US\$1, Sun free; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat, 11am-1pm Sun) recounts the sweeping history of the Araucanian peoples. Take *micro* 9 from downtown or walk.

Salute Chile's national flower, the *copihue*, at **Cerro Ñielol** (Prat; admission US\$1.25), where



TEMUCO

0 0.5 miles 1 km

1 To Bahía Perú (300m); Pub de Pinto (450m); Hospedaje Maggi Alvarado (500m)

2 Plaza Teniente Dagoberto Godoy

3 Universidad Católica

4 Plaza de Armas 'Anibal Pinto'

5 To Terminal Rodoviario (400m); Santiago (675km)

6 Estación de Ferrocarril

7 Plaza de Armas 'Anibal Pinto'

8 Plaza de Armas 'Anibal Pinto'

9 Plaza de Armas 'Anibal Pinto'

10 Plaza de Armas 'Anibal Pinto'

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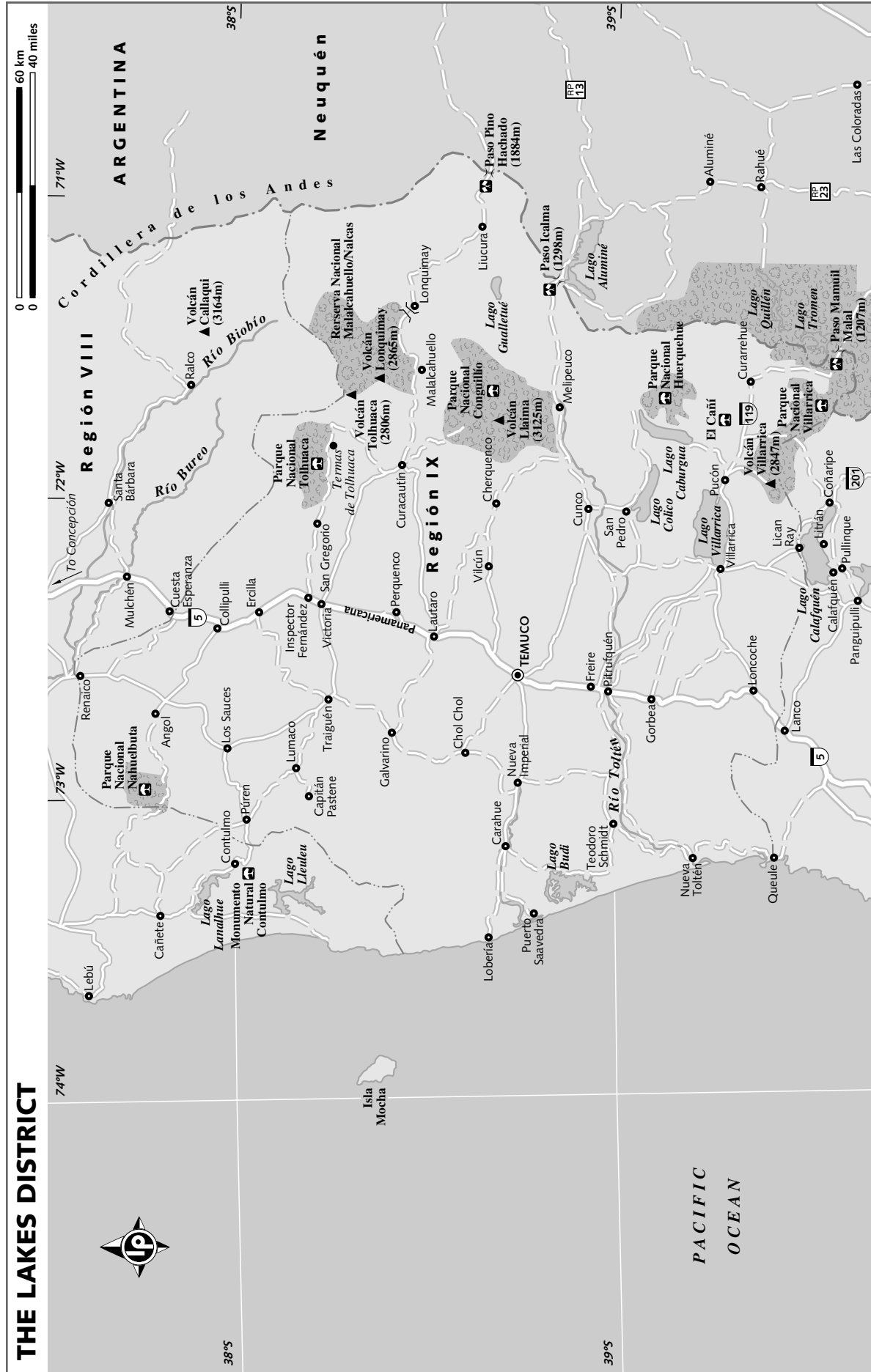
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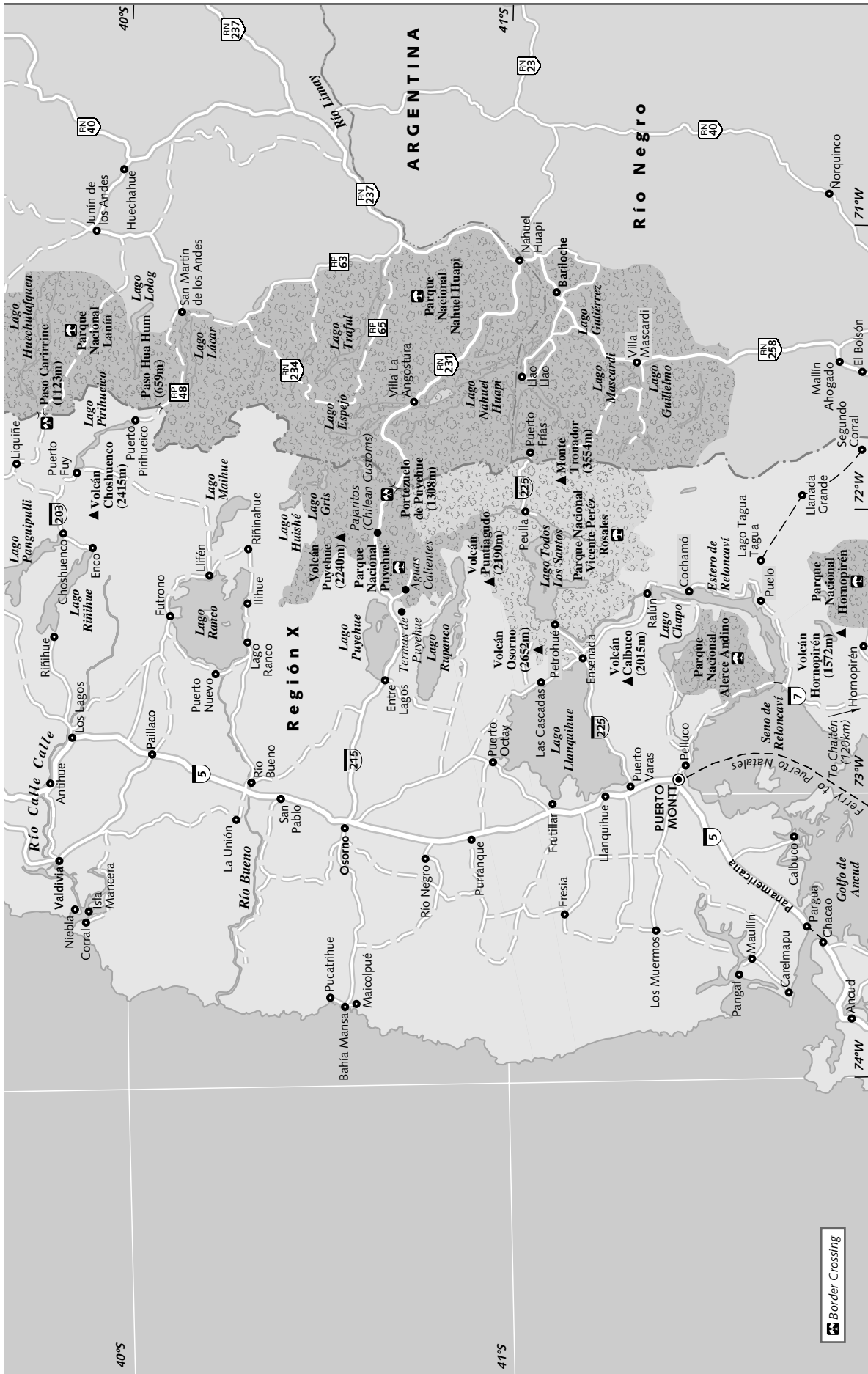
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CHILE

CHILE

THE LAKES DISTRICT





CHILE

there's trails and an environmental information center.

Sleeping

Fundamentally not a tourist town, Temuco proves a challenge for backpackers. Cheap digs around the train station and FERIA Libre can be sketchy, especially for women; the neighborhood between the plaza and university is preferable.

Hospedaje Maggi Alvarado (☎ 263-215; Recreo 209; r per person US\$8) Fastidious rooms and trip advice have this homey spot edging out the competition.

Hospedaje Araucanía (☎ 219-089; Gral Mackenna 151; r per person US\$8) A creaking old wooden house downtown, with a warm family feel and quiet rooms.

Hospedaje Flor Aroca (☎ 234-205; Lautaro 591; r per person US\$8) Spacious and cheerful and just off Av Caupolicán. No kitchen privileges; but breakfast is US\$2.

Hostal Casablanca (☎ 212-740; Manuel Montt 1306; s with breakfast US\$10) In a rambling old white building, Casablanca requires earplugs, but offers breakfast. Rooms with private bathroom (US\$16) have cable TV.

Hostal Austria (☎ 247-169; hostalaustría@terra.cl; Hochstetter 599; r per person incl breakfast US\$24-38; (P) (X)) A notch above your average *hostal*, this west Temuco house decks rooms in warm duvets. There's cable TV, a tasty breakfast and hot baths.

Hotel Continental (☎ 238-973; Antonio Varas 709; d US\$80-120) Reserve Neruda's favorite room at Temuco's classic landmark, with one of the best restaurants in town.

Eating & Drinking

El Turista (Claro Solar 839; snacks US\$2) Serves coffee with rich sweets and chocolates.

Ñam Ñam (Diego Portales 802 & No 855; sandwiches US\$3-6) Draft beer and heaping sandwiches net the student crowd. Enjoy the nonsmoking section.

Feria Libre (Av Barros Arana; ☎ 8am-5pm; mains US\$3.50) Cheap eats are diced and simmered steps from your bench at these simple stalls churning with activity.

Mercado Municipal (cnr Bulnes & Diego Portales; mains US\$4-8; ☎ 9am-7pm) Though a tourist cliché, you can't beat the *caldillo* (soup) and seafood platters at this cluster of restaurants.

Las Tranqueras (Av Alemania 0888; mains US\$4-8) Lamb, goat, roast pig and other grilled

favorites are served in this unpretentious locale.

Madonna (Av Alemania 0660; pastas US\$6-8) An easygoing local with chins dribbling cheese. Thirty pizza pies to choose from, plus mix-and-match pasta and salsas.

Jairo's (Av Alemania 0830; mains US\$8-12) An organ-grinder accompanies delectable *ostiones a la crema* (scallops in cream sauce) in Temuco's top seafood restaurant.

In west Temuco, many restaurants are also the place for drinks:

Pub de Pinte (cnr Recreo & Alessandri) With candlelit, folksy decor, cold draft beer and snacks (US\$3).

Bahía Perú (cnr Av Alemania & Recreo) For a dash of spice or ceviche (mains US\$8 to US\$11) with a splash of Pernod, this spot is unbeatable, attracting a lively, affluent crowd.

Shopping

Casa de la Mujer Mapuche (Prat 283) Cooperative selling indigenous crafts, most notably textiles and ceramics, benefiting nearly 400 local artisans.

Taller Artesanal Universidad Católica (Av Alemania 0422; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Fri) Sells quality silver reproductions of Mapuche jewelry, created by artisans and local students.

Mercado Municipal (cnr Bulnes & Diego Portales) One full city block with gleaming treasures hidden in the bric-a-brac.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Airport Maquehue is 6km south of town. **Lan** (☎ 600-526-2000; Bulnes 687) has plenty of flights to Santiago (US\$175, 1¼ hours), and daily flights to Puerto Montt (US\$80, 45 minutes) and Punta Arenas (US\$250, three hours). **Sky** (☎ 747-300; Bulnes 655, Local 4) has competitive rates.

BUS

Terminal Rodoviario (☎ 255-005; Pérez Rosales 01609) is at the northern approach to town. Companies have ticket offices downtown, including **Tur Bus** (☎ 278-161; cnr Lagos & Manuel Montt), with the most frequent service to Santiago; **Tas Choapa** (Antonio Varas 609), for northern destinations up to Antofagasta; and **Cruz del Sur** (☎ Claro Solar 599), which also serves the island of Chiloé.

Argentina is more easily accessed from Osorno. Cruz del Sur goes off-hours to Bariloche via Paso Cardenal Samoré, east of Osorno; Tas Choapa has similar service.

Terminal de Buses Rurales (cnr Avs Balmaceda & A Pinto) serves local destinations, such as Chol Chol (US\$2, 1½ hours) and Melipeuco (US\$3, 2½ hours). **Buses Jac** (cnr Av Balmaceda & Aldunate) offers the most frequent service to Villarrica and Pucón, plus service to Santiago and Coñaripe. The **Rodoviario Curacautín** (Av Barros Arana 191) is the departure point for buses to Curacautín, Lonquimay (US\$3.50, three hours) and the upper Biobío.

Destination	Duration (hr)	Cost (US\$)
Angol	2	34
Bariloche, Argentina	10½-12	20
Chillán	4	8
Coñaripe	2½	6
Concepción	4½	7
Cunco	1½	2
Curacautín	1½	4
Osorno	3	7
Pucón	1½	4.50
Puerto Montt/Puerto Varas	7	9
Santiago	8	10-35
Valdivia	3	4
Victoria	1	2.50
Villarrica	1	4.50
Zapala & Neuquén, Argentina	10	33

TRAIN

Santiago-bound trains leave nightly, stopping at various stations en route (economy/reclining seat US\$21/27.50, nine hours). Trains also head south to Puerto Varas and Puerto Montt. Buy tickets at **Estación de Ferrocarril** (☎ 233-416; Av Barros Arana) or at the downtown office of **Ferrocarriles del Estado** (EFE; ☎ 233-522; Bulnes 582).

Getting Around

From the airport, taxis cost about US\$5 to the city center. Bus 1 runs between downtown and the train station. From the bus terminal, hop on *colectivos* 11P and 25A. *Colectivo* 9 services west Temuco. Car rental is available at the airport with **Budget** (☎ 338-836) and at **Full Fama's** (☎ 213-851; Andrés Bello 1096).

PARQUE NACIONAL CONGUILLÍO

A refuge for the araucaria (monkey-puzzle tree), **Conguillío** (admission US\$5.50) shelters 60,835 hectares of alpine lakes, deep canyons and native forests. Its centerpiece is the smoldering Volcán Llaima (3125m), which last erupted in 1957.

The superb **Sierra Nevada trail** (10km, approximately three hours one way) leaves from the parking lot at Playa Linda, at the east end of Laguna Conguillío, and climbs northeast through coigue forests, passing a pair of lake overlooks; from the second and more scenic, you can see solid stands of araucarias offset coigues on the ridge top. A link of **Sendero de Chile** (18km, approximately six hours one way) connects Laguna Captrén with Guardaria Triful-Triful. At **Laguna Captrén, Los Carpinteros** (8km, approximately 2½ hours one way) accesses the awe-striking 1800-year-old, 3m-wide Araucaria Madre, the largest tree in the park.

Call to see which parts of the park are open from April to November since heavy snowdrifts may accumulate. In **Laguna Conguillío**, Conaf's **Centro de Información Ambiental** (www.parquenacionalconguillio.cl in Spanish) sells trail maps. The diminutive three-trail **Centro de Ski Las Araucarias** (☎ 045-562-313; www.skiaraucaarias.cl in Spanish; half-/full-day lift tickets US\$20/25) also has an office in **Temuco** (☎ 045-274-141; Bulnes 351, Oficina 47). Experienced skiers will trudge further up the volcano for a thrill.

Sleeping & Eating

The campgrounds at Laguna Conguillío all charge US\$30; options include **El Estero** (in Temuco ☎ 045-644-388) and **Laguna Captrén**, 6km from Lago Conguillío. Rates are heavily discounted off-season.

Centro de Ski Las Araucarias offers skiers **Refugio Los Paraguas** (dm US\$11) and **Refugio Pehuén** (dm US\$14, d US\$34-43). Dorm guests may need to provide a sleeping bag. Contact the ski center for bookings.

La Baita (☎ 416-410; www.labaitaconguillio.cl in Spanish; 4-8-person cabins US\$60-85) is an ecotourism project just outside the park's southern boundary, sitting in pristine forest. Six attractive cabins come fully equipped and include slow-burning furnaces, limited electricity and hot water. In high season, meals, excursions and a small store are available. La Baita is 15km from Melipeuco and 60km from Curacautín.

Getting There & Away

To reach Sector Los Paraguas, **Buses Flota Erbus** (☎ 045-272-204), at Temuco's Terminal de Buses Rurales, runs a dozen times daily to Cherroquenco (US\$2, one hour), from where it's a 17km walk or hitchhike to the ski lodge.

For the northern entrance, Buses Flota Erbus has regular service to Curacautín (US\$2.15, 1½ hours), from where a shuttle (US\$1) reaches the park border at Guardería Captrén on weekdays. From December to March, if conditions allow, it continues to Laguna Captrén. Heavy rain can prevent the movement of passenger vehicles between the lagunas.

For the southern entrance, **Nar-Bus** (☎ 045-211-611) in Temuco runs seven buses daily to Melipeuco (US\$2.50, one hour), where **Hostería Huetelén** (☎ 045-693-032) can arrange a taxi to the park.

VILLARRICA

☎ 045 / pop 28,000

Villarrica has similar scenery but less fluff, zip and bustle than nearby Pucón; it bloomed and faded beforehand and today remains a somewhat lackadaisical resort. On the southwest shore of Lago Villarrica, it was founded in 1552 and repeatedly attacked by Mapuche until treaties were signed in 1882.

Information

Banks with ATMs are plentiful.

Banco de Chile (cnr Alderete & Pedro de Valdivia) Has an ATM.

Hospital Villarrica (☎ 411-169; San Martín 460)

Oficina de Turismo (Pedro de Valdivia 1070; ☎ until 11pm in summer) Has helpful staff and useful leaflets.

Post office (Anfión Muñoz 315)

Telefónica CTC (Henríquez 544)

Turcamb (Pedro de Valdivia 1061) Exchanges US cash.

Sights

The **Museo Histórico y Arqueológico** (Pedro de Valdivia 1050; admission US\$1; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7:30pm Mon-Fri), next to the tourist office, displays Mapuche jewelry, a *ruka* (thatched hut), musical instruments and rough-hewn wooden masks. Behind the tourist office, the **Feria Artesanal** offers a selection of crafts.

Tours

Many of the same tours organized in Pucón (see opposite) can be arranged here; try the agency **Politur** (☎ 414-547; Henríquez 475) or fly-fishing operator **Süd Explorer** (Av Pedro de Valdivia).

Sleeping

Prices rise considerably in summer and during the ski season. The **Cámara de Turismo** (cnr Gral Urrutia & A Bello) lists *hospedajes*.

La Torre Suiza (☎ /fax 411-213; www.torresuiza.com; Bilbao 969; campsites per person US\$5, dm US\$10, d without/with bathroom US\$23/26; ☎ ☎) Loved by Europeans, it's a smorgasbord of clean dorms and stylish rooms in a well-kept older house. Attractions include a fully equipped kitchen, laundry and bike rental.

Hostal Berta Romero (☎ 411-276; Pedro de Valdivia 712; r US\$10) This elegant, understated home tends toward the noisy side. Perks include kitchen use.

El Arrayán (☎ 411-235; Gral Körner 442; s/d US\$16/24, cabins for 4 people US\$51) Welcoming and well run, with kitchen privileges.

More than half a dozen campgrounds dot the road between Villarrica and Pucón. The following recommended places both have reasonably private shady sites and hot showers:

Camping Los Castaños (☎ 412-330; campsites US\$18) One kilometer east of town.

Camping Dulac (☎ 412-097; campsites US\$22) Two kilometers east.

Eating & Drinking

Café Bar 2001 (Henríquez 379; sandwiches US\$2.50-5) A kick-back-and-relax spot with real coffee and fat, scrumptious sandwiches.

Hostería de la Colina (☎ 411-503; Las Colinas 115; mains US\$6-10; ☎ lunch & dinner) Imagine getting excited about soup? Ponder gazpacho, chestnut and Chinese carrot flavors...main dishes are locally inspired but there's the occasional lasagna or pot roast.

Travellers (☎ 413-617; Valentin Letelier 753; mains US\$4-8) Choose between oatmeal or wontons for breakfast from a globetrotting menu, disorienting in the land of bland and cheesy. Some will simply rejoice – the Chilean and Mexican fare *are* all that. In the evening sip a drink and chill to jazz.

Getting There & Away

Villarrica has a main **bus terminal** (Pedro de Valdivia 621), though a few companies have separate offices nearby. Long-distance fares are similar to those from Temuco (an hour away), which has more choices.

Buses Jac (Bilbao 610) goes to Pucón (US\$75¢, 30 minutes), Temuco (US\$4, 1½ hours), Lican Ray (US\$75¢, 30 minutes) and Coñaripe (US\$1.50, one hour). **Buses Regional Villarrica** (Vicente Reyes 619) also has frequent buses to Pucón.

For Argentine destinations, Igi Llaima leaves at 6:45am Monday, Wednesday and Friday for San Martín de los Andes (US\$20)

and Neuquén (US\$40, 16 hours) via Paso Mamuil Malal. Buses San Martín has a similar service, and both leave from the main bus terminal.

PUCÓN

☎ 045 / pop 21,000

A shimmering lake under the huffing cone of 2847m Volcán Villarrica feeds the mystique of village turned mega-resort Pucón. Summer time draws a giddy mix of families, adventurers, package tourists and new-age gurus to this mecca. Where else in Chile can you party and play slots till dawn, leave in time to start hiking the volcano (alongside 300 other enthusiasts) or sleep in, go to the beach or hot springs, drink a caramel latte, buy a gem-encrusted handbag, run into half of Santiago, get a massage, and sleep in a teepee? Something does exist for everyone here and, snootiness aside, the mix of international wanderers, the zippy social scene and backyard of natural wonders is often a blast.

Orientation

Pucón is 25km from Villarrica at the east end of Lago Villarrica, between the estuary of the Río Pucón to the north and Volcán Villarrica to the south. You can easily navigate town on foot: most tour operators and services are on the commercial main strip of Av O'Higgins. Restaurants and shops are along Fresia, which leads to the plaza. Slightly beyond the plaza is the beach.

Information

Exchange rates are better in Temuco but you'll find banks on Av O'Higgins or Fresia.

Ciber-Unid@D G (Av O'Higgins 415, Local 2; per hr US\$1) Get online.

Conaf (☎ 443-781; Lincoyán 336) Has information on nearby parks.

Entel (Ansorena 299) Call home.

Hospital San Francisco (☎ 441-177; Uruguay 325; ☎ 24hr) For medical emergencies.

Laundry Express (Av O'Higgins 660, Local 2; per load US\$1.75)

Lavandería Esperanza (Colo Colo 475; per load US\$1.75)

Oficina de Turismo (cnr Av O'Higgins & Palguín) Offers brochures and there's usually an English speaker on staff. Check out the colorful complaints book before booking activities, especially canopy.

Post office (Fresia 183) You can also call home from here.

Pucon (www.pucon.com) Useful internet resource.

Supermercado Eltit (Av O'Higgins 336; ☎ 7am-9pm) Changes US cash with reasonable fees and also has an ATM.

Activities

Regardless of how many people are milling about Av O'Higgins on any given day, with a little creativity you can always find a spot to explore and leave the crowds behind. Don't limit your ideas to the most popular tours – ask locals and resident expats for their picks.

The masses come to **hike** the smoking, lava-spitting crater of Volcán Villarrica. The full-day excursion (US\$40 to US\$60) leaves Pucón around 7:30am. There is no technical climbing involved and the ascent is frequently done by people with no prior mountaineering experience. A guide is recommended unless you are an expert with your own equipment. When you book a guide service, ask how they will handle a bad-weather day. Less reputable companies head up on a lousy day, just to turn back and not have to give a refund. Check for complaints with the tourism office and other travelers.

The rivers near Pucón and their corresponding rapids classifications are: the Lower Trancura (III), the Upper Trancura (IV), Liucura (II-III), the Puesco Run (V) and Maichín (IV-V). When booking a **rafting** or **kayaking** trip, note that stated trip durations include transportation time. Prices range from US\$10 to US\$50 depending on the season, the number of participants, the company and level of challenge. Rafting may be unavailable in winter when water levels rise.

Mountain **bikes** can be rented (US\$20 per day) all over town. Check shocks and brakes before renting yours. The most popular route is the Ojos de Caburgua Loop. Take the turnoff to the airfield about 4km east of town and cross Río Trancura. Bike shops should be able to provide a map.

Courses

Get fluent at **Pucón Language & Cultural Center** (☎ 443-315, 099-935-9417; www.languagepucon.com; Uruguay 306; 1-week group intensive US\$162), where you can also hook up with a homestay and free book exchange.

Tours

Outfitters include the following:

Aguaventura (☎ 444-246; www.aguaventura.com; Palguín 336) This spirited French-owned agency is on the cutting edge of rafting, kayaking, rappelling, canyoning and snowsports.

PUCÓN

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CHILE

Antilco (☎ 099-713-9758; www.antilco.com) Fifteen kilometers east of Pucón on Río Liucura; recommended horse treks in Liucura Valley.

Centro Ecuestre Huepil-Malal (☎ 099-643-3204; www.huepil-malal.cl; km 27 on Camino Pucón-Huife) A reputable equestrian center with excellent horse treks in the *cordillera*, run by a warm family.

Enjoy Tour (☎ 442-313; www.enjoytour.cl; Ansorena 123) A professional outfit with sharp new gear and attentive staff offering myriad excursions and airport transfers for US\$31.

Outdoor Experience (☎ 442-809; www.outdoorexperience.org; Gral Basilio Urrutia 952 B) Run out of an office adjoining jécole!, this small agency offers rock climbing, trips to el Cani and generally less-commercial trips run with expertise and an educational bent.

Sol y Nieve (☎ 441-070; www.chile-travel.com/solnieve.htm; Av O'Higgins 192) A dependable volcano and rafting outfitter, known to kick in after-rafting *asados* (BBQs).

Festivals & Events

Summer is a constant stream of cheer-pulsing proceedings, but don't miss these events:

Jornadas Musicales de Pucón An annual music festival held mid-January.

Triatlón Internacional de Pucón (Pucón International Triathlon) Early February.

Sleeping

Guests pay a premium to vacation in Pucón; you'll think some of these places are kidding with their prices. Listings show high-season

rates; they mercifully drop 20% off-season. If you're without a reservation, look for cheap, unregistered family homestays around Lincoyán, Perú and Ecuador.

¡école! (☎ 441-675; ecole@entelchile.net; Gral Basilio Urrutia 592; dm US\$8, shared r US\$16, s/d with bathroom US\$37/45) This local institution features a gamut of offerings: while the doubles upstairs are crisp and comfortable, some of the digs out back look like...garage living. Still, the potted plants, excellent vegetarian restaurant and general nature-loving vibe make it a positive place. The unheated dorms close in winter.

Hospedaje Victor (☎ 443-525; www.pucon.com/victor; Palguín 705; s US\$12; 📺) A budget standout, with practically new cozy wood rooms with bright linens and new fixtures. Well insulated and very welcoming.

Casa de Huespedes (☎ 442-444; www.dondegerman.cl; Pasaje las Rosas; dm/shared r US\$12/14; 📺) Take refuge in these sparkling, somewhat removed digs with blonde wood finish, with the same owner as Hostal Donde Germán. The huge checker-tiled kitchen with funky neon lighting sports a wood stove for cooking. It's by the bus terminal, a five minute walk to the action.

Hospedaje Lucía (☎ 441-721; Lincoyán 565; r per person US\$12) A respectful, well-kept home with friendly owners who also run fishing trips.

Hospedaje Irma (☎ 442-226; Lincoyán 545; shared r/d US\$12/35) Geraniums and velour couches set the scene of this very Chilean home, with shoe-box rooms.

Hostal Emanuel (☎ 442-696; Gral Basilio Urrutia 571; r US\$12, with bathroom US\$14) Touts 'the nicest *señora* in Chile,' whose rooms are dark but serviceable.

Hostal Donde Germán (☎ 442-444; www.dondegerman.cl; Brasil 640; dm/d US\$14/49; 📺) With a lounge-strewn lawn fit for putting, tasteful shared spaces, wood-finish rooms and fluffy duvets, this German-owned house pushes the envelope of hostels. The hefty charge includes internet access and book exchange.

Hostal Sonia (☎ 441-269; Lincoyán 485; r per person US\$16) A tidy little spot with miniature rooms in floral themes.

Hospedaje M@yra (☎ 442-745; Palguín 695; dm/s/d US\$16/18/32; 📺) A worn-out chalet offering a gravel lounge area and bunks in peach cobbler colors.

Residencial Graciela (☎ 441-494; Roland Matus 521; s/tr US\$24/39) Squat, scrubbed rooms with polyester curtains and a welcoming hostess.

Hostal Gerónimo (☎ 443-762; www.geronimo.cl; Gerónimo de Alderete 665; s/d incl breakfast US\$49/55; 📺) No *hostal*, Gerónimo has lovely rooms with tapestries on the stucco walls, reliable gas heat, terracotta-tile bathrooms and balconies to admire Villarica's smoking crater. Breakfast usually includes juice, eggs and *küchen*.

La Tetera (☎ 441-462; www.tetera.cl; Gral Basilio Urrutia 580; d incl breakfast without/with bathroom US\$43/57; 📺) While the decor could use some freshening up, spotless serenity rules this welcoming wood-paneled home and the staff is just great. The best breakfast in town.

Camping Parque La Poza (☎ 441-435; Costanera Roberto Geis 769; camping per person US\$5) The constant traffic passing this huge, shady camping facility diminishes its appeal, but there are cooking facilities, storage lockers and hot water.

About 18km east, off the road to Lago Caburgua, three campgrounds charge US\$10 to US\$12 per six-person site. Look for signs after crossing Río Pucón. There are more campsites between Pucón and Villarrica.

Eating

Splurge a little because you won't get gourmet food this good in the rest of southern Chile.

Rap Hamburger (cnr Av O'Higgins & Arauco; burgers US\$3) Try this place for quick bites, including cheeseburgers. It's open very late.

La Tetera (Gral Basilio Urrutia 580; mains US\$3-6) Breakfasts include muesli or eggs and fresh bread and fruit. Pasta lunches and tea time also satisfy.

Café de la P (cnr Av O'Higgins & Lincoyán; mains US\$3-10) A stylish café with prime people-watching, decent espresso and nice steak and provolone on baguettes.

Patagonia Express Café (Fresia 354; cones US\$4) Homemade tart and creamy ice creams, handmade chocolates and caramel lattes on the sidewalk – a very summery affair.

¡école! (Gral Basilio Urrutia 592; mains US\$4-7) The decor is Snow White meets Bob Marley and the food – Bengal curry salmon and spinach salad with sesame – is further evidence of fusion reigning, but it works deliciously. Look for occasional live entertainment.

Marmonhi (Ecuador 175; mains US\$4-10) Luxuriate with a slow lunch away from the bustle in this log home with crisp linens on the tables and garden seating. The regional cuisine is tops – including *empanadas* and *humitas*.

Arabian Café (Fresia 354; mains US\$5-9; 📺 lunch & dinner) The specialty is stuffed red peppers

with spiced beef but you'll find the hummus and tahini worthy of your attention at this authentic Middle Eastern restaurant.

Viva Perú (Lincoyán s/n; mains US\$5-13) Tip back the best *pisco sour* in town with a side of piping hot *yuquitas* (manioc fries) on the deck. Slick styling and a great, original menu but avoid the oily *arroz chaufa* (fried rice).

La Marmita de Pericles (☎ 442-431; Fresia 300; fixed-price lunch US\$7; ☺ lunch & dinner) Sincere service and skillful cooking make this worth the splurge. Consider trout in rosemary butter and a bottle of wine while Sinatra croons on the sound system.

Trawen (Av O'Higgins 311; mains US\$8-14; ☺ lunch & dinner) Pumpkin fettuccini, whole wheat pizza, fresh juice smoothies...if you are craving fresh and original then sit yourself at a worn wood table and endure the wait. A woodland mural and rock wall further promote the idea of Nirvana.

Senzo (Fresia; mains US\$8-16) The menu here has upscale traces (risotto with shrimp and tomatoes) but there's a slew of cocktails, cold drafts with squashed lemons, and options for patio seating.

Drinking

El Bosque (Av O'Higgins 524) Popular and geared to well-heeled outdoor types, El Bosque is crafted from local wood with a stylish wine bar and adventure sport DVDs on show.

Krater (☎ 441-339; Av O'Higgins 447) A dive bar for the slumming traveler.

Mama's & Tapas (Av O'Higgins 587) This bar with curves and iron stools hosts a hipster crowd. Take advantage of the weekday happy hour until 10pm.

Entertainment

Hotel del Lago (Ansorena 23) Offers a glitzy casino and movie theater.

Getting There & Away

Bus transportation to/from Santiago (US\$13 to US\$32, 11 hours) is with **Tur Bus** (Camino Internacional), which is east of town, **Buses Jac** (cnr Uruguay & Palguín), **Cóndor Bus** (Colo Colo 430) and **Buses Power** (Palguín 550), the cheapest (and least comfortable) option.

Tur Bus also goes to Puerto Montt daily (US\$10, five hours). For Temuco, Tur Bus leaves every hour and Buses Jac every half-hour (US\$3.50, two hours). For Valdivia, Jac has five daily buses (US\$4, three hours). Buses

Jac and **Minibuses Vipu Ray** (Palguín 550) have a continuous service to Villarrica (US\$1, 30 minutes) and Curarrehue (US\$1.20, 45 minutes). Buses Jac also has a service to Caburgua (US\$1, 45 minutes), Paillaco (US\$3, one hour) and Parque Nacional Huerquehue (US\$3, one hour). For San Martín de los Andes, Argentina, **Buses San Martín** (Tur Bus terminal) has six weekly departures (US\$20, five hours) stopping in Junín.

Getting Around

Daily car-rental rates range from US\$30 for passenger cars to US\$70 for 4WD pickups. Try **Hertz** (☎ 441-664; www.hertz.com; cnr Gerónimo de Alderete & Fresia). Taxis will negotiate prices to outlying areas. **Radio Taxi Araucaria** (☎ 442-323; cnr Palguín & Uruguay) can prearrange trips.

AROUND PUCÓN Río Liucura Valley

East of Pucón, the Camino Pucón-Huife cuts through a lush valley hosting a myriad of hot springs. The best value is at the end of the road: **Termas Los Pozones** (km 36; admission US\$6, 3hr max stay) with the six natural stone pools open 24 hours. Light some candles and soak under the stars. Arrange a transfer with a *hospedaje* or agency, or rent a car en masse and do the hot-spring hop in your own time.

Formed by citizens fighting off old-growth logging interests, the nature sanctuary **El Cañil** (km 21; entrance with/without guide US\$10/5) protects some 400 hectares of ancient araucaria forest. A three-hour 9km hiking trail ascends a steep trail to gorgeous views. Arrange to visit with Outdoor Experience or at the park entrance.

Ruta 119

Arriving at the Argentine border at Mamuil Malal, this route provides some off-piste pleasures. The quiet and colorful **Curarrehue** has Mapuche influences. The **tourist office** (☎ 197-1573; Plaza) has some info on activities and camping/hostels. Before town, **Kila Leufu** (☎ 099-711-8064; s/d US\$13/26) provides a fun countryside respite; learn to milk cows and enjoy a comfy night's sleep. Buses leave frequently to Curarrehue from Pucón (US\$1.20, 45 minutes) and Villarrica (US\$2, 45 minutes). There is also service to San Martín de los Andes from Curarrehue.

Traveling 5km northeast of Curarrehue, the rustic **Recuerdo de Ancamil**, on the banks of Río Maichín, has eight natural pools, including

one tucked in a grotto. There's camping and a few cabins. Another 10km, **Termas de Panqui** (day use US\$13) has serene hot springs and a spiritual bent. You can also have meals (US\$5 to US\$8) or stay in a teepee (US\$18) or hotel (room per person US\$27). For treks and climbing tours check out the **Lodge** (☎ 441-029; www.the-lodge.cl; excursion & lodging US\$100 daily). It's 24km northeast of Curarrehue but owners offer free pickups from Pucón.

PARQUE NACIONAL HUERQUEHUE

Rushing rivers, waterfalls, araucaria forest and alpine lakes adorn the 12,500-hectare **Parque Nacional Huerquehue** (admission US\$3.50). Only 35km from Pucón, it has easy access and a wide array of hiking options. Conaf sells trail maps at the entrance.

The **Los Lagos trail** (9km, three to four hours one way) switchbacks from 700m to 1300m through dense *lenga* forests to solid stands of araucaria surrounding a cluster of pristine lakes. At Laguna Huerquehue, the trail **Los Huerquenes** (two days) continues north then east to cross the park and access **Termas de San Sebastián** (☎ 045-341-961), just east of the park boundary. From there a gravel road connects to the north end of Lago Caburgua and Cunco.

Conaf's Lago Tinquilco and Renahue campgrounds charge US\$16 per site. **Refugio Tinquilco** (☎ 02-777-7673 in Santiago; www.tinquilco.cl; bunks without sheets US\$12, d US\$34), at the base of the Lago Verde trailhead, is a welcoming two-story wooden lodge offering French-press coffee and meals for extra (full board US\$12), or you can cook for yourself.

Buses Jac has a regular service to/from Pucón in the morning and afternoon (US\$3, one hour); be sure to reserve your seat beforehand. Otherwise join a tour or share a taxi.

PARQUE NACIONAL VILLARRICA

Established in 1940, Parque Nacional Villarica protects 60,000 hectares of remarkable volcanic scenery surrounding the 2847m-high Villarica, 2360m-high Quetrupillán and, along the Argentine border, a section of 3746m-high Lanín (shared with Argentina, from where it may be climbed).

Rucapillán is directly south of Pucón along a well-maintained road and takes in the most popular hikes up and around Villarica. (For volcano hike details, see p485.) Shortcutters can take the ski lift up partway. How's that for cheating? The trail **Challupen Chinay** (23km,

12 hours) rounds the volcano's southern side crossing through a variety of scenery to end at the entrance to the **Quetrupillán** sector.

Ski Pucón (☎ 045-441-901; www.skipucon.cl in Spanish; Gran Hotel Pucón, Clemente Holzapfel 190, Pucón; full-day lift ticket US\$31; ☞ Jul-Oct) is best for beginners but experienced skiers will find some nice out-of-bounds options. The lava chutes make some seriously fun natural half-pipes. Too much wind or cloud cover shuts this active volcano down; check conditions before you head up. Almost every agency and a number of hotels send minivans (US\$6 to US\$10, free with ski rental) up to the base lodge.

LAGO CALAFQUÉN

Black-sand beaches and gardens draw tourists to this island-studded lake, especially at fashionable **Lican Ray** (30km south of Villarrica) and more down-to-earth **Coñaripe** (22km east of Lican Ray). Out of season, it's dead. Lican Ray's **tourist office** (☎ 045-431-516; Urrutia 310), directly on the plaza, offers maps and accommodations listings. Coñaripe's **Turismo Aventura Chumay** (☎ 045-317-287; Las Tepas 201) rents bikes and has area information and tours. Coñaripe has access to rustic hot springs and other sides of the park that tourists rarely tread.

Sleeping & Eating

In Coñaripe, campgrounds by the lake are small, cramped lots charging a negotiable US\$16 to US\$20 per site. Try **Millaray** (☎ 099-802-7935) or **Rucahue** (☎ 045-317-210).

Hostal Chumay (☎ 045-317-287; Las Tepas 201; s/d US\$12/27) A great bargain behind the plaza with a restaurant serving set-price seafood lunches (US\$4).

Hotel Elizabeth (☎ 045-317-275; Beck de Ramberga 496; s/d US\$17/34.50) A two-story wooden hotel with room balconies and wafting smells from the downstairs bakery. Not for dieters – it also has a restaurant and chocolatería.

Services open year-round in Lican Ray include the following:

Hostal Hofmann (☎ 045-431-109; Cam Coñaripe 100; r per person US\$10) An appealing home with feather pillows and flower gardens.

Los Ñaños (☎ 045-431-026; Urrutia 105; mains US\$6-12) Excellent for *empanadas*, with decent seafood, meat and pasta dishes at inflated prices.

Getting There & Away

Buses Jac (cnr Urrutia & Marichanquín) goes often to Villarica (US\$1.50, 45 minutes) and Coñaripe

(US\$1.50, 30 minutes). Other buses leave from the corner of Urrutia and Huenumán. Every morning at 7:30am a local bus goes to Panguipulli (US\$3, two hours) via back roads.

LAGO PANGUIPULLI

At the northwest end of Lago Panguipulli, the town of **Panguipulli** is a main service center with an assortment of eateries and a gaping view of Volcán Choshuenco (2415m). The municipal **tourist office** (☎ 063-312-202; Plaza Prat), on the east side of the plaza, is helpful and has area information. At the lake's east end is the tranquil hamlet **Choshuenco**, with sweeping beach views. Further south is **Enco**, the access point for hikes on Mocho Choshuenco, the most accessible of the volcano's two peaks.

Sleeping & Eating

Playa Chauquén, south of town, is a beach area that allows a variety of camping. In summer a shuttle runs to and from the beach twice daily.

Camping El Bosque (☎ 063-311-489; campsites per person US\$5) In Panguipulli, 200m north of Plaza Prat, with 15 tent sites and hot showers.

Hostal España (☎ 063-311-166; jhrios@telsur.cl; Av O'Higgins 790; s/d US\$26/34.50) Offers homey rooms with private bathrooms in a family atmosphere. Breakfast is available and money can be changed here.

Girasol (Martínez de Rozas 664; lunch US\$5) Offers Chilean comfort food. Check out the creamy *pastel de choclo*.

Gardylafquen (☎ 063-311-887; Martínez de Rozas 722; lunch US\$5) Dishes up inviting fixed-price menus.

Getting There & Away

Panguipulli's main **Terminal de Buses** (Gabriela Mistral 100), at the corner of Diego Portales, has regular departures from Monday to Saturday to Liquiñe, Coñaripe (US\$1.50) and Lican Ray (US\$3, two hours); to Choshuenco, Neltume and Puerto Fuy; and to Valdivia (US\$3, two hours) and Temuco (US\$4.50, three hours). Buses from Panguipulli to Puerto Fuy (two hours) pass through Choshuenco and return to Panguipulli early the following morning.

LAGO PIREHUEICO

Follow the rush and tumble curves of Rio Huilo Huilo on this scenic route to San Martín de los Andes, Argentina. With 60,000 acres of private land, **Huilo Huilo** (☎ 02-334-4565; www.huilo

huilo.cl in Spanish; admission US\$1.50) is developing the area for low-impact ecotourism. The grounds include a fairy-tale spire-shaped hotel called **La Montaña Mágica** (d from US\$100) decked out in finery.

The **ferry Hua-Hum** (in Panguipulli ☎ 063-311-334) transports passengers and vehicles between Puerto Fuy and Puerto Pirehueico (1½ hours), from where land transportation departs, crossing the border at Paso Hua Hum and continuing onto San Martín. The ferry leaves twice a day in each direction from January to mid-March, and once daily the rest of the year. Cars cost US\$16, jeeps and pickups US\$25, pedestrians US\$1, and bicycles US\$3. Basic lodging is available at both ends of the lake.

VALDIVIA

☎ 063 / pop 127,750

The university city of Valdivia probably presents the hippest urban living in Chile's south, with its breezy riverfront, multiple universities, stacks of bars and restaurants, old architecture and modern attitudes. The city has a historic background as the seat of German immigration in the 1850s and '60s (which is why chocolate and beer abounds). It has known both splendor and disaster. Ransacked by Mapuches after its founding, it fell again when the 1960 earthquake obliterated much of it and sunk the coast 4m. A 2005 environmental catastrophe where some 5000 black-necked swans died from contamination from the Celco-Arauco paper mill drew local and worldwide outrage although the plant continues to operate. The environmental battle wages on (see www.accionporloscisnes in Spanish).

Orientation

Valdivia is 160km southwest of Temuco and 45km west of the Panamericana. From the Terminal de Buses, any bus marked 'Plaza' will take you to the center and Plaza de la República. Lodgings are within walking distance.

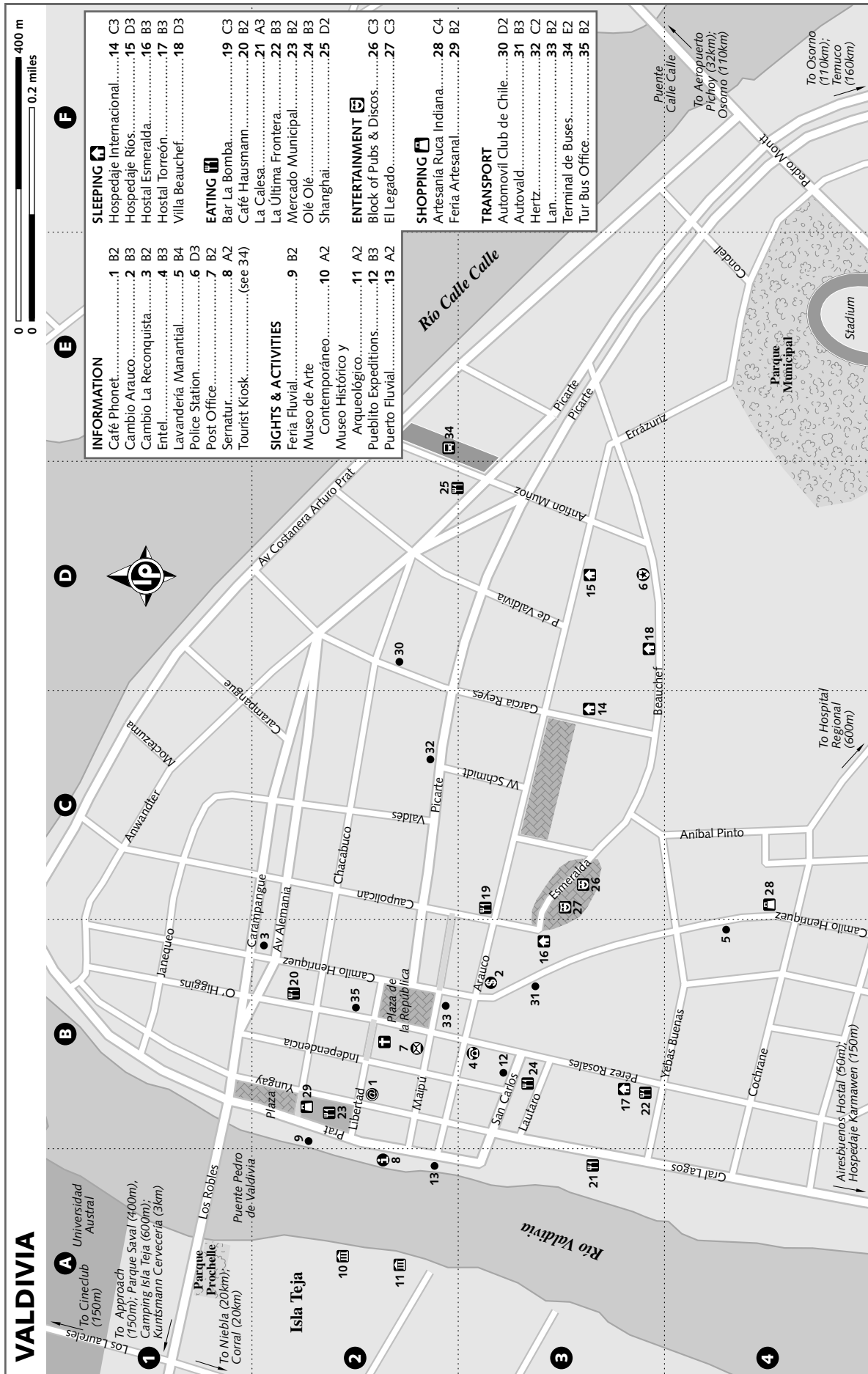
Information

Downtown ATMs are abundant, as are call centers. There is a tourist kiosk at the Terminal de Buses.

Café Phonet (Libertad 127; per hr US\$1) Internet with chat-happy long-distance phone rates.

Cambio Arauco (Arauco 331, Local 24) For money changing; open on Saturday.

Cambio La Reconquista (Carampangue 329)



Entel (Pérez Rosales 601) Call center.

Hospital Regional (☎ 297-000; Simpson 850; 🕒 24hr) South of town, near Aníbal Pinto.

Lavandería Manantial (Camilo Henríquez 809; per load US\$2) Scrub your skivvies here.

Post office (O'Higgins 575)

Sernatur (☎ 213-596; Prat 155; 🕒 8:30am-5:30pm Mon-Fri Mar-Dec, daily Jan & Feb) Sits riverfront.

Sights & Activities

Head to the colorful **Feria Fluvial**, a riverside fish and vegetable market, where sea lions paddle up for handouts. Across the bridge on Isla Teja, tiny **Parque Prochelle** can provide a piece of quiet. The excellent **Museo Histórico y Arqueológico** (Los Laureles 47; admission US\$1.25; 🕒 9am-1pm & 2:30-6pm Dec-Mar, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Apr-Nov) occupies a nearby riverfront mansion. Displays include Mapuche indigenous artifacts and household items from early German settlements. Nearby is **Museo de Arte Contemporáneo** (☎ 221-968; Los Laureles; admission US\$1; 🕒 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sun), sitting atop the foundations of the former **Cervecería Anwandter**, a brewery felled during the 1960 earthquake. Also on Isla Teja, shady **Parque Saval** has a riverside beach and a pleasant trail to a lily-covered lagoon.

Valdivia is the seat of German culture in Chile and a tour to **Cervecería Kunstmann** (☎ 292-969; www.cerveza-kunstmann.co.cl in Spanish; 🕒 noon-1am Nov-Mar, noon-midnight Mon-Sat, noon-7pm Sun Apr-Oct) certainly informs: this is real beer, some of South America's best. There's ample sampling and at night you can enjoy hearty German fare (pitchers US\$5, meals with drinks US\$12 to US\$15). Any bus or *colectivo* to Isla Teja (US50¢) can drop you off at Km5 on the road to Niebla.

Boat cruises (US\$22 to US\$26, 6½ hours) leave **Puerto Fluvial** and float the river confluence smattered with 17th-century Spanish forts. Save some bucks by taking *colectivos* (corner Chacabuco and Yungay; US\$1), either yellow or marked 'T-350', or *micros* (US80¢), to Niebla. From Niebla, ferries visit Isla Teja, Corral, Isla Mancera and Isla del Rey every half-hour from 8am to 8pm; each leg is US\$2.

For a more active approach, contact **Pueblito Expeditions** (☎ 245-055; www.pueblitoexpediciones.cl; San Carlos 188; kayak outings US\$29) to paddle the calm web of rivers or take a kayak course.

Festivals & Events

Noche de Valdivia, held on the third Saturday in February, is Valdivia's annual kicker, enlivened with decorated riverboats and fireworks.

Sleeping

During the school year the university crowd monopolizes cheap housing, summer has better options. The *hospedajes* near the Terminal de Buses are the cheapest but dingy.

Camping Isla Teja (☎ 225-855; Los Cipreses 1125; campsites US\$10-15) Good riverfront facilities in an apple orchard. It's a 30-minute walk across Puente Pedro de Valdivia, at the end of Calle Los Robles and Los Cipreses, or take Bus 9 from the Mercado Municipal.

Hospedaje Ríos (☎ 206-013; Arauco 869; r per person US\$10) You'll find ample, bright rooms in this creaky house, praised for its hospitality. The shared bathrooms could be cleaner.

Hospedaje Karamawen (☎ 347-317; esolisromero@yahoo.com; Gral Lagos 1334; shared r incl breakfast US\$12) Enjoy the personal attention and artistic ambience with tasteful rooms and an engaging and lively translator-owner. Breakfasts are excellent. English, French, German and Swedish are spoken.

Airesbuenos Hostel (☎ 206-304; www.airesbuenos.cl; Gral Lagos 1036; dm/s/d US\$13.50/29/35; 📞 📺) As agreeable as *hostal* living gets, with gorgeous wrought-iron details, spacious spaces and modern design in a 19th-century historical house. Staff is excellent and bike rentals, kitchen privileges and hot cocoa are yours for the taking. HI-affiliated.

Villa Beauchef (☎ 216-044; www.villabeauchef.cl in Spanish; Beauchef 844; s/d US\$14/24, with bathroom US\$20/29) A peach-bright old home with airy and light-filled rooms, flower gardens and a good selection of singles. Breakfast included.

Hospedaje Internacional (☎ 212-015; García Reyes 660; r per person US\$14) Travelers will find plain, kempt rooms, spotless bathrooms and an assertive staff at this German-run *hostal*.

Hostal Torreón (☎ 212-622; Pérez Rosales 783; r per person US\$20, with bathroom US\$24) Old-fashioned and elegant, it's a touch expensive but provides cozy respite on a rainy Valdivian day. Avoid the damper basement rooms.

Hostal Esmeralda (☎ 215-659; Esmeralda 651; s/d US\$24/31) A once-stately home with enough residual charm, it's convenient to the bars but for that very reason isn't ideal for light sleepers.

Eating

Café Hausmann (O'Higgins 394; cruditos & pies US\$1.50-5) A thimble-sized shop serving *cruditos* (carpaccio), strudel and *küchen*. It's a local favorite.

Approach (Los Robles 150; mains US\$4-7; ☑ lunch & dinner) An Argentine-styled place just over the bridge on Isla Teja, this popular and friendly restaurant is worth the short trip for its top-notch pizzas and pastas.

Mercado Municipal (Prats/n; mains US\$4-8; ☑ lunch) Fat plates of fish and chips or *choritos al ajillo* (mussels in garlic and chilies) are some of the specialties served in three floors of restaurants, overlooking the river.

La Última Frontera (Pérez Rosales 787; mains US\$4-7; ☑ lunch & dinner) Where the university crowd gathers under portraits of Butch Cassidy and Comandante Marcos to chat and feast on superb sandwiches, lunches, fresh juices and huge beers. This funky, restored mansion is a great place for an outing, open late.

Olé Olé (Lautaro 170; mains US\$5) Two tables, four chairs, one open kitchen assembling paella and delectable *empanadas*. Sangria is on the house when the Spanish owner tests a new batch.

Shanghai (Andwandter 898; mains US\$5) Students and townsfolk swear by the generous portions of Chinese *chaufan* (mixed rice) and attentive family service.

Bar La Bomba (Caupolicán 594; lunch US\$6) Old-time Valdivia, ripe with yesteryear nostalgia. Join the regulars for a *schop* or quick lunch.

La Calesa (Yungay 735; mains US\$8-15; ☑ lunch & dinner) Downright seductive, with sumptuous Peruvian flavors set in a sunlit room or riverfront deck.

Entertainment

Merrymakers should explore the block of pubs, restaurants and discos on Esmeralda (after Caupolicán); there's something for every taste and even for those without.

El Legado (Esmeralda 657) For live jazz on weekends this place is the best bet.

Cineclub (www.uach.cl) Offers art-house cinema at the University of Austral from March to February.

Shopping

Feria Artesanal (Mercado Municipal) Offers a selection of wooden handicrafts and woolens.

Artesanía Ruca Indiana (Camilo Henríquez 772) This is your best bet for Mapuche crafts.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Lan (☎ 600-526-2000; Maipú 271) flies twice daily to Concepción (US\$70, 45 minutes) and Santiago (US\$157, 2¼ hours).

BUS

Valdivia's **Terminal de Buses** (☎ 212-212; Anfión Muñoz 360) has frequent buses traveling to destinations between Puerto Montt and Santiago. Long-haul northbound buses leave early morning and late evening. **Tur Bus** (ticket office O'Higgins 460) offers many destinations. Buses Pirehueico and Sur Express access Panguipulli; Buses Jac accesses Villarrica (US\$3.50, 3½ hours), Pucón and Temuco. Tas Choapa and Andesmar travel to Bariloche, Argentina. Igi Llama goes to San Martín de los Andes and Neuquén once daily.

Destination	Duration (hr)	Cost (US\$)
Ancud	5½	11
Bariloche, Argentina	6	21
Neuquén, Argentina	16	43
Osorno	1½	2
Panguipulli	2½	1.75
Pucón	3	5
Puerto Montt	3½	6
San Martín de los Andes, Argentina	8	20
Santiago	10	20
Temuco	2¼	5

Getting Around

Aeropuerto Pichoy is located north of the city via the Puente Calle Calle. **Transfer** (☎ 204-111) provides a minibus service (US\$3.50).

Both **Autovald** (☎ 212-786; Camilo Henríquez 610) and **Hertz** (☎ 218-317; Picarte 640) rent vehicles. **Automóvil Club de Chile** (☎ 212-376; García Reyes 440) is also helpful.

OSORNO

☎ 064 / pop 140,000

Agricultural hub Osorno, 910km south of Santiago, is an access point to Parque Nacional Puyehue and a convenient bus-transfer point for crossing into Argentina. While mild-mannered and pleasant, there's little to seduce a visitor into dawdling here.

Orientation

The main bus station is in the eastern section of downtown, five blocks from Plaza de Armas. Many budget lodgings are one block north and one block west.

Information

Cambiotur (☎ 234-846; Juan Mackenna 1004, Local B) Change money here.

Conaf (☎ 234-393; Martínez de Rosas) Has details on Parque Nacional Puyehue.

Entel (Ramírez 1107)

Hospital Base (☎ 235-572; Av Bühler) On the southward extension of Arturo Prat.

Lavandería Limpec (Prat 678) Laundry facilities.

Post office (O'Higgins 645)

Sernatur (☎ 237-575; O'Higgins 667) On the west side of the Plaza de Armas.

Tourist booth (🕒 until 11pm) At the bus station.

Sights

If you're spending the day, check out the **Museo Histórico Municipal** (Matta 809; admission free; 🕒 10am-12:30pm & 2:30-5pm Mon-Fri, plus 11am-1pm & 4-7pm Sat Dec-Feb), an apt look at Mapuche culture and German colonization. Also worth a look is the Historic District near the Plaza de Armas.

Sleeping

Near the bus terminal budget hostels are plentiful, though there are better parts of town to stay in.

Camping Olegario Mohr (☎ 204-870; camping per person US\$4) On Río Damas' south bank, east of town, but the gate closes between midnight and 8am. *Colectivos* on Av Buschmann can drop you within a few minutes' walk.

Hospedaje Webar (☎ 319-034; renewebar@entelchile.net; Los Carrera 872; s/d incl breakfast US\$8.50/17) An artsy old rambler whose charms override a few sagging beds. The high-ceiling rooms are quite comfy.

Hospedaje Sánchez (☎ 232-560; crisxi@telsur.cl; Los Carrera 1595; s/d incl breakfast US\$8.50/17) While the exterior could use sprucing up, this corner building has a welcoming interior. The delightful owners provide breakfast and kitchen privileges.

Residencial Ortega (☎ 232-592; Colón 602; r per person US\$12; 📍) A backpacker perennial favorite with ample common spaces and cable TV in every room.

Hospedaje Puelche (☎ 238-065; hospedaje_puelche_osorno@hotmail.com; Barrientos 2456-E; s/d US\$17/26) A cozy option with firm beds and hot showers, out of the blowing *puelche* winds the *hospedaje* takes its name from.

Eating & Drinking

Líder (cnr Colón & Errázuriz) Supermarket next to the bus terminal.

Mercado Municipal (cnr Arturo Prat & Errázuriz) Has a line of lunch stalls serving inexpensive staples.

Entre Amigos (Local 2; plates US\$1.50-4) Try this place on the old butchers' row for seafood dishes and soups.

Café Migas (☎ 235-541; Freire 584; mains US\$2-5; 🕒 8am-9pm) A chipper café offering *empanadas*, pizzas and cakes, plus a US\$3.50 lunch special.

Pizzería Donnatelo (cnr Cochrane & Ramírez; pizzas US\$2-6; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Back-alley pizza pies, probably the best in town.

Club de Artesanos (Juan Mackenna 634; mains US\$2.50-7; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Ideal for a pint of local home-brew Märzen, this union house specializes in heaping plates of Chilean classics.

Salón de Té Rhenania (Eleuterio Ramírez 977; onces US\$4; 🕒 closed Sunday) An airy and light-filled 2nd-floor café with generous sandwiches and fried *empanadas*.

Shopping

Asociación Futa Huillimapu (cnr Juan Mackenna & Portales) Sells quality woven and wooden goods, supporting an association of indigenous women.

La Casa de Vino (☎ 207-576; Juan Mackenna 1071) The knowledgeable owners at La Casa de Vino give great suggestions on new Chilean wines.

Climent (Angulo 603) Specializes in camping supplies.

Getting There & Away

Long-distance and Argentine-bound buses use the **main bus terminal** (Av Errázuriz 1400), near Angulo. Most services going north on the Panamericana start in Puerto Montt, departing about every hour, with mainly overnight services to Santiago. There are services to Argentina daily and to Coyhaique, Punta Arenas and Puerto Natales (US\$41, 28 hours) several times a week, via Ruta 215 and Paso Cardenal Antonio Samoré.

Sample travel times and fares follow:

Destination	Duration (hrs)	Cost (US\$)
Bariloche	5	15
Coyhaique	22	30
Puerto Montt	1	3
Punta Arenas	28	41
Santiago	12	21-40
Temuco	3	7

Local and regional services leave from **Terminal Mercado Municipal** (cnr Errázuriz & Prat), two

blocks west of the main terminal, in the Mercado Municipal. Destinations include Entre Lagos (leaves from front of market, US\$2, 30 minutes), Termas Puyehue/Aguas Calientes (leaves from back of market, US\$1.50, one hour), Anticura (US\$3, 1½ hours), Pajaritos (US\$3, two hours) and Río Negro (US\$1, 15 minutes). *Colectivos* go to Entre Lagos all year, and to Aguas Calientes in summer only. To get to coastal towns, cross the Río Rahue to the bus stops at Feria Libre Ráhue or catch a *colectivo* on the corner of República and Victoria.

Getting Around

Automóvil Club de Chile (☎ 255-555; Bulnes 463) rents jeeps and cars.

AROUND OSORNO

Along the coast, **Maicolpué** is a great escape off the gringo grid. **Campsites** (per tent US\$4) are at the southern section of town. **Cabañas Rosenberg** (per person US\$12) has elfin, wood-shingled A-frames with views of the crashing surf. Trails headed south access pristine, near-deserted beaches.

On the southwest shore of Lago Puyehue, **Entre Lagos**, 50km from Osorno, is a restful alternative to Osorno. **Camping No Me Olvides** (☎ 064-371-633; camping per person US\$5, cabins per person US\$18), 6km east of town on Ruta 215, is a top-notch campground divided by pruned hedges. Lodgers can also stock up on breads and cakes here. **Hospedaje Panorama** (☎ 064-371-398; Gral Lagos 687; r per person incl breakfast US\$8) is brimming with fruit trees, and has friendly German shepherds. Beds have woolen duvets, and the breakfasts may include fresh pie, enjoyed on the back porch.

Another 16km east is **Termas de Puyehue** (☎ 064-232-157; www.puyehue.cl in Spanish; s/d from US\$98/104), a top-drawer hotel with hot springs (day use from US\$12.50). Trekkers can come and use the pools for the day or schedule a massage. From here, Ruta 215 forks; the north fork goes to the Argentine border, while its south fork goes to Parque Nacional Puyehue.

PARQUE NACIONAL PUYEHUE

Volcán Puyehue, 2240m tall, blew its top the day after the earthquake in 1960, turning a large chunk of dense humid evergreen forest into a stark landscape of sand dunes and lava rivers. Today, **Parque Nacional Puyehue** (parquepuyehue@terra.cl; admission US\$1.50) protects

107,000 hectares of this contrasting environment. **Aguas Calientes** (day use US\$5.50) is an unpretentious hot-springs resort. Conaf has an information center and collects admission here. **Camping Chanleufú** (4-person campsites US\$22) doesn't have hot showers, but fees entitle you to use the outside hot-springs pool and facilities.

Antillanca (lift tickets US\$26, rentals US\$18-26), on the flanks of 1990m Volcán Casablanca, is a small ski resort 18km beyond Aguas Calientes. Enjoy superb views of the lakes and volcanoes and the down-home ambience. Skiers are clad in mismatched thermals and antiquated gear – it's a far cry from nearby Bariloche. In summer a trail leads to a crater outlook with views of the mountain range. At the base you can stay at **Hotel Antillanca** (☎ 064-235-114; s/d in refugio US\$20/34, in hotel US\$35/48) with rustic and more mainstream options. Trimmings include a gym, sauna and disco – for those wild nights you might share with the pocketful of other overnight guests.

Anticura is 17km northwest of the Aguas Calientes turnoff and the best launchpad for more remote sectors of the park. Pleasant, short walks lead to a lookout and waterfall. **Camping Catrué** (2-person sites US\$8) has woodsy, level sites with tree-trunk picnic tables, limited electricity and decent bathrooms.

Two kilometers west of Anticura, **El Caulle** (☎ 099-641-2000; admission fee US\$12) is the entrance for the popular trek across the desolate plateau of Volcán Puyehue. While officially within park boundaries, the access land is privately owned. The admission fee is steep, but is used to maintain the free *refugio* and trails. Trekkers can stash extra gear at the entrance. The **Puyehue Traverse** (three to four days) starts with a steep hike through *lenga* forest and loose volcanic soil to a campsite and *refugio* with a woodstove and water. From there, trudge to the top of the crater or continue four hours to Los Baños, a series of riverbank thermal baths (not obvious; test the waters to find them) with wild camping. The trail continues to an impressive geyser field. The trail does continue north to Riñinahue, at the south end of Lago Ranco, although these trails are not maintained and may be difficult to follow. (Hikers report being charged to cross private land leaving the park as well.) Another hike, **Ruta de los Americanos** (six to eight days), branches off the Los Baños trail and loops around the eastern side of the volcano. Wild camping is possible.

Buses and *colectivos* from Osorno's **Mercedo Municipal** (cnr Errázuriz & Prat) go to Termas de Puyehue, Aguas Calientes (US\$1.50, one hour), Anticura (US\$3, 1½ hours), and Chilean customs and immigration at Pajaritos. Any bus heading to Anticura can drop off trekkers at El Cauille. In winter there may be a shuttle to the ski lodge at Antillanca; contact the **Club Andino Osorno** (☎ 064-232-297; O'Higgins 1073, Osorno). Otherwise, you'll need to arrange your own transportation.

PUERTO OCTAY

☎ 064 / pop 3000

Bucolic Puerto Octay linked Puerto Montt and Osorno via Lago Llanquihue in the early days of German settlement. Lovely and serene, it's a good alternative to its more touristy neighbors, although there's little more to do than count the cows. Original German buildings further transport you to colonial yesteryear. The **tourist office** (Esperanza 555) is on the east side of the Plaza de Armas. Ask for the map of the town's historic houses. **Museo El Colono** (Independencia 591) includes displays on German colonization and local architecture.

Camping Centinela (☎ 391-326; Península Centinela; family sites US\$16) will discount for just two people. Sites are right near the lakeshore with lots of shade. Backpackers flock to **Zapato Amarillo** (☎/fax 391-575; dm/d US\$11/25), on a small farm about 2km north of town. The hospitable Chilean-Swiss owners provide a separate kitchen for lodgers, veggies from the garden, excursions and bike rental. Lunch or dinner is US\$5. On the plaza, **Baviera** (Germán Wulf 582) has special lunches for US\$3.50, with vegetarian alternatives.

Puerto Octay's **busterminal** (cnr Balmaceda & Esperanza) has regular services to Osorno (US\$1.50, one hour), Frutillar (US\$1, 30 minutes), Puerto Varas (US\$1.50, one hour), Puerto Montt (US\$2, 1½ hours) and Cruce de Rupanco (US\$0.80, 20 minutes), from where Osorno–Las Cascadas buses can be picked up.

LAS CASCADAS

On the far eastern shore of Lago Llanquihue, Las Cascadas is a tiny settlement with a gorgeous black-sand beach. Grab a hiking map from the supermarket. The road south to Ensenada is great for biking, but prepare for strong sun and *tábanos* (horseflies) in January.

Canary-yellow **Hostería Irma** (☎ 064-396-227; camping per person US\$6, r per person US\$10), 1km to-

ward Ensenada, has patchy flower gardens and a wonderful hostess, whose father takes guests for hikes on the lower flanks of the volcano (looming large in the backyard). Rates include breakfast. The beachside campsite has tables and soft sand. Deals can be negotiated at **Camping Las Cañitas** (☎ 099-643-4295; 6-person sites US\$20), 5km down the Ensenada road. The complex has cabins; a 500m hike beginning behind cabin 7 leads to an incredible waterfall. Ask the caretaker for directions.

Buses Cordillera runs direct to/from Osorno five times per day. From Puerto Octay, there is a 5pm bus each weekday, leaving Las Cascadas at 7:30am.

FRUTILLAR

☎ 065 / pop 10,000

The mystique of Frutillar is its Germanness, the 19th-century immigrant heritage that the village pickled and preserved. To come here is to savor this idea of simpler times, float in the lake, eat home-baked pies and sleep in rooms shaded by lace curtains. It's cheaper to stay in nearby Osorno or Puerto Varas. Mature visitors enjoy Frutillar best, for many it is simply too still to stay for very long. However, the town grooves from late January to early February, when the concert series **Semana Musical de Frutillar** (www.semanasmusicales.cl in Spanish) brings international folk, chamber music and jazz to a magnificent modern amphitheatre on the lake. Midday concerts are cheapest.

The town has two sectors: Frutillar Alto is no-frills working town, Bajo fronts the lakes and has all of the tourist attractions. The **tourist kiosk** (Av Philippi; ☎ 10am-9pm Dec-Mar) is between San Martín and O'Higgins. Around the municipality, you can find the regular banks, post office and call centers.

Museo Colonial Alemán (cnr Pérez Rosales & Prat; admission US\$2; ☎ Tue-Sun) features accurate reconstructions of a water-powered mill, a smithy and a mansion set among manicured gardens. **Centro Forestal Edmundo Winkler** (Calle Caupolicán), on the spit of land north of town, has an 800m loop trail along which species of trees are identified.

Los Ciruelillos (☎ 420-163; 2-person campsites US\$10), on a peninsula at the south end of the beach (1.5km from Frutillar Bajo), has 45 fully equipped sites, a small sandy beach and fire pits. **Hostería Winkler** (☎ 421-388; Av Philippi 1155; dm US\$12) opens an annex to independent backpackers. Some roadside stands sell snacks, but

restaurant meals are pricey. Best-value grub is at **Casino de Bomberos** (Av Philippi 1065; meals US\$5). **Hotel Klein Salzburg** (Av Philippi 663; meals US\$7-14) is a smart choice if you're after *onces*.

Buses to Puerto Varas (US\$1, 30 minutes), Puerto Montt (US\$1.80, one hour) and Osorno (US\$1.50, 40 minutes) leave from Frutillar Alto. Inexpensive *colectivos* shuttle along Av Carlos Richter between Frutillar Alto and Frutillar Bajo.

PUERTO VARAS

☎ 065 / pop 22,500

Every summer this staid and manicured former German colony is besieged by visitors. Take in the pleasures of its small town formality, the prim grannies alongside backpacker hordes, and the arresting lake view of Volcán Osorno when the rains pause. With a swank casino, steady growth and ready access to canyoning, climbing, fishing, hiking and skiing, Puerto Varas aspires to be the Chilean Bariloche, though in reality it still is a sleepy place where Sundays are devoted to God and barbecue.

Orientation & Information

From the Puerto Montt airport, taxis cost US\$21. *Micros* shuttle back and forth from Puerto Montt's bus terminal (US\$1.50). There are numerous ATMs downtown.

Afex Exchange (San Pedro 410) Changes cash and traveler's checks.

Casa de Turista (☎ 237-956; Av Costanera) On the pier; is a private organization with information about its members.

Centro Médico Puerto Varas (☎ 232-792; Walker Martínez 576)

Clínica Alemana (☎ 232-336; Hospital 810, Cerro Calvario) Near Del Salvador's southwest exit from town.

Dizconexion (Santa Rosa 539; per hr US\$1.50) Has internet access with fast connections.

Entel (San José 413)

Lavandería Schnell (San Pedro 26-A; per kg US\$3) Laundry service.

Municipal tourist office (☎ 232-437; San Francisco 431) Has brochures and free maps.

Post office (cnr San Pedro & San José)

Sights & Activities

A stroll around town to see all that 19th-century German architecture is a worthy diversion. The colorful 1915 **Iglesia del Sagrado Corazón** (cnr San Francisco & Verbo Divino) is based on the Marienkirche of Black Forest, Germany.

A dip in the invigorating cobalt waters of Lago Llanquihue makes a good alternative to a siesta on a warm summer day. The best beaches are east of the center in Puerto Chico or along the road to Ensenada. If you're adventurous enough for that, consider rafting Río Petrohué's ice-green waters: descents down its class III and IV rapids start at US\$30. Canyoning provides yet another opportunity to submerge yourself in icy waters, this time in gorgeous waterfall canyons.

Those who prefer solid ground can try a number of **hikes**. Volcán Calbuco (2015m) offers a moderate hike; other trails can be accessed via Petrohué. **Climbing** Volcán Osorno (2652m) requires ropes and harnesses for the last two pitches. Outfitters charge around US\$170 per person in groups of three. The trip lasts 12 hours, leaving at 5am. In wintertime you can **ski** the volcano (see p500). **Canopy** is another way to glimpse the forest if your own dogs are too tired to walk.

Secret spots to cast a line abound. If you're serious about **fly-fishing**, contact a guide. **Oswaldo Anwandter** (☎ 099-869-3862; www.fly-fishingchile.cl) comes recommended.

Tours

Al Sur (☎ 232-300; www.alsurexpeditons.com; cnr Del Salvador & San Juan) The official outdoor operator for Parque Pumalín, with sea-kayak trips, as well as local rafting and ascents of Volcán Osorno.

Andina del Sud (☎ /fax 232-511; www.andinadelsud.com; Del Salvador 72) Offers the *Cruce del Lagos* from Petrohué to Bariloche, Argentina via ferry and bus.

Campo Aventura (☎ 232-910; www.campo-aventura.com; San Bernardo 318) Quality horse-riding trips from Cochamó (see p501).

Capitán Haase (☎ 232-747, 099-810-7665; Santa Rosa 132; cruise adult/child US\$30/20) Sunset cruises on a 65ft sailboat from late October to mid-April.

CTS (☎ 237-328; www.ctsturismo.cl; San Francisco 333) Tour agency for Volcán Osorno ski area, offering transportation to the mountain, canopy excursions (traveling on ziplines, tree to tree) and regional tours.

Ko'Kayak (☎ 232-424; www.paddlechile.com; San José 130) Reputable sea and river kayaking and rafting trips on Petrohué and Palena Rivers. French and English spoken.

LS Travel (☎ 232-424; www.lstravel.com; San José 130) Friendly, with good information on Argentina, tours and car rental.

Pachamagua (☎ 09-500-5991; pachamagua@chile.com) Professional canyoning outfitter with English and French spoken. Best canyoning in town.

Sleeping

Those traveling in January and February should reserve in advance. Elicit a discount off-season.

Hospedaje Ellenhaus (☎ 233-577; www.ellenhaus.cl; Walker Martínez 239; dm/s/d US\$8/13/24) Feather duvets and knotty pine make up for the fact that most rooms are absolute shoe boxes.

Offers kitchen use, traveler info and bike rentals.

Compass del Sur (☎ 232-044; www.compassdelsur.cl; Klenner 467; camping/dm/s/d US\$8/14/27/35; 🏠) Snug and stylish, this *hostal* with chalky pastel walls and an ample yard promises travelers some serious R & R. German and English are spoken.

CHILE

INFORMATION

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Casa Margouya (☎ 511-648; www.margouya.com; 318 Santa Rosa; r per person US\$14) Guests share these small quarters like family; before you know it there's communal dinners and a stack of empty wine bottles. Offers snug bunks, free internet, breakfast, kitchen use and discounts with local adventure tours.

Casa Azul (☎ 232-904; www.casaazul.net; cnr Manzanal 66 & Del Rosario; dm/s/d US\$14/29/39) Backpackers' delight: comfortable well-heated rooms, free wi-fi, kitchen use and a large garden with Japanese fish pond. The owner speaks German and English. Breakfast (US\$3) includes homemade muesli and yogurt.

Hospedaje Viola Optiz (☎ 232-890; Del Salvador 408, Depto 302; r per person US\$16) Old-fashioned and lovely, with a dear matron who will serve you breakfast in bed. Check out the bell collection and the cowhide sofa.

Canales del Sur (☎ 346-121; www.canalesdelur.cl; Pasaje Ricke 224; r per person US\$16; P) A tidy guesthouse on a quiet pedestrian staircase, with lace-curtained rooms and homey touches.

Guest House (☎ 231-521; www.vicki-johnson.com; O'Higgins 608; s/d/tr incl breakfast US\$45/65/85; P) No detail is left to chance at this American-owned inn: rooms are ample and luminous, with lovely furnishings, and breakfast includes real coffee and bran muffins. Unique extras include morning yoga, hydrotherapy and a massage.

Eating

Lider (Av Gramado s/n) Big supermarket with a broad selection. Across the street the Mercado Municipal has open-air vegetable and fruit stands.

Café Danes (Del Salvador 441; mains US\$3-7) Reliably good *empanadas* or *humitas* (corn tamale) are good choices amongst the typical café fare.

Dalí (Santa Rosa 131; tapas US\$4) Relax among art books and prints on red and gold cushions overlooking Lake Llanquihue. This sliver of a café offers velvety espresso, tapas and cheese plates.

Sushi Varas (Del Salvador 537; rolls US\$6) When you're overstuffed with *empanadas*, a *kanikama* roll with extra avocado makes a nice change.

Mediterráneo (Santa Rosa 068; pisco sours US\$6) With a menu that's a bit inflated, this lakefront spot is best for outdoor tapas and tart *pisco sours* on the deck.

La Olla (Av Costanera 1071; mains US\$6-12; ☎ noon-midnight) La Olla is known for Chilean seafood classics impeccably prepared and generously

served. The decor is all granny. Try *chupe de jaiva* (baked crab in cheese and cream) cooked in a clay pot.

La Cucina d'Alessandro (Av Costanera 1290; mains US\$7; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sun) Sicilian owner Alessandro creates delectable pastas and thin-crust pizza topped with arugula. Top it off with an espresso and tiramisu in this relaxed lakefront setting.

Govinda (Santa Rosa 218; mains US\$9) More than food, it's a philosophy. With yoga, tai-chi and massage on-site, this new restaurant attends to body and mind, but some offerings lack the intrigue of their description.

Drinking

Puerto Café (Del Salvador 328) Devour Chilean gossip rags while sipping a *cortado* (coffee with milk) on a billowy couch.

El Barómetro (Walker Martínez 584) Travelers and locals happily mix in this quirky local institution with quality beers on tap and tasty appetizers.

El Garage (Walker Martínez 220; ☎ 2pm-4am) This bar mixes live jazz and fusion 'til the wee hours on long summer nights.

Entertainment

Casino de Puerto Varas (Del Salvador 21; ☎ 24hr) A posh ambience with great views and cocktails, where out-of-towners come to spend money and console their losses with shrimp cocktail and live entertainment.

Getting There & Away

BOAT

The tourist cash-cow of *Cruce de Lagos* (US\$170, eight hours) herds visitors across Lago Todos Los Santos and the Andes to Bariloche, Argentina (p136) through a combination of ferries and buses. It's truly spectacular on a sunny day (never guaranteed). The independently minded would do as well to find similarly stunning vistas on their own.

Andina del Sud (☎ 232-511; www.cruce Lagos.cl; Del Salvador 72) makes reservations, it also has a **Puerto Montt** (☎ 257-797; A Varas 437) branch. Bring along victuals, as offerings on board are slim. Student discounts may apply. Departures are limited in the off-season.

BUS & MICRO

Most long-distance buses originate in Puerto Montt. Buses leave from terminals on the perimeter of town. The **Turbus** (☎ 234-525; Del

Salvador 1093) terminal houses Turbus, JAC, Intersur, Tas Choapa and Condor bus lines. **Cruz del Sur** (San Francisco 1317), at the bus terminal, has most departures, including to Chiloé and Punta Arenas. It also has an **office** (Walker Martínez 230) in town. Also check out **Tur Bus** (San Pedro 210). For Santiago, Tur Bus, **Tas Choapa** (Walker Martínez 227) and **Buses Inter** (San Pedro 210) have nightly departures.

For Bariloche, Argentina, Tas Choapa leaves Monday and Saturday, while Cruz del Sur leaves every day. Minibuses to/from Ensenada (US\$1.50) and Petrohué (US\$3) leave frequently in summer and thrice daily in the off-season from along Del Salvador, where minibuses to Puerto Montt (US\$1, 30 minutes), Frutillar (40 minutes) and Puerto Octay (one hour) also depart frequently. Take buses to Ralún and Cochamó from the corner of Walker Martínez and San Bernardo.

TRAIN

Service with **Empresa de los Ferrocarriles de Estado** (☎ 232-210; www.efe.cl; Klenner s/n) has returned. Trains run south to Puerto Montt (US\$1, 21 minutes) and north to Temuco (US\$7, 5½ hours) with connections to Santiago. Check the website for summer/winter schedules.

ENSENADA

Bendy Ruta 225 is a quaint country lane dotted with beaches and topped with the megaphone protrusion of Volcán Osorno. Horse stables **Quinta del Lago** (☎ 099-138-6382; km 25; rides per hr US\$12) guides horse treks up the flanks of Volcán Calbulco. Rafting outfitter **Ko'Kayak** (☎ 232-424; www.paddlechile.com; San José 130, Puerto Varas) has its base camp at km 40 and lodgings at the rural **Casa Ko** (☎ 099-699-9850; per person without/with bathroom US\$24/27.50), a sweet old farmhouse with walks and fishing out the back door. Arrange transportation there from the Ko'Kayak base or call ahead. **Camping Montaña** (☎ 065-235-285; camping per person US\$5) is in front of the police station. Next door, **Terra Sur** (☎ 065-260-308; www.osorno-tours.com; km 44; bike rental per day US\$12) rents quality mountain bikes with shocks, provides vehicle support or simply guides the way. Between October and May you can stop by **Hotel Ensenada** (km 44) for a drink or snack. Browsing this grand old rambler, with its massive collection of valises, memorabilia, old farm equipment, slanting floors and long white corridors, is like entering an antiquarian's *The Shining*.

PARQUE NACIONAL VICENTE PERÉZ ROSALES

A long emerald lake ringed by steep Valdivian rainforest and volcanoes, Chile's first **national park** protects 251,000 hectares including Lago Todos Los Santos and snowtipped volcanoes Osorno, Puntiagudo (2190m) and Monte Tronador (3554m). Ruta 225 ends in Petrohué, 50km east of Puerto Varas, where there's park access. Minibuses from Puerto Varas are frequent in summer, but limited to twice daily the rest of the year.

Waterfalls boom over basalt rock at **Salto del Petrohué** (admission US\$2), 6km before the village. **Petrohué** has beaches, trailheads and the dock for *Cruce de Lagos* (see p499) departures to Peulla. The grand **Hotel Petrohué** (☎ 065-258-042; www.petrohue.com; s/d US\$130/170; P 🚰) has fires crackling in inviting spaces accented with rocks and wooden beams. Lunch is available (US\$10 to US\$14). If luxury isn't in the budget, pay one of the boatmen (US\$1) to cross you to **Hospedaje Kuschel** (campsites/r per person US\$5/16) where you'll be camping with the cowpies, if you don't score one of the few rooms available. Bring provisions from Puerto Varas.

From Hotel Petrohué a dirt track leads to **Playa Larga**, a long black-sand beach, from where **Sendero Los Alerces** heads west to meet up with **Sendero La Picada**. The sandy track climbs to Volcán Osorno's Paso Desolación, with scintillating panoramas of the lake, Volcán Puntiagudo and Monte Tronador. There is no road around the lake, making the interior trails inaccessible to foot travel. Those willing to hire a boat (US\$40 one way – and make sure it's seaworthy) or join a hiking tour can access the luxuriant **Termas de Callao** hot springs, where there's camping or other incredible trails. **Expediciones Petrohué** (☎ 065-212-025; www.Petrohué.com), affiliated with and next to the hotel, leads excursions into the area.

Access to climb or ski **Volcán Osorno** is near Ensenada. Ski area **Volcán Osorno** (☎ 065-233-445; www.volcanosorno.cl; lift tickets per half/whole day US\$20/27, students US\$16) has two lifts on 600 hectares and lovely out-of-bounds skiing for experts (watch for crevasses). The rustic **Refugio Teski Ski Club** (☎ 099-700-0370; dm US\$14; 🗓 year-round) is perched mid-mountain, with sick views and little dormitory bunk slots (bring a sleeping bag for extra warmth). Mamita and Papito warmly attend guests. Breakfast (US\$6), lunch and dinner (both US\$9) are served. Climbing equipment can be rented here.

To get to the ski area and *refugio*, take the Ensenada–Puerto Octay road to a signpost 3km from Ensenada and continue 9km up the lateral. In Puerto Varas CTS arranges shuttle transportation.

RÍO PUELO VALLEY

A corkscrew road skirting Seno Reloncaví leads you to the petite village of **Cochamó**, with its *alerce*-shingled **Iglesia Parroquial María Inmaculada**, built in the Chilote style. Like a country lass of modest charms, the Río Puelo valley remains unfazed by that massive industry called tourism, offering a few homespun adventures.

Campo Aventura (☎ 065-232-910; www.campo-aventura.com; San Bernardo 318, Puerto Varas; campsites US\$4.50, r per person incl breakfast and dinner US\$44; 📅 October 1–April 15) offers top-notch horse treks through the upper Río Cochamó Valley and can recommend reliable local independent guides at low costs. Its snug lodge will also take overnight visitors and passersby can dine on delectable meals (breakfast US\$5 to US\$8, lunch US\$12, dinner US\$15) at the vegetarian-friendly restaurant. From here, prepared long-distance trekkers can explore the marvels of the granite-domed valley. In town, **Hospedaje Edicar** (☎ 065-216-256; cnr Av Prat & Sargento Aldea; r per person US\$12) has firm beds and balcony vistas.

Río Puelo, 26km down the road, is a quiet, rain-damp village with the **Municipalidad de Cochamó** (☎ 065-350-271, 099-949-4425; www.cochamo.cl; plaza). Azucena Calderón is the helpful repre-

SPLURGE!

Butch Cassidy and Sundance did it; now you can too. Pack your harmonica and a rain poncho for this stunning crossing of the Andes. Experienced outfitter **Opentavel** (☎ in Puerto Montt 65-260-524; www.open-travel.cl) leads treks and rides on narrow trails that skirt frothy waterfalls and lakes, wading through icy rivers up to remote farms. Guests stay with pioneer families, eat bread hot from wood ovens and berries off the bush. A night on an island inhabited by one is the sweet finale. English, French and Spanish is spoken. Start or end in El Bolson, Argentina or Puerto Montt, Chile. Tailor treks start at US\$500 per person for four days/three nights, four-person minimum.

sentative of the tourist office. She can present (in patient Spanish) options for local treks, rustic family lodgings and guides. Most trips start in Llanada Grande and take different routes along the valley (see left). Hard-core hikers should seek out the amicable services of Lolo Escobar for an unforgettable five-day round-trip to the Ventisquero Glacier near Segundo Corral. Ask for the Cochamó hiking map and brochure. **Victor Baccaro** (☎ 099-138-2310; info@andespatagonia.cl) offers reliable mountain-guide services (hikes from US\$118) in Río Puelo and is developing geodesic dome lodgings.

Buses Fierro has five daily departures to/from Puerto Montt (US\$6, four hours), stopping in Puerto Varas, Ensenada and Cochamó.

PUERTO MONTT

☎ 065 / pop 160,000

A grinding hub of commerce and industry, Puerto Montt is one of the fastest growing cities on the continent, thanks to the salmon industry. For travelers it is a spring board to Patagonia.

Orientation

Sitting 1020km south of Santiago, Puerto Montt's downtown stretches along the sea. The waterfront Av Diego Portales turns into Av Angelmó as it heads west to the small fishing and ferry port of Angelmó. To the east it continues to the bathing resort of Pelluco, connecting with the Carretera Austral. At night the area around the bus terminal harbors petty crime; take precautions and don't walk alone here or along the waterfront.

Information

Internet places line Av Angelmó and ring the plaza. ATMs abound.

Afex (Av Diego Portales 516) For money exchange.

Arco Iris (San Martín 232; per load US\$1) Laundry can be done here.

Banco de Chile (cnr Pedro Montt & Av Diego Portales) Has an ATM.

Hospital Regional (☎ 261-134; Seminario; 🕒 24hr) Near the intersection with Décima Región.

Latin Star (Av Angelmó 1672; per hr US\$1) Internet; also has a cheap call center and book exchange.

Municipal tourist office (Varas & O'Higgins) In a kiosk across from the plaza.

Post office (Rancagua 126)

Sernatur (Plaza de Armas) The tourist office is only slightly more helpful.

Sights & Activities

The town's oldest building is the 1856 *alerce* **Iglesia Catedral** (Urmeneta s/n) on the Plaza de Armas. The **Casa del Arte Diego Rivera** (☎ 261-817; Quillota 116; admission free; 🕒 10am-1pm & 3-9pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) has art and photo exhibits upstairs. The downstairs room offers theater, dance and film.

The waterfront **Museo Juan Pablo II** (Av Diego Portales 991; admission US\$50¢; 🕒 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun) has displays ranging from history and archaeology to religious iconography, German colonization and local urbanism.

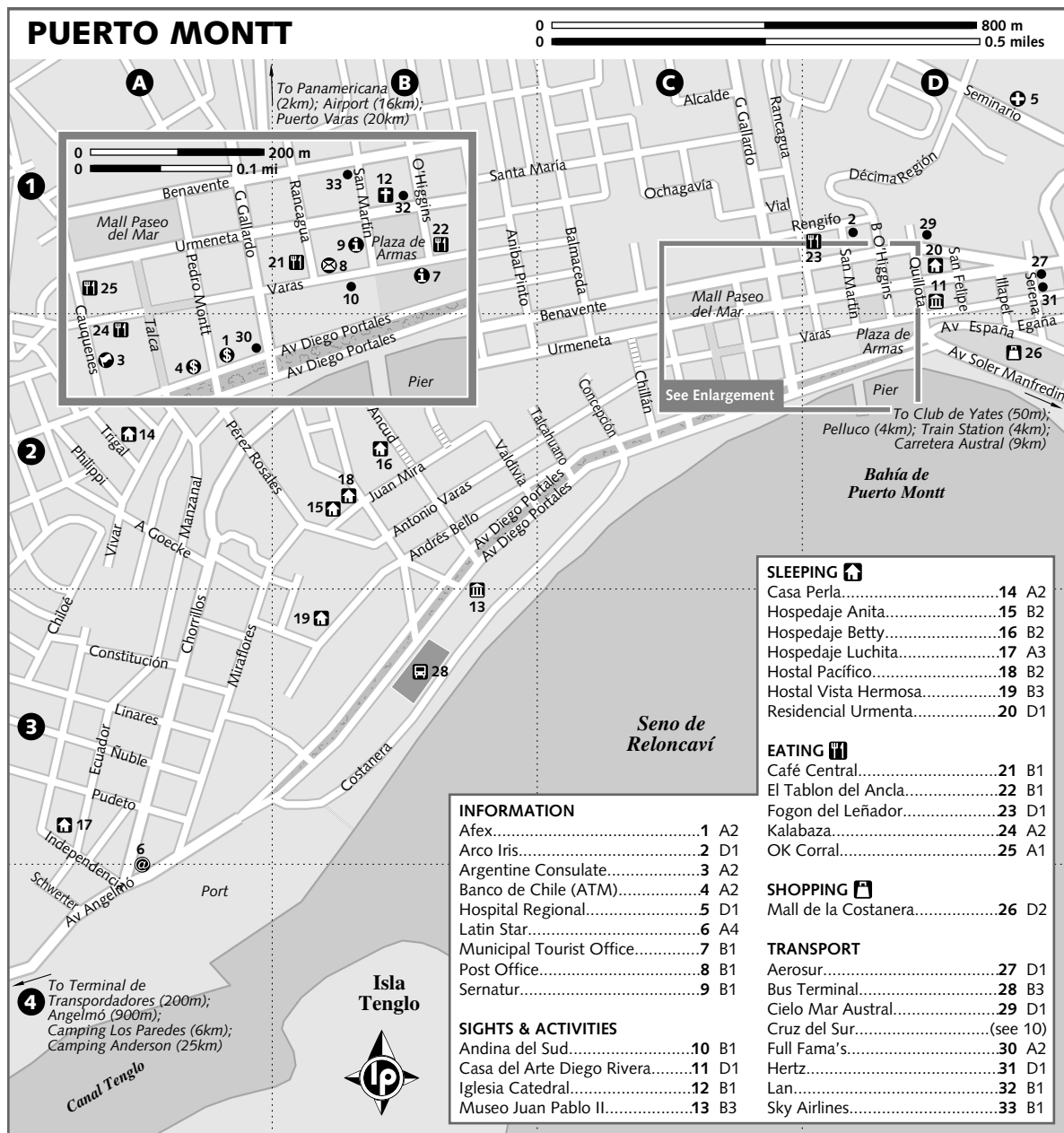
Streetside stalls line busy and exhaust-ridden Av Angelmó; their prices go up every time a cruise ship docks at port. Take in their disheveled stacks of woollens, woodcarvings

and trinkets. At the end of the strip are *palafitos* (stilted homes on the water), an excellent fish market and more crafts in the picturesque fishing port of Angelmó, 3km west. Offshore Isla Tenglo, reached by inexpensive launches from the docks at Angelmó, is a favorite local beach spot and not a bad place for a picnic.

Sleeping

Travelers find wider choices in tourist-ready Puerto Varas up the road, but there are a few good options here.

Camping Anderson (☎ 099-517-7222; www.chipsites.com/camping/; Panitao, Km 20; campsites US\$5) An ecologically minded campground right on the bay, on the road to Panitao. Paupers can work for their lodgings, although we didn't ask if



this means latrines... Buses Bohle makes the 20km trip from Puerto Montt's bus terminal to Panitao (six times daily, except Sunday).

Camping Los Paredes (☎ 258-394; campsites US\$14) Pleasant sites with hot showers; backpackers might bargain for deals. Located 6km west of town on the road to Chinquihue; local buses from the bus terminal can stop at the entrance.

Hospedaje Anita (☎ 315-479; Juan Mira 1094; r per person US\$8) Easily confused with a rectory, this place is simple and the slightest bit shabby.

Hospedaje Luchita (☎ 253-762; Independencia 236; r per person US\$12) The generous Doña Luchita will likely serve you a slice of *küchen* before you've sat down in this sweet family home with waxed floors and neat little rooms.

Hospedaje Betty (☎ 253-165; Ancud 117; r per person without/with bathroom US\$12/14) Rose-colored shingles, a sprawling old-fashioned kitchen and pastel rooms with sheer curtains cozy it up; the hostess is wonderful too.

Hostal Vista Hermosa (☎ 255-859; Miramar 1486; r per person US\$12) The paint is chipped and the rugs worn bare but this *alerce*-shingled house is warm and well attended.

Casa Perla (☎ 262-104; www.casaperla.com; Trigal 312; s/d US\$12/24; 📺) A tidy and relaxed family residence that can link you with Spanish classes and kayak trips.

Residencial Urmenta (☎ 253-262; Urmenta 290; s/d without bathroom US\$17/26) A well-kept dinosaur with mint-colored walls, soft sheets, immense bathrooms and a farmhouse kitchen.

Hostal Pacífico (☎ 256-229; www.hostalpacifico.cl; Juan Mira 1088; s/d US\$29/45) Bulky beds fill these well-kept hotel rooms with clean wood finish and sparkling private bathrooms.

Eating & Drinking

The *palafitos* at the far end of Angelmó have loads of ambience and good meals for about US\$6 to US\$8; waitresses loiter outside to coax you in. In the opposite direction, Pelluco (a US\$50¢ bus trip from the terminal) has a range of well-heeled restaurants and clubs on the beach. This is where Puerto Montt goes at night (if it goes out at all).

Café Central (Rancagua 117; snacks US\$1.50-6) Join the regulars filling this smoky room for grilled meat and drinks.

El Tablon del Ancla (cnr Varas & O'Higgins; set lunch US\$3) Friends pack the comfy booths on the plaza for cheap set lunches or *pichangas* (french fries with toppings).

Kalabaza (Varas 629; mains US\$3-7) A touch hipper, with sandwiches, Kuntsmann beer and fixed-price lunches (with vegetarian options).

Fogon del Leñador (Rancagua & Rengifo; mains US\$8-10 ☒ closed Sun) Steaks singed to perfection are served with piping-hot *sopapillas* (frybread).

OK Corral (Cauquenes 128; burgers US\$4-6) Once you get over the silly saloon theme, this is a casual spot buzzing with energy and offering whopping meal portions and suds on tap.

Club de Yates (Costanera; mains US\$12-20; ☒ noon-4pm & 8pm-late) Snooty and sparkling, from the glint off the glassware to the harbor panorama. An encyclopedic menu offers expertly prepared seafood; try the crab-filled spinach crêpes or grilled tuna.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Lan (☎ 253-315; www.lan.com; O'Higgins 167, Local 1-B) flies up to four times daily to Punta Arenas (from US\$200, 2¼ hours), three times daily to Balmaceda/Coyhaique (around US\$100, one hour) and up to eight times daily to Santiago (from US\$200, 1½ hours).

Sky Airlines (☎ 248-027; www.skyairlines.cl; cnr San Martín & Benavente) flies to Punta Arenas (US\$140) and Santiago (US\$120) with considerably better prices than Lan. **Aerosur** (☎ 252-523; Urmeneta 149) flies daily except Sunday to Chaitén on the Carretera Austral (US\$50).

BOAT

Puerto Montt is the main departure port for Patagonia. The **Terminal de Transbordadores** (Av Angelmó 2187) has a ticket office and waiting lounge for **Navimag** (☎ 253-318; www.navimag.com). Check your departure: rough seas and bad weather can cause delays.

To Chaitén, Catamaranes del Sur has a fast five-hour ferry; call **Cielo Mar Austral** (☎ 264-010; Quillota 245; one way US\$39) to check on availability; it is often out of service. Navimag sails to/from Chaitén and Quellón regularly in high season, but less often off-season. Check the website for the latest rates and schedules.

To Puerto Chacabuco you can hop on Navimag's M/N *Puerto Edén* (18 hours). Prices range from US\$52 for a *butaca* (reclining chair) to US\$216 per person for a dorm bed with shared bathroom. M/N *Evangelistas* stops en route to Laguna San Rafael every four or five days in high season, and only three or four times monthly the rest of the year. Prices

range from US\$310 per person for bunks to US\$827 for a cabin with private bathroom.

To Puerto Natales, Navimag's M/N *Magallanes* sails the popular three-night journey through Chile's fjords; check with Navimag's Santiago offices (p418) or on the website for departure dates and confirm your booking with the Santiago office. High season is November to May, midseason is October to April, and low season is May to September. Prices for the trip include meals. Per person fares, which vary according to view and private or shared bathroom, are as follows:

Class	High season (US\$)	Midseason (US\$)	Low season (US\$)
AAA	1690	1180	720
AA	1620	1060	700
A 1440	860	650	
Berths	325	275	200

Cars are US\$385 extra. Bicycles and motorcycles can also be carried along for an additional cost. Travelers prone to motion sickness should consider taking medication prior to crossing the Golfo de Penas, which is exposed to gut-wrenching Pacific swells.

BUS

Puerto Montt's waterfront **bus terminal** (☎ 253-143; cnr Av Diego Portales & Lillo) is the main transportation hub. Watch your belongings or leave them with the *custodia*. In summer, buses to Punta Arenas and Bariloche sell out, so book in advance.

Minibuses to Puerto Varas (US\$1.50, 30 minutes), Frutillar (US\$1.80, one hour) and Puerto Octay (US\$2, 1½ hours) leave from the eastern side of the terminal. Buses leave five times daily for Cochamó (US\$5, four hours).

For Hornopirén, where summer-only ferries connect to Caleta Gonzalo, Buses Fierro has three daily departures (US\$5, five hours). Off-season (mid-March to mid-December), bus transportation to Hornopirén and the upper Carretera Austral is very limited.

Cruz del Sur (☎ 254-731; Varas 437) has frequent buses to Chiloé. Santiago-bound buses usually leave around 10pm, stopping at various cities. 'Direct' buses stop only in Puerto Varas and Osorno; try to get one of these. **Tur Bus** (☎ 253-329) has daily buses to Valparaíso/Viña del Mar. For Coyhaique and Punta Arenas via

Argentina, try Cruz del Sur or Turibús. For Bariloche, Argentina, try **Tas Choapa** (☎ 254-828), **Río de La Plata** (☎ 253-841) and Cruz del Sur, which travel daily via the Cardenal Samoré pass east of Osorno.

Destination	Duration (hrs)	Cost (US\$)
Ancud	2	4
Bariloche, Argentina	8	19
Castro	4	6
Concepción	9	15
Coyhaique	20	32
Osorno	1½	3
Pucón	8	7
Punta Arenas	30-36	50
Quellón	6	9
Santiago	12-14	11-23
Temuco	7	9
Valdivia	3½	6
Valparaíso/Viña del Mar	14	25

TRAIN

Service with **Empresa de los Ferrocarriles de Estado** (☎ 480-787; www.efe.cl; Cuarta Terraza s/n) runs north to Temuco (US\$8, six hours) with connections to Santiago.

Getting Around

ETM buses (US\$2) run between Aeropuerto El Tepual, 16km west of town, and the bus terminal. A taxi from the airport costs about US\$10.

Car-rental agencies include **Hertz** (☎ 259-585; Varas 126) and **Full Fama's** (☎ 258-060; Portales 506). The latter can help get permission to take rental vehicles into Argentina. Rates range from US\$50 for a normal car to US\$100 for a pickup or jeep.

PARQUE NACIONAL ALERCE ANDINO

Few venture to the rugged emerald forest of 40,000-hectare **Parque Nacional Alerce Andino** (admission US\$2), despite its 40km proximity to Puerto Montt. The park was created in 1982 to protect some of the last remaining stands of *alerce*, found primarily 400m to 700m above sea level. Those who brave the mud and frequent rain will be rewarded by forest vistas ranging from sea level to 900m, a thick twisting medley of *coigue* and *ulmo*, ferns, climbing vines and dense thickets of *quila*. Pumas, *puñús*, foxes and skunks are about, but you'll have better luck glimpsing condors, kingfishers and waterfowl.

Conaf has a five-site **campground** (campsites US\$7) at Correntoso on the Río Chamiza at the northern end of the park, and another six-site **campground** (campsites US\$7) near the head of the Río Chaica Valley. Trekkers can backcountry camp.

A few agencies in Puerto Varas arrange hikes and tours of the park. To get there on your own, take the Ruta 7, Carretera Austral; it runs to La Arena on the Estero de Reloncaví. From Puerto Montt, Buses Fierro has four buses daily to the village of Correntoso (US\$2, 30 minutes), only 3km from the Río Chamiza entrance on the northern boundary of the park. Fierro also runs five buses daily to the crossroads at Lenca (US\$2, 1¼ hours) on the Carretera Austral, where a narrow lateral road climbs 7km up the valley of the Río Chaica.

CHILOÉ

In Chiloé rural ingenuity invented the *trineo*, a sled to steer through thick mud; rural necessity perfected *curanto*, meat, potatoes and shellfish vapor-smoked in giant leaves; and rural imagination created the *invunche*, a mythological gatekeeper whose price of admittance is a peck on the rear. Who are these people? With indigenous Chonos and Huilliche roots, the humble Chilote welcomed Jesuits and the Spanish, but were never an ally of mainlanders. Island insularity fostered incredibly rich traditions and myths populated by ghost ships, phantom lovers and witches, cute versions of which are whittled and sold for today's tourists. Forget the rustic souvenirs. The patient visitor needs a succession of misty rains, muddy walks and fireside chats to fathom these characters who are proud but never showy, friendly but none too talkative.

In an archipelago of over 40 minor islands, the main island is a lush quilt of pastureland on undulating hills, 180km long but just 50km wide. Towns and farms tilt toward the eastern side, while the western shores are a nearly roadless network of thick forests lapping the wild Pacific. More than half of the 155,000 Chilotes live off subsistence agriculture, while others depend on a fishing industry that has rapidly transformed from artisanal to industrial, with the introduction of salmon farming in the mid-1990s. Visitors shouldn't miss the shingled houses and wooden churches dotting

the island, some up to 200 years old, preserved as a Unesco World Heritage site.

ANCUD

☎ 065 / pop 28,000

Bustling and weathered, urban Ancud offers an earthy base to explore the penguin colonies and walk or sea-kayak the blustery, dazzling north coast.

Information

Banco de Chile (Libertad 667) Has an ATM. ATMs are also at other banks.

Clean Center (Pudeto 45; per load US\$1.75) Does laundry.

Entel (Pudeto 219) Call center

Hospital de Ancud (☎ 622-356; Almirante Latorre 405) At the corner of Pedro Montt.

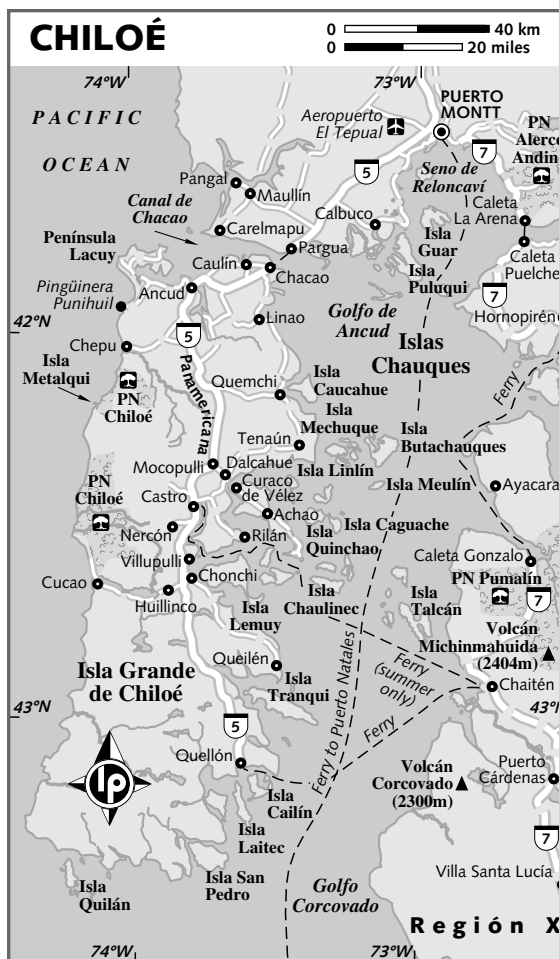
La Red de Agroturismo (☎ 628-333; Ramírez 207)

Organizes excursions to farming and fishing communities and homestays in small towns off the tourist map.

Post office (cnr Pudeto & Blanco Encalada)

Sernatur (☎ 622-800; Libertad 665; 🕒 8:30am-8pm summer, 8:30am-6pm Mon-Fri winter) Across from the plaza; has excellent travel information and hiking maps.

Zone@Net (Pudeto 396, 2nd fl; per hr US\$1) Internet café.



Sights & Activities

The **Museo Regional de Ancud** (Libertad; adult/child US\$1/25¢; ☎ 10:30am-7:30pm Jan-Feb, 9:30am-5:30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun Mar-Dec) tracks island history with excellent, informative displays. Northwest of town, **Fuerte San Antonio** was Spain's last Chilean outpost. The remodeled **Mercado Municipal** (Prat) offers a colorful stroll through live crabs, fat lettuce heads and woolens.

Austral Adventures (☎ 625-977; www.austral-adventures.com; Lord Cochrane 432) is known for awesome multiday boat trips around the archipelago but tours also include beach hiking, penguin-colony excursions, kayaking, and rural homestays. Day rates for hiking and penguin colonies are US\$40 to US\$60. Guides speak English. Small, family-run **Puñihuil** (☎ 099-655-6780) offers tours (US\$16 per person) to the penguin and sea lion colonies.

On the way to the penguin colonies you'll pass **Puente Quilo** (donations only), a fabulously quirky open-air museum created by Don Serafin, a regular Joe whose backyard flooded with odd treasures after the 1960 earthquake. The booty spans from whole whale skeletons to stuffed sea creatures and indigenous relics.

Festivals & Events

Ancud makes merry in the second week of January with **Semana Ancuditana** (Ancud Week). There are island-wide celebrations with music, dance and foods.

Sleeping

Camping Arena Gruesa (☎ 623-428; Costanera Norte 290; camping/r per person US\$3/11) Adequate *hostal* rooms or grassy sites with hot water, light and kitchen access, six blocks north of the plaza.

Hospedaje Austral (☎ 624-847; hospedajeaustral@hotmail.com; Aníbal Pinto 1318; s/d/tr US\$8.50/17/25.50; (P) (Q)) This friendly and newly built budget haven, with comfortable blanket-stacked beds, is right next to the terminal.

Cabañas y Hospedaje Vista al Mar (☎ 622-617; www.vistaalmar.cl; Costanera 918; cabins per person US\$8.50-12, full cabins US\$40; (P) (Q)) HI members can shack up in a shared cabin; don't mind the 1982 ambience.

Terramar (☎ 620-493; Bellavista 457; r per person US\$10) Down comforters and slanted ceilings make you feel right at home in this sweet family-friendly shingled home.

Hostal Mundo Nuevo (☎ 628-383; www.newworld.cl; Costanera 748; dm/d incl breakfast US\$12/33; (P)) Hunker down in this seafront refuge with firm beds

and sharp hardwood details. Owner Martin recommends hikes and breakfast includes homemade multigrain loaves.

Hostal Lluhay (☎ 622-656; Cochrane 458; s/d incl breakfast US\$16/25) A comfortable seafront house with dear hosts, roaring fires and a tinkling piano. Don't miss breakfast.

Eating & Drinking

Café Arte Nerudiano (cnr Ramirez & Maipu; snacks US\$2-4; ☎ 9am-1am, Sun afternoon only) Espresso and sandwiches served in a light-filled space with deck.

Pedersen Salón de Té (Sargento Aldea 470; kitchen US\$3.50) Ancud's best pies and cakes are baked daily in this waterfront teahouse.

Retro Pub (Maipú 615; mains US\$4-8) A cozy timber tribute to rock and roll with tasty Tex-Mex; hopping on summer nights.

El Sacho (Mercado Municipal; mains US\$4-8; ☎ lunch) Fresh no-frills seafood on the cement deck; the enormous plates include steamed mussels and fried fish.

La Candela (Libertad 599; mains US\$5-8) In front of the plaza, this cool and color-streaked café serves up salmon in soy and Peruvian *ají de gallina* (spicy chicken stew).

Lumiere (Ramirez 278; dinner US\$7) Awash in ocean blue and bright charm, this pub-restaurant serves ceviche, *mariscos a pil pil* (seafood with chilies and garlic) and drinks; movies are shown in winter.

Getting There & Away

The **bus terminal** (☎ 624-017; cnr Aníbal Pinto & Marcos Vera) is 2km east of downtown. Taxis downtown cost US\$2. Cruz del Sur departs frequently to Puerto Montt (US\$4, 2½ hours), Castro (US\$2, 1½ hours) and Quellón (US\$4, 2½ hours).

CASTRO

☎ 065 / pop 29,000

Castro is the prospering capital of Chiloé. Its renovation invites strange sights: a wheelbarrow vendor selling fresh *sierra* fish next to town's first mega-grocery, stalwart constructions replace the buckling ones as the salmon industry edges out the wooden launches used for centuries. But the crayon-happy *palafitos* still stand as testimony to Castro's heritage which started humbly in 1567.

Information

ATMs are found around the plaza.

Chiloé Web (www.chiloeweb.com in Spanish) Loads of useful bits can be gleaned from this website.

Conaf (☎ 532-501; Gamboa 424) Can provide information on Parque Nacional Chiloé.

Entel (O'Higgins 480)

Hospital de Castro (☎ 632-445; Freire 852) At the foot of Cerro Millantuy.

Julio Barrientos (Chacabuco 286) Exchanges cash and traveler's checks.

Municipal tourist office (Plaza de Armas) Has good information on rural homestays.

Post office (O'Higgins 388)

Turismo Pehuen (☎ 635-254; consultas@turismo.pehuen.cl; Blanco Encalada 299) Reputable. Open year-round, with tours to nearby islands and horse trekking.

Sights & Activities

You can't miss neo-Gothic 1906 **Iglesia San Francisco de Castro** (Plaza de Armas), the yellow-lavender paint job of which testifies to island individuality. Clever farm instruments and Huilliche relics are among the displays at **Museo Regional de Castro** (Esmeralda s/n; ☎ 9:30am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10:30am-1pm Sun Jan-Feb, 9:30am-1pm & 3-6:30pm Mon-Sat, 10:30am-1pm Sun Mar-Dec). Near the fairgrounds, the **Modern Art Museum** (☎ 635-454; Parque Municipal; donations accepted; ☎ 10am-8pm summer) displays innovative local works. Nonprofit **Almacén de Biodiversidad** (cnr Lillo & Blanco; www.almacendebiodiversidad.com; ☎ 9am-1pm, 3-6:30pm Mon-Fri) sells top-quality goods made by local artisans. The colorful **palafitos** are mostly along Costanera Pedro Montt north of town at the western exit from the city.

Festivals & Events

Festival de Huaso Chilote Cowboy festival held in late January.

Festival Costumbrista Folk music and dance and traditional foods in mid-February.

Sleeping

Seasonal lodging is advertised with hand-written signs along San Martín, O'Higgins and Barros Arana. Those interested in **rural homestays** (☎ in Santiago 02-690-8000; www.viajesrurales.cl) can also inquire at the municipal tourism office.

Camping Pudù (☎ 099-643-7764; 2-person campsites US\$9) Decent facilities on the way to Dalcahue, 10km north of Castro.

Hospedaje Central (☎ 637-026; Los Carrera 316; r per person US\$7) Large *hostal* with decent wood-venish rooms, some tight spaces and frilly bedcovers.

Hospedaje Agüero (☎ 635-735; Chacabuco 449; r per person US\$12) The reception may be grumpy

but rooms are comfortable and offer *palafito* views.

Hostal O'Higgins (☎ 632-016; O'Higgins 831, Interior; d incl breakfast US\$12) Prim and paneled rooms with clean shared bathrooms and breakfast included.

Camping Licaldad (☎ 635-080; Fiordo de Castro; 4-person campsites US\$14) Off the Panamericana, 6km south of Castro; sites are muddy in rainy season.

Hospedaje Mirador (☎ 633-795; Barros Arana 127; r per person US\$14; ☎) This red house on a steep seafront passageway has locking rooms (small but amenable) with big beds and gasp-inducing views.

Hostal Cordillera (☎ 532-247; hcordillera@hotmail.com; La Rosedana 175; r per person US\$14; ☎) A great atmosphere, it's a little worn but spacious and well-attended with a quiet covered terrace. Ask for the room with the sea view, it can't hurt.

Hostal del Río (☎ 632-223; Thompson 232; s/d US\$39/\$49) Fresh white bedding, streaming light and spacious, thoroughly feminine rooms.

Eating

Waterfront restaurants next to the *feria artesanal* have the best bang for your peso; try **Vista Hermoso** (set lunches US\$5).

Restaurant Camahueto (Los Bancos 350; menu del dia US\$3.50) Abundant and simple lunch specials, like salmon with rice and salad, are your best bet.

Años Luz (San Martín 309; mains US\$4-12; ☎ 11am-late) Offerings like espresso, raspberry margaritas and generous plates of almond-crusted congrio or salmon pastries fuel friendly crowds. Live Latin jazz or rock starts at 11pm in summertime.

Sacho (Thompson 213; mains US\$5-9) A top-drawer seafood restaurant with excellent crab and *curanto* (a hearty pile of fish, shellfish, chicken, pork, lamb, beef and potato cooked together) big enough for two.

Getting There & Away

BOAT

During the summer, there are sometimes ferries to Chaitén (p510); most stop off in Quellón. **Naviera Austral** (☎ 634-628; Av Puerto Montt 48; US\$31) travels Wednesday at 4pm, Saturday at 12pm and Sunday at 3pm. Check on current schedules with **Navimag** (☎ 432-360; www.navimag.com; Angelmó 2187, Puerto Montt), or Catamaranes del Sur agent **Cielo Mar Austral** (☎ 264-010; Quillota

245; one way US\$39). Some of the ferries can take cars on board.

BUS & COLECTIVO

The municipal **Terminal de Buses Rurales** (San Martín), near Sargento Aldea, has buses to Dalcahue (US\$2, 30 minutes) and Cucao (US\$3, one hour), with limited services off-season. The **Cruz del Sur terminal** (☎ 632-389; San Martín 486) services Quellón and Ancud as well as long-distance destinations.

Destination	Duration (hr)	Cost (US\$)
Ancud	1¼	2
Puerto Montt	4	5
Quellón	1½	2
Quemchi	1½	2
Santiago	16	29-48
Temuco	7	15
Valdivia	7	10

For nearby destinations, *colectivos* provide a faster alternative. **Colectivos Chonchi** leave from Chacabuco near Esmeralda (US\$1) as well as from Ramírez near San Martín. **Colectivos Quellón** leave from Sotomayor and San Martín (US\$3), as do **Colectivos Achao** (US\$1).

DALCAHUE & ISLA QUINCHAO

Dalcahue, 20km northeast of Castro, has a doric-columned 19th-century church, well-preserved vernacular architecture, and a famous Sunday market selling wool imaginatively woven into fleece-lined slippers, dolls, even skirts. Artisan women weave baskets and knit at their stands, hoping the live performance will sweeten a sale. Outside of town, **Altue Sea Kayak Center** (☎ in Santiago 02-232-1103; www.seakayakchile.com) leads wonderful six- to nine- day kayak tours of the archipelago. All trips must be booked in advance.

Midway between Dalcahue and Achao, **Curaco de Vélez** dates from 1660 and has a treasure of Chilote architecture, plus an open-air oyster bar at the beach. Buses between Achao and Dalcahue stop in Curaco.

Isla Quinchao, southeast of Dalcahue, is one of the most accessible islands, and worth a day trip. Isla Quinchao's largest town, **Achao**, features Chiloé's oldest church. Wooden pegs, instead of nails, hold together **Iglesia Santa María de Achao**.

Camping García (☎ 065-661-283; Delicias; camping per person US\$3; ☞ Dec-Mar) offers sites with a hot

shower one block from the plaza. There are good lodging options at **Hostal Plaza** (☎ 065-661-283; Amunátegui 20; r per person US\$10), across from the plaza, or the comfortable **Soly Lluvia** (☎ 065-253-996; Gerónimo de Urmeneta 215; r US\$12). Overlooking the pier, **Mary Velas** (Serrano 02) serves up mussels or clams and cold beer.

Minibuses and *colectivos* go directly to/from Castro. From Dalcahue, **Dalcahue Expreso** (Freire) has half-hourly buses to Castro (US\$2) weekdays, but fewer on weekends. Ferries for Isla Quinchao leave continuously. Pedestrians go free (but you'll need to take a bus to reach any destinations once you get on the island), and cars cost US\$6 (round-trip).

CHONCHI

☎ 065 / pop 12,000

A somnolent village on a tranquil bay, Chonchi defies its rebel past as the former haunt of pirates and port for cypress export. Located 23km south of Castro, it is the closest sizable town to the national park. Services center on Centenario, including a **tourist office** (cnr Sargento Candelaria & Centenario; ☞ Jan-Mar). Visitors can explore **Isla Lemuy** by taking the free ferry departing every half-hour from Puerto Huichas (5km south). On Sunday and in the off-season, the service is hourly.

Camping los Manzanos (☎ 671-263; Pedro Aguirre Cerda 709; campsites up to 4 people US\$9) has hot showers. Beachfront haven **La Esmeralda** (☎ 671-328; carlos@esmeraldabythesea.cl; Irrázabal s/n; dm/d US\$10/16; ☞) has simple, agreeable rooms; for views reserve the 'early honeymoon' room. Owner Charles Gredy rents bikes and fishing gear, offers tours of his seafood farm and hosts congenial dinners with the day's catch. Seafood delights are served in the *mercado*: the 2nd-floor restaurants above the crafts market have a slim deck overlooking the water.

Catch Castro-bound buses opposite the plaza on the upper level or take a *colectivo* (US\$1) opposite the church. Transportation to Parque Nacional Chiloé (US\$2, 1½ hours) departs a few times per day in summer.

PARQUE NACIONAL CHILOÉ

Gorgeous, evergreen forests meet taupe stretches of sand and the boundless, thrashing Pacific in this 43,000-hectare **national park** (admission US\$2), 54km southwest of Castro. The park protects diverse birds, chilote fox and the reclusive *pudú*. Some Huilliche communities

live within the park boundaries and some manage campsites.

Access the park through Cucao, a minute village with growing amenities, and park sector Chanquín, where Conaf runs a visitors center with information. **Sendero Interpretivo El Tepual** winds 1km along fallen tree trunks through thick forest. The 2km **Sendero Dunas de Cucao** leads to a series of dunes behind a long, white-sand beach. The most popular route is the 20km **Sendero Chanquín-Cole Cole**, which follows the coast past Lago Huelde to Río Cole Cole. The hike continues 8km north to Río Anay, passing through groves of red myrtles.

Sleeping & Eating

A road passing the park has a series of private campgrounds, all charging around US\$3 per person.

Camping Chanquín (camping per person US\$4) In the park, 200m beyond the visitors center. Good amenities and a covered rain area.

El Fogon de Cucao (☎ 099-946-5685; camping per person US\$6, r per person incl breakfast US\$20) Choose between a gorgeous guesthouse with sprawling deck or waterfront camping with full facilities. Beware: the restaurant can host jam sessions, featuring its musician owner and friends, 'til the wee hours, but you're lucky to get the free concert (not true for the campground sing-alongs out back). It also offers horse treks to a *refugio* (a two-day trip).

Parador Darwin (☎ 099-884-0702; paradordarwin@hotmail.com; s/d incl breakfast US\$14/24; ☑ Jun-Jul) A rainy day score: inviting rooms with sheepskin rugs, trunk tables and electric teapots. The café delights with fresh juices, local razorback clams with parmesan and big salads (mains US\$6) to be enjoyed over board games and jazz.

Cheap and friendly lodgings include **El Arroyán** (☎ 099-219-3565; park entrance; s/d US\$8/14) and **El Paraíso** (☎ 099-296-5465; r US\$10), located before the bridge.

Those making the 20km hike to **Cole Cole** stay at the **campsite** (camping per person US\$3). Bring your own stove and prepare for pesky sand fleas.

Getting There & Away

Buses go to/from Castro five times daily (US\$2.75, one hour). Service from Chonchi is sporadic. Stay on the bus until after the Cucao bridge. The final stop is the park.

QUELLÓN

☎ 065 / pop 13,800

Those imagining a pot of gold and rainbows at the end of the Panamericana will be surprised by a dumpsy port. Even locals bemoan the pirating of Quellón's natural wealth, which has left a sad industrial air. Most travelers head this way to make ferry connections to Chaitén or Puerto Montt. It's best to change money before coming. **Banco del Estado** (cnr Ladrilleros & Freire) has an ATM. **Patagonia Chiloe Expeditions** (08-590-2200; ☑ Jan-Feb) runs excursions to the lovely and remote Isla Kailin (boat trip US\$20).

Lodgings per person, no breakfast, include the threadbare **Hotel Playa** (☎ 681-278; Pedro Montt 427; r US\$8); and **Hotel El Chico Leo** (☎ 681-567; Pedro Montt 325; r without/with bathroom US\$14/39), whose fuzzy bedspreads, shell lamps and acrylic landscapes offer the best value. The restaurant (lunch US\$2.50 to US\$6) is good and the pool tables bustle with action. Anyone with *honda* (good vibes) taxis down to **Taberna Nos** (O'Higgins 150; snacks US\$3; ☑ 8:30pm-3am Mon-Sat), as much for the ska, cheap pints and seafood tapas as for the smiley welcome by its Galician-Chilote owners.

Buses Cruz del Sur and Transchiloé leave from the **bus terminal** (cnr Aguirre Cerda & Miramar) for Castro frequently (US\$2, 1½ hours). **Navimag** (☎ 432-360; www.navimag.com; Angelmó 2187, Puerto Montt) sails to Chaitén twice weekly. **Naviera Austral** (☎ 207; Pedro Montt 457) goes to Chaitén (US\$29, five hours) on Wednesdays at noon and Fridays at 9am. Ferry schedules change seasonally; verify all departures at the appropriate office in advance.

NORTHERN PATAGONIA

A web of rivers, peaks and sprawling glaciers long-ago provided a natural boundary between northern Patagonia and the rest of the world. Pinochet's **Carretera Austral** (Hwy 7) was the first road to effectively link these remote regions in the 1980s. Isolation has kept the local character fiercely self-sufficient and tied to nature's clock. '*Quien se apura en la Patagonia pierde el tiempo*', locals say (he who hurries in Patagonia loses his time). Weather decides all in this nowhere land beyond the Lakes District. So don't rush. Missed flights, delayed ferries and floods are routine to existence; take the wait as locals would – another opportunity to heat the kettle and strike up a slow talk over mate.

Starting south of Puerto Montt, the Carretera Austral links widely separated towns and hamlets all the way to Villa O'Higgins, a total of just over 1200km. High season (from mid-December through February) offers considerably more travel options and availability. Combination bus and ferry circuits afford visitors a panoramic vision of the region. This section covers Chaitén to Lago General Carrera but there's plenty more. Don't hesitate to tread beyond the pages of the guidebook: the little villages along the road and its furthest hamlets of Cochrane, Caleta Tortel and Villa O'Higgins are fully worth exploring.

CHAITÉN & PARQUE PUMALÍN

☎ 065 / pop 3500

An emerald umbrella on the rainy bay, the yawning outpost of Chaitén is little more than a six by eight grid of wide streets. The only town near Parque Pumalín, it's also a major transport stop for the ultrarural Carretera Austral. If you arrive by ferry; the port is a 10-minute walk northwest of town. Around the plaza are the post office, Entel and **Banco del Estado** (cnr Libertad & O'Higgins), which exchanges cash at poor rates and has an ATM. The **tourist kiosk** (cnr Costanera & O'Higgins; ☎ 9am-9pm Jan-Feb) lists lodgings. **Pumalín Information Center** (O'Higgins 62) has park information and reserves cabins. A bastion of local information, **Chaitur** (☎ 731-429; nchaitur@hotmail.com; O'Higgins 67) organizes excursions with bilingual guides to Pumalín, the Yelcho glacier, Termas de Amarillo and beaches with sea-lion colonies. Regional buses are based here and the agency also can provide general tour assistance, in English as well.

Sights & Activities

Pristine native rainforest and ancient *alerce* trees are protected in 2889-sq-km **Parque Pumalín** (www.pumalinpark.org; admission free), 68km north of Chaitén. It is Chile's largest private park and one of the largest conservation projects of its kind. While much of the land is impenetrable, developed hikes run the length of the road through the park. After the bus drops you off you can hitch to the next hike, but not in off-season. **Sendero Cascadas** (Caleta Gonzalo) climbs through dense forest to a large waterfall. **Sendero Laguna Tronador**, 12km south, climbs stairs and stepladders to views of Michinmahuida and a secluded lake with two campsites. Another kilometer south, **Sendero Los Alerces** is an easy interpretive trail through

majestic groves of *alerce*. Check at the park offices for additional options. Visitors can choose from various **camping areas** (per person US\$3, covered campsites US\$10).

About 25km southeast of Chaitén, **Termas El Amarillo** (admission US\$5; campsites US\$7) are hot springs diverted to small cement pools amid greenery. Campers get exclusive access to the pools at night.

Sleeping & Eating

Los Arrayanes (☎ 731-136; campsites per person US\$5) Beachfront with hot showers, 4km north of Chaitén.

Hospedaje Llanos (☎ 731-332; Corcovado 378; s US\$10) Simple rooms, some with sea views, and a delightful hostess.

Casa Hexagon (☎ 08-286-2950; Río Blanco 36; s US\$14) River stones and raw beams decorate this lovely hexagonal house on the river. The friendly German host offers valuable tips on the area.

Hostería Los Coihues (☎ 731-461; Pedro Aguirre Cerda 398; s/d incl breakfast US\$26/34) Stylish and sunny, this quiet *hostería* spoils the road-weary with abundant towels and generous continental breakfasts.

Corcovado (cnr Corcovado & Cerda; lunch special US\$6) No-nonsense dining room serving roast lamb or salmon and potatoes.

Cocinerías Costumbristas (Portales 258; meals US\$3-6) Unbeatable *empanadas de mariscos* (seafood) and heaping fish platters from sweet aproned señoras.

Getting There & Away

AIR

AeroSur (☎ 731-228; cnr Pinto & Riveros) has an air-taxi to Puerto Montt (US\$60, 45 minutes).

BOAT

Ferry schedules change, so confirm them before making plans.

Catamaranes del Sur (☎ 731-199; Juan Todesco 118) Passenger-only ferries to Puerto Montt and Castro thrice weekly in summer.

Naviera Austral (☎ 731-272; www.navieraaustral.cl in Spanish; Corcovado 266) Auto-passenger ferry *Pincoya* to Puerto Montt (US\$31, 12 hours) four times a week. In summer only to Quellón, Chiloé (US\$29, six hours) two times a week; and daily from Caleta Gonzalo in Parque Pumalín to Hornopirén (US\$19), where buses depart for Puerto Montt.

BUS

Transportes Cordillera (Libertad 432) goes to Futaleufú daily at 3:15pm. **Chaitur** runs buses to



CHILE

Futaleufú (US\$10, four hours) at 3:30pm daily except Sunday. **Buses Palena** (cnr Corcovado & Tordesco) goes to Palena (US\$9, 4½ hours) thrice weekly from the terminal. **Buses Norte** (☎ 731-390; Libertad 432) goes to Coyhaique (US\$27, 12 hours) on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 9:30am, stopping in La Junta (US\$14, four hours) and Puyuhuapi (US\$15). Chaitur goes to Coyhaique (US\$27) at 9am daily except Saturday, and to Caleta Gonzalo (US\$5, two hours) at 7am and 5pm daily. **ByV Tour** (Libertad 432) goes to Caleta Gonzalo daily.

FUTALEUFÚ

☎ 065 / pop 1800

The diamond-cut waters of the Futaleufú have made famous this modest mountain village, 155km from Chaitén. World-renowned rafting and kayaking comes at a price: the valley is starting to feel a little like Boulder, Taos, or Pucón. If the Futa or Fu (as those in the know call it) is on your destination list, make sure you slow down and say hello to locals, speak their language and share something, because these days there's more of us than them.

Information

Bring all the money you'll need; **Banco del Estado** (cnr O'Higgins & Manuel Rodríguez) is the only place to change cash.

Tours

Rafting trips on Río Espolón and segments of the more difficult Futaleufú are expensive (US\$85 to US\$100). Reliable outfitters:

Austral Excursions (Hermanos Carera 500) A locally owned outfitter with river descents as well as trekking and canyoning excursions.

Bio Bio Expeditions (☎ 800-246-7238; www.bbrafting.com) A pioneer in the region, this ecologically minded group offers river descents, horse treks and more. It is well established but may take walk-ins.

Expediciones Chile (☎ 721-386; Mistral 296) A secure rafting operator with loads of experience. Offers kayaking, mountain biking and other activities as well.

Sleeping & Eating

Camping Puerto Espolón (☎ 696-5324; camping per person US\$4; ☎ Jan-Feb) The best option close to town, riverside with a sandy beach.

Cara del Indio (camping per person US\$6) Spacious riverside camping, 15km after Puerto Ramírez. There's kayak and raft put-in sites, hot showers, sauna and staples of homemade bread, cheese and beer are sold.

El Campesino (☎ 721-275; Prat 107; r per person incl breakfast US\$8) The hospitable home of an old colonist, with breakfast and shared bathroom.

El Galpón (☎ 021-964-200; www.dosmargaritas.org; Sector Azul puente Pinilla; r per person US\$9) A gorgeous working farm and foundation dedicated to local development through sustainable tourism and agriculture. Guests stay in rustic, immaculate rooms in the converted barn and can cook and purchase fresh farm products. It's 22km before Futaleufú.

Posada Ely (☎ 721-205; Balmaceda 409; s incl breakfast US\$18) Well kept rooms under the guardianship of Betty, who makes a mean rosehip jam (served with a breakfast of fresh bread, eggs, juice, tea and more).

Futaleufú (Cerde 408; mains US\$6) Rain or shine you'll find abundant salads, french fries and scalloped chicken here for reasonable prices.

Sur Andes (Cerde 308; meals US\$6) Sip real coffee on the garden patio of this teahouse; the hungry can feast on cakes, burgers and vegetarian fare.

Martín Pescador (Balmaceda 603; meals US\$18) Easily the best meals for miles with memorable salmon ceviche and a long list of delectable wines. Check out the cheaper daily lunch special.

Getting There & Away

In front of the plaza, **Transportes Cordillera** (☎ 721-249; Prat 262; US\$3; 1½hr) goes to the Argentine border at 9am and 6pm Monday and Friday; during high season there are more frequent trips with other companies. The **Futaleufú border post** (☎ 8am-8pm) is far quicker and more efficient than the crossing at Palena, opposite the Argentine border town of Carrenleufú.

Transportes Sebastián (☎ 721-288; Piloto Carmona 381) goes to Chaitén (US\$10, four hours) at 7:30am daily except Sunday, stopping at Villa Santa Lucía (where you can transfer south to Coyhaique), Puerto Cárdenas and Termas El Amarillo. **Cuchichi** (Sargento Aldea) goes to Puerto Montt via Argentina at 8am on Tuesday and Thursday (US\$31, 13 hours).

There's no gas station. The grocery store on Sargento Aldea sells fuel by the jug; it's cheaper in Argentina, if you make it.

PALENA

☎ 065 / pop 1500

Tourism is still a queer notion in the prickly foothills and grassy meadows beyond the ultra turquoise Río Palena, but remnants of pioneer

lifestyle and incredible hospitality make it worth the journey. Just 8km west of the border, Palena is a low-traffic crossing point into Argentina. The **Rodeo de Palena** is held on the last weekend in January.

Have the bus drop you off 22km before Palena to stay at the cozy **Adventuras Cordilleras** (741-388; www.rutatranspatagonia.cl; El Malito bridge; s incl breakfast US\$10), where Mireya pampers guests like part of the brood. The family also offers riverfront cabin accommodations and rides to rural El Tranquilo. In town try the friendly **La Frontera** (741-388; Montt 977; r per person US\$10) or **Residencial La Chilenita** (☎ 731-212; Pudeto 681; r per person US\$10). Adventurers can ride or hike to wonderful **Rincón de la Nieve** (741-269; Valle Azul; s incl breakfast US\$12), the Casanova family farm in Valle Azul. Chill there or continue on a truly incredible five-day round-trip ride to remote Lago Palena (see boxed text, p516). Arrange in advance.

Buses Palena (Plaza de Armas) goes to Chaitén (US\$9, 4½ hours) at 7:30am Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

PUERTO PUYUHUAPI

In 1935 four German immigrants settled this remote rainforest outpost, inspired by explorer Hans Steffen's adventures. The agricultural colony grew with Chilote textile workers, whose skills fed the success of the 1947 German **Fábrica de Alfombras** (www.puyuhuapi.com; Calle Aysen s/n; tours US\$2), still weaving carpets today. Across the inlet, **Termas de Puyuhuapi** is a high-end hot-springs resort.

Friendly **Hostería Marily** (☎ 067-325-102; cnr Uebel & Circunvalación; s/d incl breakfast US\$15/30) offers sound mattresses and firm beds. Pioneer home **Casa Ludwig** (☎ 067-320-000; www.casaludwig.cl; Uebel s/n; r per person incl breakfast from US\$20) is elegant and snug – a real treat with a roaring fire and big breakfasts at the large communal table. **Rosbach** (meals US\$8) has excellent *küchen*, as well as heaping home-style meals. Come out of the rain at **Aonikenk Cabañas** (☎ 067-325-208; Hamburgo 16; 2–4-person cabins US\$25-35), with great café fare and generous hospitality (the owner will dry your wet layers by the woodstove). Cabins are well appointed and it's a good stop for area information.

Buses Norte (☎ 067-232-167; Gral Parra 337) and Transportes Emanuel buses leave for Chaitén (US\$16, 5½ hours) and Coyhaique (US\$14, 6½ hours) between 3pm and 5pm from the store next to the police station.

PARQUE NACIONAL QUEULAT

Queulat (admission US\$3) is a wild realm where rivers wind through forests thick with ferns and southern beech. Its steep-sided fjords are flanked by creeping glaciers. From Conaf's **Centro de Información Ambiental** there is a 3km hike to a lookout with views of Ventisquero Colgante, a chalk-blue hanging glacier.

Just north of the southern entrance at Pudú, at km 170, a damp trail climbs the valley of the **Río de las Cascadas** through a dense forest to a granite bowl where half-a-dozen waterfalls spring from hanging glaciers.

Basic camping is available at **Ventisquero** (per site US\$7), convenient to the Ventisquero Colgante, and at **Angostura** (Lago Risopatrón; campsites US\$7), 15km north of Puyuhuapi.

COYHAIQUE

☎ 067 / pop 44,900

Coyhaique fills the rolling steppe at the foot of Cerro Macay's basalt massif. Ranch town and regional capital, it attracts rural workers to the timber or salmon industries and anglers to nearby fly-fishing lodges. For those fresh from the wilderness, it can be a jarring relapse into the world of semitrucks and subdivisions.

Coyhaique's plaza occupies the heart of a disorienting pentagonal plan. Av General Baquedano skirts northeast and connects with the highway to Puerto Chacabuco. Av Ogano heads south to Balmaceda and Lago General Carrera.

Information

Banks with ATMs line Condell.

Cabot (☎ 230-101; Lautaro 331) A general service travel agency.

Conaf (☎ 212-109; Av Ogana 1060) Has park details.

Hospital Base (☎ 231-286; Ibar 68) Near the western end of JM Carrera.

Lavamatic (Simpson 417; per kg US\$4)

Lavandería QL (Bilbao 160; per kg US\$4)

Post office (Cochrane 202)

Sernatur (☎ 233-949; Bulnes 35) Staff here provide excellent information on lodgings, fishing guides, transportation and possibilities further south.

Turismo Prado (21 de Mayo 417) Change traveler's checks here.

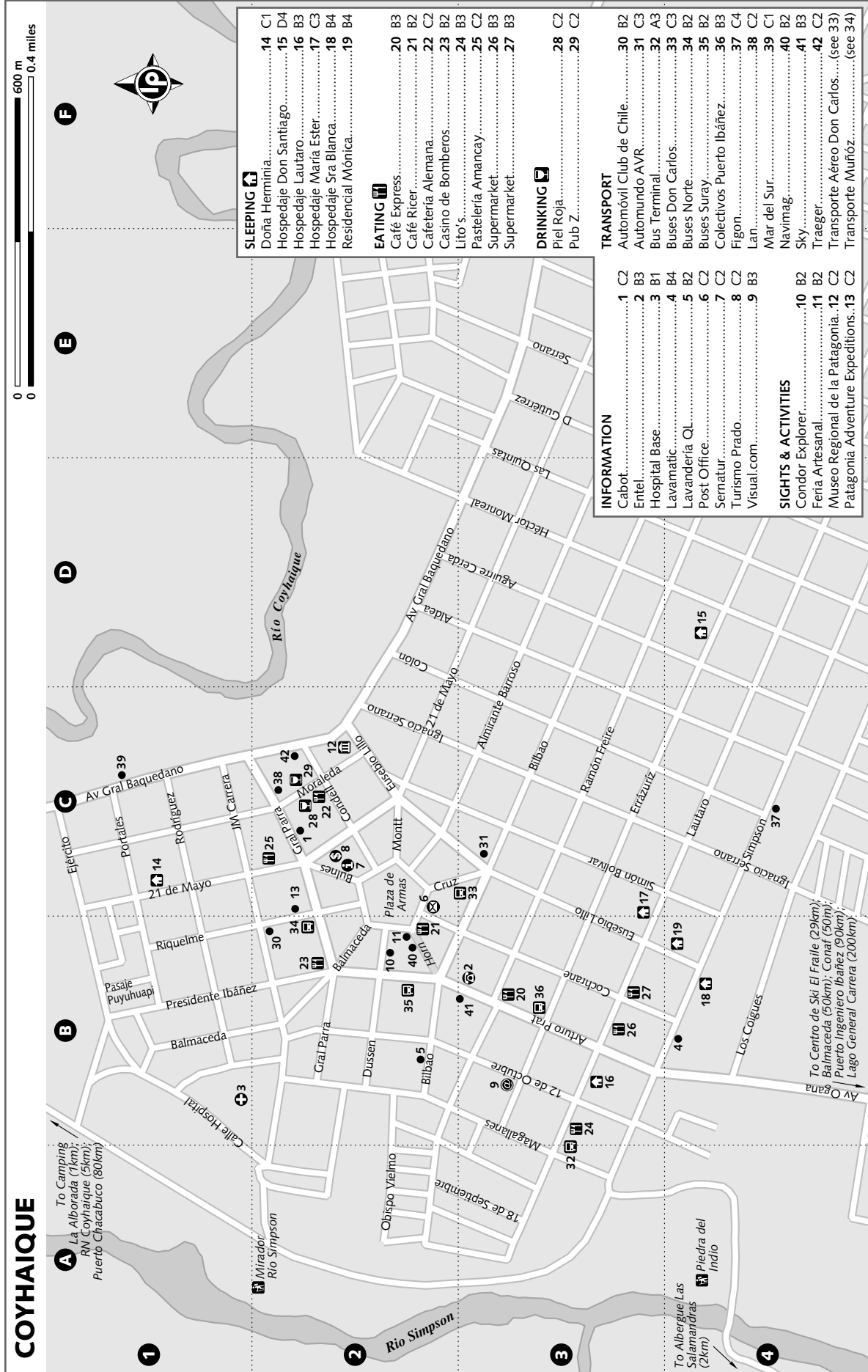
Visual.com (12 de Octubre 485-B; per hr US\$1) Get online here or at call centers.

Sights & Activities

Prime river vistas can be gained at **Mirador Río Simpson**, reached by walking west on JM

CHILE

COYHAIQUE



0 0 600 m 0.4 miles



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 - Hospedaje Don Santiago.....15 D4
 - Hospedaje Lautaro.....16 B3
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A To Camping La Alborada (1km); RN Coyhaique (5km); Puerto Chacabuco (80km)

4 To Alberque Las Salamandras (2km); Piedra del Indio

To Centro de Ski El Fraile (29km); Balmaceda (50km); Conaf (50km); Puerto Ingeniero Ibáñez (90km); Lago General Carrera (200km); Av O'Gana

Carrera. Hikers can tread trails in **Reserva Nacional Coyhaique** (admission US\$1), 5km from town: take Baquedano north across the bridge and go right at the gravel road; from the entrance it's 3km to Laguna Verde. **Condor Explorer** (☎ 670-349; www.condorexplorer.com; Dussen 357) offers trekking, climbing and more with bilingual guides and good service. Recommended and English-speaking, **Patagonia Adventure Expeditions** (☎ 219-894; www.adventurepatagonia.com; Riquelme 372) runs rafting (US\$25 half day) and fantastic multiday glacier hikes.

Anglers can go **fishing** from November to May, with some restrictions. Brown and rainbow trout are typical catches. From June to September, skiers can make turns at the **Centro de Ski El Fraile** (☎ 231-690), only 29km south of Coyhaique. The T-bar and pommel lift access 800m of vertical terrain. Experts can hike past the lifts to access some bowls with heavy, wet snow and lovely tree-skiing.

In town, **Museo Regional de la Patagonia** (cnr Av General Baquedano & Eusebio Lillo; admission US\$7.5; ☎ 9am-6pm Dec-Feb, limited hours rest of year) catalogues pioneer artifacts and Jesuit regalia. **Feria Artesanal** (Plaza de Armas) sells woolens, leather and wooden knickknacks.

Sleeping

Rates listed here are with shared bathroom.

Albergue Las Salamandras (☎ 211-865; www.salamandras.cl; campsites/dm/d US\$7/16/26) On a wooded bank of Río Simpson, this rustic guesthouse offers ample common spaces, two kitchens, and dorm beds weighted in blankets.

Hospedaje Don Santiago (☎ 231-116; Errázuriz 1040; r US\$8) A wonderfully welcoming place, with matchbox-sized rooms and thermoses of hot water on request.

Reserva Nacional Coyhaique (5-person site US\$9) Well-equipped sites; consult with Conaf.

Hospedaje Lautaro (☎ 238-116; Lautaro 269; r US\$9; ☎ summer only) Frayed rooms and pleather couches characterize this flophouse handy to the terminal.

Hospedaje María Ester (☎ 233-023; Lautaro 544; s US\$10) Bright petite rooms each have windows but the number of singles is limited.

Hospedaje Sra Blanca (☎ 232-158; Simpson 459; s US\$12) Ample rooms with fussy lace curtains, tucked behind grandmother's rose garden.

Doña Herminia (☎ 231-579; 21 de Mayo 60; s incl breakfast US\$10) Herminia's affectionate service and attention to details like reading lamps and fresh towels make these impeccable rooms a steal.

Residencial Mónica (☎ 234-302; Eusebio Lillo 664; s US\$12) Well-attended and cozy in prim '60s style.

Camping La Alborada (☎ 238-868; 5-person site US\$20) Clean with good amenities and sheltered sites; 1km from town.

Eating & Drinking

Two large supermarkets sit side by side on Lautaro.

Pastelería Amancay (21 de Mayo 340; dessert US\$3) Droolworthy, with five kinds of chocolate cake, *küchen* and hand-crafted chocolates.

Casino de Bomberos (Gral Parra 365; lunch US\$5) A happening greasy-spoon in the fire station with reasonable lunches.

Lito's (☎ 214-528; Lautaro 147; meals US\$5-9) Clad modestly in vinyl paneling, this local fave expertly cooks Chilean preparations of meat, seafood and salads.

Café Express (cnr Arturo Prat & Freire; meals US\$6) Join locals for simple café fare and beer on tap.

Cafetería Alemana (Condell 119; sandwiches US\$6) Service drags but it's good for large beef sandwiches in a country kitsch ambience.

Café Ricer (Horn 48; mains US\$10-12) Charging high prices for sheepskin chairs and rustic-chic, Ricer reels in the beautiful people with a catalogue of offerings which includes tasty pizza, salads and ice cream, but service is its weak suit.

Piel Roja (Moraleda 495; ☎ 6pm-5am) Abuzz with the youth and outdoor crowd, this colorful club sports a swank bar and upstairs dance floor that shakes till all hours.

Pub Z (Moraleda 420) A former barn hosting occasional art exhibits and live music.

Getting There & Away

AIR

The region's main airport is in Balmaceda, 50km southeast of Coyhaique. **Lan** (☎ 600-526-2000; Gral Parra 402) has daily flights to Puerto Montt (one hour) and Santiago (2½ hours). **Sky** (☎ 240-825; Arturo Prat 203) is another choice.

BOAT

Ferries to Puerto Montt leave from Puerto Chacabuco, two hours from Coyhaique by bus. Schedules are subject to change.

Navimag (☎ 233-306; www.navimag.com; Horn 47-D) sails from Puerto Chacabuco to Puerto Montt (US\$52 to US\$216, 18 hours) several times per week. **Mar del Sur** (☎ 231-255; Av General Baquedano 146-A) runs ferries to/from Puerto Ibáñez and

DETOUR TO PIONEER PATAGONIA

When winds roar sidelong and rains persist, take refuge by the woodstove, drink a round of *mates* and *echar la talla* (pass the time) with the locals. Rural Patagonia offers a rare and privileged glimpse of a fading way of life. To jump-start their slack rural economy, government and nonprofit initiatives created local guide and homestay associations.

These family enterprises range from comfortable roadside *hospedajes* and farmstays to wild multiday treks and horse trips through wonderland terrain. Prices are reasonable, ranging from US\$12 to US\$16 per day for lodging and US\$20 per day for guide services, although extras include horses and only Spanish is spoken.

RutaTransPatagonia (☎ 67-214-031; www.rutatranspatagonia.cl in Spanish) operates from Palena to Cerro Castillo, south of Coyhaique. Further north, the tourist office in the Municipalidad de Cochamó arranges similar trips near Río Puelo. It's best to book a week in advance or more, as intermediaries will have to make radio contact with the most remote hosts. That's right – no phones, no electricity, no worries.

Chile Chico (US\$5, 2½ hours). It's in high demand, so make reservations at the office in advance.

BUS

Buses operate from the **bus terminal** (cnr Lautaro & Magallanes) and separate offices. Schedules change continuously; check with Sernatur for the latest information. Unless noted, the following leave from the terminal.

For Puerto Aisén and Puerto Chacabuco, **Buses Suray** leaves approximately every 1½ hours (US\$2.50, one hour).

Companies going to Chaitén (US\$29, 12 hours) include **Buses Norte** (Gral Parra 337) and **Transporte Muñóz** (Gral Parra 337) and Bus Daniela. Otherwise, coordinate a bus to La Junta (US\$20, seven to 10 hours) with connecting buses to Chaitén.

Colectivos and shuttle buses head to Puerto Ingeniero Ibáñez (US\$7, 1½ hours) to connect with the Chile Chico ferry. These include shuttles **Colectivos Puerto Ibáñez** (cnr Arturo Prat & Errázuriz) and **Transportes Ali** (☎ 219-009, 250-346), with door-to-port service.

Acuario 13 and Buses Ñadis go to Cochrane (US\$17, seven to 10 hours) four times weekly. **Buses Don Carlos** (Cruz 63) goes to Puerto Río Tranquilo (US\$11, five hours) at 4pm Thursday and Monday, from where connections can be made to Chile Chico. Minibus Interlagos leaves for Chile Chico (US\$20, 12 hours) three mornings per week.

Queilin bus goes to Osorno and Puerto Montt via Argentina (US\$49, 20 to 22 hours) daily. For Punta Arenas, Bus Sur leaves Tuesday (US\$50, 22 hours), and for Comodoro Rivadavia on Monday and Friday (US\$30,

eight hours) from where you can transfer further south.

Getting Around

Door-to-door shuttle service (US\$5) to the airport leaves two hours before flight departure. Call **Transfer Coyhaique** (☎ 210-495, 099-838-5070) or **Transfer Aisén Tour** (☎ 217-070, 099-489-4760).

Car rental is expensive and availability limited in summer. Try **Traeger** (☎ 231-648; Av General Baquedano 457), **Automundo AVR** (☎ 231-621; Bilbao 510), and **Automóvil Club de Chile** (☎ 231-847; JM Carrera 333). **Figon** (Simpson 888) rents (US\$10 to US\$25 per day) and repairs bikes.

LAGO GENERAL CARRERA

Split with Argentina (where it's called Lago Buenos Aires), this massive 224,000-hectare lake is often a wind-stirred green-blue sea in the middle of a sculpted Patagonian steppe. Its rough and twisty roads dwarf the traveler: you'll feel like you're crawling through the landscape. This section follows the Carretera Austral south from Coyhaique, around the lake's western border.

Just before reaching Balmaceda from Coyhaique, a right-hand turnoff (the sign points to Cochrane) heads toward **Reserva Nacional Cerro Castillo**. The spires of glacier-bound Cerro Castillo tower over some 180,000 hectares of southern beech forest. In Villa Cerro Castillo (km 104) stay with **Don Niba** (☎ public phone 067-419-200; Los Pioneros 872; s incl breakfast US\$10), guide, storyteller and grandson of pioneers, in a comfortable home with whopping breakfasts. He also offers horse treks and hikes.

Along the western shore, **Puerto Río Tranquilo** has a petrol station. Boat tours visit **Capilla de Mármol** (marble chapel) when the water's calm. North of town an (unfinished) glacier-lined road to Parque Nacional Laguna San Rafael bumps toward the coast. **Residencial Darka** (☎ 067-419-500; Arrayanes 330; s/d incl breakfast US\$10/20) has a few decent rooms and a friendly owner. Wild camping is possible on the windy beach, or 10km west at Lago Tranquilo.

About 13km east of Cruce El Maitén **Puerto Guadal** has petrol and provisions. Pitch a tent lakefront, or hunker down at the well-weathered **Hostería Huemules** (☎ 067-431-212; Las Magnolias 382; r per person US\$10), attended by its next-door host Don Kemel. No less than legend, he's sometimes willing to share a tale of navy days in Valparaíso or his youth in Beirut.

Chile Chico

☎ 067 / pop 4000

Gold and silver mines dot the roller-coaster road from Puerto Guadal, ending in Chile Chico, a sunny oasis of wind-pummeled poplars and orchards. From here, buses connect to Los Antiguos (p151) and Ruta 40 leading to southern Argentine Patagonia. Nearby **Reserva Nacional Jeinemeni** (admission US\$2), 60km away, is a treasure of flamingos and turquoise mountain lagoons. Aside from a few expensive tours, there's little transportation. You can try to grab a ride in with **Conaf** (☎ 411-325; Blest Gana 121) rangers.

There is **tourist information** (☎ 411-123; cnr O'Higgins & Lautaro) and a **Banco del Estado** (González 112) for money exchange.

You can stay at the ultrafriendly **Kon Aiken** (☎ 411-598; Pedro Burgos 6; camping per person US\$5, dm US\$10) or the endearing **Hospedaje No Me Olvides** (campsites per person US\$5, s US\$16), 200m from town toward Argentina; it has snugly, large and clean rooms, kitchen use and meals. **Oliser** (☎ 411-904; O'Higgins 426; s US\$10) has tip-top ample rooms above the phone center. **Hospedaje Brisas del Lago** (☎ 411-204; Manuel Rodríguez 443; s/d US\$15/24) is comfortable and clean, but lacking sparks.

Café Elizabeth y Loly (Pedro González 25; mains US\$3-9) offers evening café-culture, strong coffee and delicious authentic baklava. **El Monchito** (O'Higgins 250; meals US\$7) prepares scrumptious tortellini and offers set menus on ferry days.

Getting There & Away

BOAT

Mar del Sur's auto-passenger ferries cross between Chile Chico and Puerto Ingeniero Ibáñez (2½ hours) several times a week. Departure days and times change often: check at the Entel office in Chile Chico for the latest posting. Rates are: passengers US\$5, bicycles US\$4, motorcycles US\$8 and vehicles US\$36. Reservations are highly recommended; for contact information, see p515.

BUS

For transportation from Coyhaique to Puerto Ibáñez, Puerto Río Tranquilo and Chile Chico, see opposite. From Chile Chico, **Acotrans** (☎ 411-582) goes to Los Antiguos, Argentina (US\$5, 20 minutes). **Transportes Condor** (☎ 419-500) goes to Puerto Río Tranquilo (US\$12, 3½ hours), stopping in Puerto Guadal (US\$6). **Transportes Ales** (☎ 411-739; Rosa Amelia 800) does the same trip, going on to Cochrane (six hours) on Wednesday and Saturday. On Wednesday morning the shuttle continues from Río Tranquilo (you must spend the night there) to Coyhaique (US\$14, 10 to 12 hours).

SOUTHERN PATAGONIA

The wind is whipping, the mountains are jagged and waters trickle clear. This desolate area first attracted missionaries and fortune seekers from Scotland, England and Croatia. Writer Francisco Coloane described these early adventurers as 'courageous men whose hearts were no more than another closed fist.' The formation of *estancias* (extensive grazing establishment, either for cattle or sheep, with a dominant owner or manager and dependent resident labor force), and the wool boom that followed created reverberating effects: great wealth for a few gained at the cost of native populations, who were nearly exterminated by disease and warfare. Later the region struggled as wool value plummeted and the Panama Canal diverted shipping routes.

Patagonia's worth may have been hard-won and nearly lost but it is now under reconsideration. While wealth once meant minerals and livestock, now it is in the very landscape. For visitors, the very thrill lies in Patagonia's isolated, spectral beauty. Torres del Paine receives 200,000 visitors a year and a growing

number set sights further south to Tierra del Fuego and Antarctica.

PUNTA ARENAS

☎ 061 / pop 125,000

If these streets could only talk: this wind-racked former penitentiary has hosted tattered sailors, miners, seal hunters, starving pioneers and wealthy dandies of the wool boom. Exploitation of one of the world's largest reserves of hydrocarbon started in the 1980s and has developed into a thriving petrochemical industry. Today's Punta Arenas is a confluence of the ruddy and the grand, geared toward tourism and industry.

Orientation

Punta Arenas' regular grid street plan, with wide streets and sidewalks, makes it easy to walk around. The Plaza de Armas, or Plaza Muñoz Gamero, is the center of town. Kiss the foot of the Ona statue for luck. Street names change on either side of the plaza. Most landmarks and accommodations are within a few blocks of here.

Information

Internet access is widely available and ATMs are common.

Conaf (☎ 223-841; José Menéndez 1147) Has details on the nearby parks.

Entel (Navarro 957; ☎ until 10pm) For phone service.

Hospital Regional (☎ 244-040; Angamos 180)

Hostal Calafate (Magallanes 926; per hr US\$1; ☎ 9am-11pm) Internet access.

Information kiosk (Plaza Muñoz Gamero; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat).

La Hermandad (Lautaro Navarro 1099) Exchange money here.

Lavazol (☎ 243-607; O'Higgins 969; per load US\$3) Laundry.

Post office (Bories 911) One block north of the plaza.

Sernatur (☎ 241-330; Waldo Seguel 689; ☎ 8:15am-6:45pm Mon-Fri, 8:15am-8pm Mon-Fri in summer) Has well-informed staff, and accommodations and transportation lists.

Telefónica (Nogueira 1116) For phone service.

Sights & Activities

The heart of the city, **Plaza Muñoz Gamero** is surrounded by opulent mansions, including the **Palacio Mauricio Braun** (Magallanes 949; admission US\$1.50; ☎ 10:30am-5pm summer, to 2pm winter), the luxurious seat of power of the 19th-century Braun-Menéndez family, who were sheep

farmers turned land magnates. Among South America's most fascinating cemeteries is **Cementerio Municipal** (Bulnes 949), a mix of humble immigrant graves with heartfelt inscriptions and extravagant tombs of the town's first families. A monument to the Selk'nam commemorates the indigenous group that was wiped out during the wool boom.

Museo Regional Salesiano (Av Bulnes 374; admission US\$3; ☎ 10am-12:30pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun) touts missionary peacemaking between indigenous groups and settlers. Worthwhile material examines the mountaineer priest Alberto de Agostini and various indigenous groups. Among the historical displays at **Museo Naval y Marítimo** (☎ Pedro Montt 981; admission US\$5; ☎ Tue-Sat) is a well-told account of the Chilean mission that rescued Sir Ernest Shackleton's crew from Antarctica.

Reserva Forestal Magallanes, 8km from town, offers great hiking and mountain biking through dense *lenga* and coigue. A steady slog takes you to the top of Mt Fenton where views are spectacular and winds impressively strong. While tame by all standards, skiing is possible (with views of the strait). The **Ski Club Andino** (☎ 241-479; www.clubandino.cl in Spanish) rents cross-country equipment (US\$6 for two hours) and downhill gear (US\$16 per day).

Inhospita Patagonia (☎ 224-510; Lautaro Navarro 1013) offers treks to Cape Froward, the southernmost point on mainland South America. For kayaking check out **Turismo Yamana** (☎ 221-130; Av Colón 568) or **Nautica** (☎ 223-117; Camino Río Seco km 7.5) by the port.

Tours

Worthwhile day trips include tours to the **Seno Otway pingüinera** (penguin colony; tours US\$10, admission US\$5; ☎ Dec-Mar) and to the town's first settlements at **Fuerte Bulnes & Puerto Hambre** (tours US\$14, admission US\$2). Lodgings can help arrange tours, or try the following:

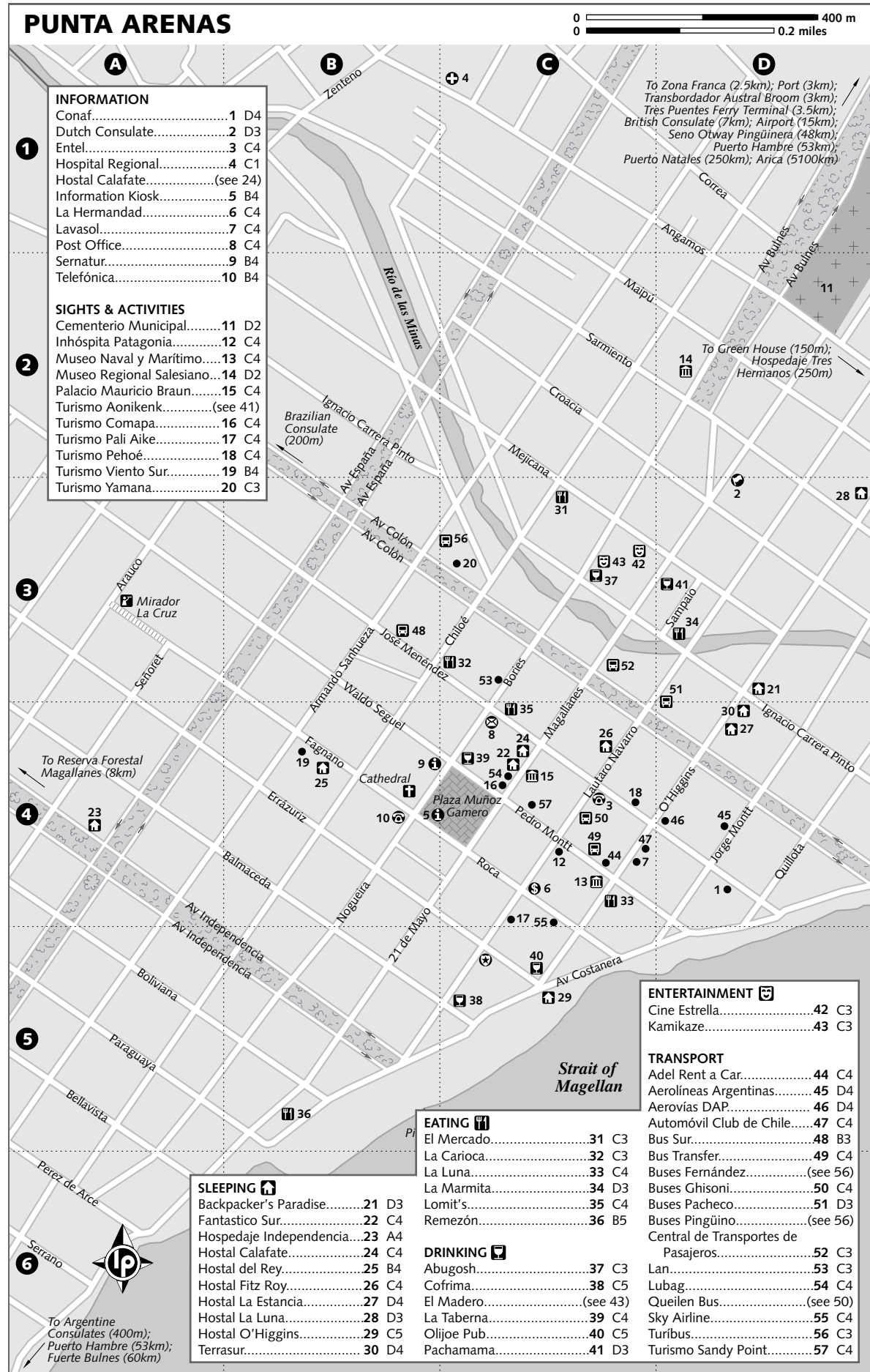
Turismo Aonikenk (☎ 228-332; www.aonikenk.com; Magallanes 619) Well regarded with multilingual staff.

Turismo Pali Aike (☎ 223-301; www.turismopaliaike.com; Lautaro Navarro 1129)

Turismo Pehoe (☎ 244-506; www.pehoe.com; José Menéndez 918)

Turismo Viento Sur (☎ 226-930; www.vientosur.com; Fagnano 565)

Tours on the *Barcaza Melinka* to see penguin colonies on **Isla Magdalena** (Monumento Natural Los Pingüinos; adult/child US\$30/15) leave Tuesday,



Thursday and Saturday, December through February. Book tickets through **Turismo Comapa** (☎ 200-200; www.comapa.com; Magallanes 990).

Festivals & Events

The fireworks and parades of **Carnaval de Invierno** (end of July) cheer up the winter in Punta Arenas.

Sleeping

Hospedaje Independencia (☎ 227-572; Av Independencia 374; camping/dm US\$3/6; 📺) Humming with backpackers, this upbeat home is a bit cramped but the price is unbeatable. Bike rentals are US\$10 per day.

Hospedaje Tres Hermanos (☎ 225-450; Angamos 1218; dm/s incl breakfast US\$8/12) This gem with warm grandmotherly reception is good value. It's east of the center.

Backpacker's Paradise (☎ 240-104; Ignacio Carrera Pinto 1022; dm US\$7; 📺) Bohemian would understate Paradise's doorless living, but the vibe is good.

Hostal O'Higgins (☎ 227-999; O'Higgins 1205; dm per person US\$10; 📺) Immaculate and well located, with large, locker room-style bathrooms, hot showers and a shared kitchen.

Hostal del Rey (☎ 223-924; Fagnano 589; dm US\$12, 2-/4-person apt US\$30/60; 📺) Teddies and silk flowers lord over this clean and pleasant home.

Hostal La Estancia (☎ 249-130; carmenalect@yahoo.com; O'Higgins 765; dm US\$12, s US\$25-29, d US\$35-39) A big house with wallpapered, high-ceiling rooms, whose excellent hosts give the warmest welcome in town. A large breakfast is included as is wireless internet and satellite TV.

Green House (☎ 227-939; Angamos 1146; per person r/cabin US\$16/20) An inviting atmosphere pervades this comfortable home hosted by a young anthropologist and her family. Guests can cook and German is spoken. It's east of the center.

Hostal La Luna (☎ 221-764; hostalluna@hotmail.com; O'Higgins 424; s/d US\$12/20; 📺) A cozy steal with native wood details and down comforters.

Hostal Calafate (☎ 241-281; Magallanes 926; s/d US\$31/49) A comfortable midrange choice smack in the center, with a selection of good rooms not quite insulated from the traffic.

Hostal Fitz Roy (☎ 240-430; hostalfitzroy@hotmail.com; Lautaro Navarro 850; s/d/tr incl breakfast US\$24/39/53) A country house plunked into the city, with an old corduroy sofa, sea charts and ample breakfasts. Rooms have phones and TV.

Terrasur (☎ 247-114; www.hostalterrasur.cl; O'Higgins 123; s/d US\$42/58) Plush, with well-appointed

rooms in floral themes, a small flower-filled courtyard and relaxing spaces.

Eating & Drinking

Lomit's (José Menéndez 722; sandwiches US\$3-5) The griddle holds center court in this bustling neon café where the locals down *shop Fanta* (orange soda and beer) and foreigners bellow at their home football teams on the tube.

La Carioca (José Menéndez 600; mains US\$4-8) The downtown stop for pizza, with good-value daily lunch specials.

La Marmita (Sampaio 678; mains US\$5-10; 📺 lunch & dinner) This place offers a delightful dining experience: everything from the steak with Carmenere sauce to the stuffed figs desert is prepared with care in a friendly kaleidoscope-color ambience.

El Mercado (Mejicana 617; mains US\$5-10; 📺 24hr) An institution of heaping seafood specialties, open all night for the postparty crowd.

Remezón (21 de Mayo 1469; mains US\$6-12) Creative cooking with seafood centerpieces; try the salmon smoked with black tea. Have a *pisco sour* to start the night.

La Luna (O'Higgins 974; seafood pastas US\$8-12) Lined with the world map and a precious wall of Chilean wines, this worldly stop offers great specials like king crab in addition to signature pastas.

Olijoe Pub (Errázuriz 970) For drinks, saddle up to swank leather booths in this ultra-Anglo pub.

La Taberna (Plaza Muñoz Gamero) Or you can drink here, a classic old-boys club tucked in the Sara Braun mansion.

El Madero (Bories 655) Warm up for clubbing here.

Pachamama (Magallanes 698) sells dried nuts and fruits. Large supermarkets in town include **Abugosh** (Bories 647) and **Cofrima** (Navarro & Balmaceda).

Entertainment

Kamikaze (Bories 655; cover US\$5) At this dance club, downstairs from El Madero, you can cut it up with local 20- and 30-somethings.

Cine Estrella (Mejicana 777) Shows movies.

Shopping

Zona Franca (Zofri; 📺 Mon-Sat) The duty-free zone, it offers heaps of electronics, outdoor gear, camera and film equipment. *Colectivos* shuttle back and forth from downtown throughout the day.

Getting There & Away

Check with Sernatur for bus and maritime schedules. *La Prensa Austral* newspaper lists transportation availability, contact details and schedules.

AIR

Aeropuerto Presidente Carlos Ibáñez del Campo is 20km north of town. **Lan** (☎ 600-526-2000; www.lan.com; Bories 884) flies at least four times daily to Santiago (US\$152, 4¼ hours) via Puerto Montt (US\$105, 2¼ hours) and on Saturday to the Falkland Islands/Islands Malvinas (US\$580 round-trip). Weekly *promociones* (specials) are advertised online; released every Tuesday, they go fast. **Aerolíneas Argentinas** (☎ 02-210-9000; Pedro Montt 969) arranges flights within Argentina. **Aerovías DAP** (☎ 223-340; www.dap.cl; O'Higgins 891) flies to/from Porvenir (US\$23, 20 minutes) twice daily except Sunday; Puerto Williams on Isla Navarino (US\$82, 1¼ hours) several times a week; Ushuaia (US\$82, one hour) on Tuesday and Friday. Luggage is limited to 10kg per person. **Sky Airline** (☎ 710-645; www.skyairline.cl; Roca btwn Lautaro Navarro & O'Higgins) flies to Santiago and Puerto Montt.

BOAT

Transbordadora Austral Broom (☎ 218-100; www.tabsa.cl; Av Bulnes 05075) sails to Porvenir, Tierra del Fuego (US\$7, 2½ to four hours), from the Tres Puentes ferry terminal (*colectivos* leave from Palacio Mauricio Braun). A faster way to get to Tierra del Fuego (US\$2, 20 minutes) is via the Punta Delgada–Bahía Azul crossing northeast of Punta Arenas. Ferries leave every 90 minutes from 8:30am to 10:15pm. Call ahead for vehicle reservations (US\$18).

Broom also runs the ferry *Patagonia*, which sails from Tres Puentes to Puerto Williams, Isla Navarino, two or three times a month, Wednesday only, returning Friday (US\$150 to US\$180 including meals, 38 hours). This tour through the Beagle Channel offers incredible scenery and a chance to see occasional dolphins or whales. Paying extra for a bunk is advisable.

BUS

Bus Transfer departs (US\$3) throughout the day to coincide with flight schedules. **Turismo Sandy Point** (☎ 222-241; Pedro Montt 840) runs door-to-door shuttle service (US\$4.50) to/from the city center. DAP runs its own shuttle service

(US\$2). Puerto Natales-bound travelers can take buses directly from the airport.

Punta Arenas has no central bus terminal. Only one bus goes daily to Ushuaia, it's imperative to nab reservations one week in advance. It may be cheaper and easier to go to Río Grande and hop on *micros* heading to Ushuaia. Companies and destinations include the following:

Bus Sur (José Menéndez 552) Puerto Natales, Coyhaique, Puerto Montt, Ushuaia.

Bus Transfer (Pedro Montt 966) Puerto Natales, airport transfers.

Buses Fernández, Turibus & Buses Pingüino

(Armando Sanhueza 745) Puerto Natales, Puerto Montt, Río Gallegos, Torres del Paine.

Buses Ghisoni & Queilen Bus (Lautaro Navarro 975) Río Gallegos, Río Grande, Ushuaia, Coyhaique, Puerto Montt.

Buses Pacheco (www.busespacheco.com; Av Colón 900) Puerto Natales, Río Grande, Río Gallegos, Ushuaia, Puerto Montt.

Central de Transportes de Pasajeros (cnr Magallanes & Av Colón) All destinations.

Destination	Duration (hr)	Cost (US\$)
Coyhaique	20-22	45-50
El Calafate	8-11	25-37
Puerto Montt	30-36	50-59
Puerto Natales	3-4	5-7
Río Gallegos	5-8	12-15
Río Grande	8-9	18-20
Ushuaia	12-14	30-36

Getting Around

Colectivos (US50¢, more at night and Sunday) zip around town; catch northbound ones on Av Magallanes or Av España and southbound along Bories or Av España.

Adel Rent a Car (☎ 235-471; www.adelrentacar.cl; Pedro Montt 962) provides attentive service, competitive rates and travel tips. You can also try **Lubag** (☎ 242-023; Magallanes 970). All agencies can arrange papers for crossing into Argentina. The **Automóvil Club de Chile** (☎ 243-675; O'Higgins 931) offers travel assistance to drivers.

PUERTO NATALES

☎ 061 / pop 18,000

A pastel wash of corrugated-tin houses shoulder to shoulder, this once-dull fishing port on Seno Última Esperanza has become a clattering hub of Gore-tex clad travelers headed to the continent's number-one national park.

Information

Most banks have ATMs.

Banco del Estado (Plaza de Armas) Changes cash.

Conaf (☎ 411-438; O'Higgins 584) Has an administrative office here.

CyberCafe (Blanco Encalada 226; per hr US\$1;

☎ 9am-9pm) Get online here.

Entel (Baquedano 270)

Hospital (☎ 411-533; O'Higgins & Ignacio Carrera Pinto)

Municipal tourist office (☎ 411-263; Manuel Bulnes 285) In the museum; offers useful listings.

Post office (Eberhard 429)

Redfarma (Arturo Prat 158) A good pharmacy.

Sernatur (☎ 412-125; Costanera Pedro Montt) This place offers information but is less helpful than the tourist office.

Servilaundry (Manuel Bulnes 513; per load US\$4)

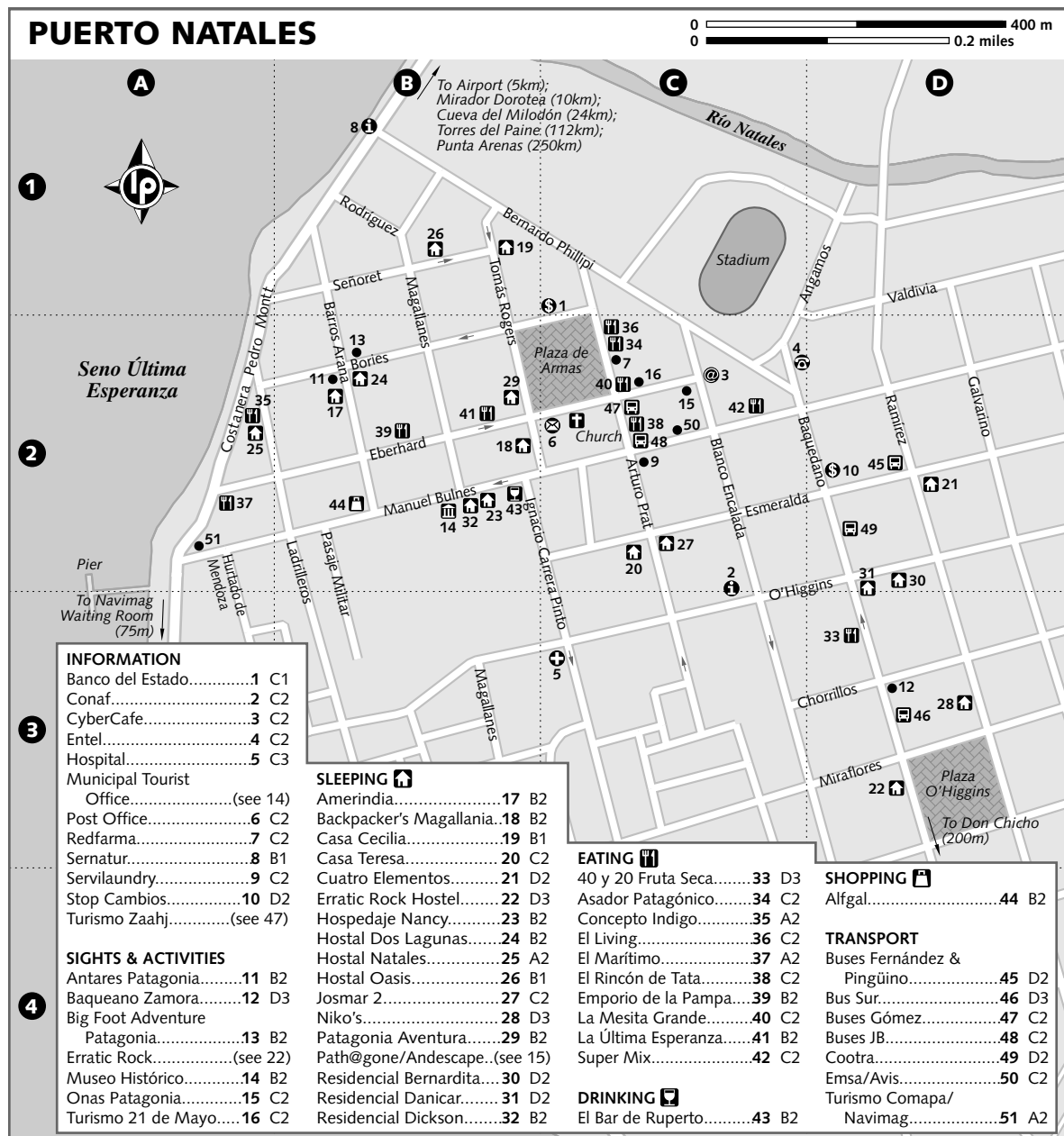
Offers laundry service, as do many hostels.

Stop Cambios (Baquedano 386) Changes cash.

Sights & Activities

For a little context, the small **Museo Histórico** (☎ 411-263; Manuel Bulnes 285; admission free; ☎ 8:30am-12:30pm & 2:30-6pm Tue-Sun) has artifacts from Yagan and Tehuelche cultures and colonists in well-marked displays.

Warm up for the big expedition on **Mirador Dorotea**, a rocky headland less than 10km from Natales off Ruta 9. A sign at lot 14 marks the way to the lookout. The hiking trail passes through a *lenga* forest and provides fantastic views of the glacial valley and surrounding peaks at the end.



CHILE

Tours

English-speaking tour agencies for the active include **Antares Patagonia** (☎ 414-611; www.atarespatagonia.com; Barros Arana 111) and **Erratic Rock** (☎ 411-472; www.erraticrock.com; Erratic Rock Hostel, Baquedano 719). For more adventure outfitters, see p524.

Sleeping

Beds abound, but the best selection fills up fast in high season, so call to reserve. Rates tumble off-season.

Hospedaje Nancy (☎ 411-186; Manuel Bulnes 343; s/d US\$10/16) Lived-in but well kept, with an incredibly sweet matron at the helm.

Erratic Rock Hostel (☎ 411-472; www.erraticrock.com; Baquedano 719; dm/s/d incl breakfast US\$12/16/32; 📺) A shabby-chic climbers haunt with the best customer service in town, as well as a movie library, cowboy coffee and American breakfasts.

Patagonia Aventura (☎ 411-028; Tomás Rogers 179; dm/d US\$12/29; 📺) Woodcarvings and comfy little rooms fill this all-service *hostal* with café breakfasts, a gear shop and trip assistance.

Residencial Bernardita (☎ 411-162; O'Higgins 765; r per person US\$14) This place has immaculately kept corrugated-tin rooms, tea and coffee service and kitchen use.

Casa Cecilia (☎ 411-797; Tomás Rogers 64; s/d incl breakfast US\$15/21) Clean and central, Cecilia offers cramped but pleasant rooms in a toasty home with breakfast with homemade bread, hot showers and camping rentals.

Hostal Dos Lagunas (☎ 415-733; Barros Arana 104; r per person US\$18) A warm and hospitable wooden home with oversized rooms, kitchen breakfasts and loads of travel tips.

Hostal Natales (☎ 410-081; www.hostalnatales.cl; Ladrilleros 209 dm/d US\$20/59; 📺) Lime green and spanking new, this relatively quiet *hostal* boasts tasteful and toasty rooms, all with private bathroom.

Hostal Oasis (☎ 411-675; Señoret 332; s/d incl breakfast US\$20/29) Snug and slightly chintzy with friendly service, breakfast and fluffy bedding.

Amerindia (☎ 411-945; Barros Arana 135; r per person incl breakfast US\$20; 📺) Funky and functional, quiet Amerindia brims with arty and retro touches. There's a lovely bathroom, self-serve breakfast, patio for drying tents and free internet and cable TV.

Cuatro Elementos (☎ 415-751; www.4elementos.cl; Esmeralda 813; dm/s/d incl breakfast US\$20/29/60) A simple, ecofriendly guest space crafted by a

mountain guide who has tenderly recycled zinc, driftwood and old woodstoves for precious results. The fresh baked bread and luxuriant attentions convince you to stay on.

Also recommended are these clean and serviceable options:

Josmar 2 (☎ 414-417; Esmeralda 517; camping US\$4, dm US\$6)

Casa Teresa (☎ 410-472; Esmeralda 483; dm incl breakfast US\$7)

Residencial Danicar (☎ 412-170; O'Higgins 707; dm/s US\$8/10; 📺)

Backpacker's Magallania (☎ 414-950; Tomás Rogers 255; dm/d incl breakfast US\$10/28)

Residencial Dickson (☎ 411-871; Bulnes 307; r per person incl breakfast US\$12)

Niko's (☎ 412-810; Ramírez 669; r per person US\$12)

Eating & Drinking

40 y 20 Fruta Seca (☎ 210-661; Baquedano 443) Shoppers can hit this place for dried fruits and nuts perfect for the trail.

Super Mix (☎ 210-661; Baquedano 443) Sells groceries for self-catering.

Emporio de la Pampa (Eberhard btwn Magallanes & Barros Arana; snacks US\$3-9) Slip into this skinny, cask-lined nook for Chilean wine and cheese or coffee and delicious baked goods.

El Rincón de Tata (Arturo Prat 236; mains US\$4-10) Sandwiches and Chilean classics are served in this smoky, well-worn atmosphere.

El Living (Arturo Prat 156; mains US\$6) A gringo den whose exotic and vegan-friendly offerings aren't as tasty as they sound. Still, where else can you read German magazines and drink real coffee?

Concepto Indigo (Ladrilleros 105; mains US\$5-9) Wind down in this comfortable café stuck right on the sound with an excellent selection of wine and hearty fare.

El Marítimo (Costanera Pedro Montt 214; mains US\$5-10) Unfussy fish and seafood platters served with a view to the sound.

La Última Esperanza (Eberhard 354; mains US\$5-15) White linen tablecloths and exquisite seafood plates served with potent *pisco sours*.

La Mesita Grande (Arturo Prat 196; pizzas US\$14) A converted wool shop with one long worn table as its centerpiece. Travelers mix and feast on heavenly thin-crust pizzas with toppings like spinach and cured ham or lemon-spiked salmon.

Asador Patagónico (Arturo Prat 158; dinner for 2 people US\$35; 📺 lunch & dinner) Sides of meat are flame-seared before your eyes in this fancy restaurant for mastedon appetites.

El Bar de Ruperto (cnr Manuel Bulnes & Magallanes; ☑) Foosball, chess and Guinness help you forget you're so far from home.

Shopping

Alfgal (Barros Arana 249) Sells camping supplies.

Getting There & Away

BOAT

Weather and tidal conditions affect ferry arrival dates. To confirm travel with Navimag's *Magallanes* (Puerto Montt–Punta Arenas) contact **Turismo Comapa** (☎ 414-300; www.comapa.com; Manuel Bulnes 533). See p503 for rate information.

BUS

Puerto Natales has no central bus terminal. Book way ahead in high season, especially for am departures. Carriers include **Buses Fernández & Pingüino** (www.busesfernandez.com; Eberhard 399), **Bus Sur** (www.bus-sur.cl; Baquedano 558), **Cootra** (Baquedano 456), **Buses JB** (Arturo Prat 258), **Turismo Zaahj** (www.turismozaahj.co.cl in Spanish; Arturo Prat 236) and **Buses Gómez** (www.busesgomez.com; Arturo Prat 234). Service is limited off-season.

To Torres del Paine, buses leave two to three times daily at around 7am, 8am and 2:30pm. If you're heading to Mountain Lodge Paine Grande in the off-season, take the morning bus (US\$10 round-trip, two hours) to meet the catamaran (US\$12.50 one way, US\$20 round-trip, two hours).

To Punta Arenas (US\$6 to US\$7, three hours), Buses Fernández is the best, but also try Bus Sur. Look for direct airport buses.

To Río Gallegos, Argentina (US\$12, four hours), Bus Sur leaves Tuesday and Thursday; El Pingüino, at the Fernández terminal, goes at 11am Wednesday and Sunday.

To El Calafate, Argentina (US\$20 to US\$30, 5½ hours), Zaahj, Cootra (also serving Río Turbio) and Bus Sur have the most service.

To travel to Coyhaique (US\$60, 22 hours) take Bus Sur.

Getting Around

Try **Emsa/Avis** (☎ 241-182; Manuel Bulnes 632) for car rentals, though rates are better in Punta Arenas.

PARQUE NACIONAL TORRES DEL PAINE

These 3000m granite spires are a globetrotter's Kubla Khan. The Torres are a day's walk from the nearest bus, but the park's diverse land-

scapes require a full pilgrimage (preferably with needlessly heavy packs) through steppe and southern beech forest, over dangling foot-bridges and past creeping glaciers. Torres del Paine (2800m), Paine Grande (3050m) and Los Cuernos (2200m to 2600m) are the poster boys of this 181,000-hectare Unesco Biosphere Reserve. Most hike the circuit or the 'W' to soak in these classic panoramas, leaving other perfectly marvelous trails deserted. You can further avoid the masses by visiting in November or March to April. Sudden rainstorms and knock-down gusts are part of the hearty initiation. Bring waterproof gear, a synthetic sleeping bag, and, if you're camping, a good tent. In 2005 a hiker burned down 10% of the park using a portable stove in windy conditions. Sloppy camping has consequences. Be conscientious and tread lightly – you are one of 200,000 yearly guests.

Orientation & Information

Parque Nacional Torres del Paine is 112km north of Puerto Natales via a decent but sometimes bumpy gravel road. At Villa Cerro Castillo there is a seasonal border crossing into Argentina at Cancha Carrera. The road continues 40km north and west to **Portería Sarmiento** (admission US\$17, paid in pesos Chilenos), the main entrance where user fees are collected. It's another 37km to the *administración* (park headquarters) and the **Conaf Centro de Visitantes** (☎ 9am-8pm in summer), with good information on park ecology and trail status.

The park is open year-round, subject to your ability to get there. Visitor flow is edging toward regulation, but not there yet. Internet resources include www.torresdelpaine.com and *hostal* website www.erraticrock.com, with a good backpacker equipment list.

Activities

HIKING

Doing the circuit (the 'W' plus the backside of the peaks) requires seven to nine days, while the 'W' takes four to five. Add another day or two for transportation connections. Most trekkers start either route from Laguna Amarga and head west. You can also hike from the *administración* or take the catamaran from Pudeto to Lago Pehoé and start from there (see p526); hiking roughly southwest to northeast along the 'W' presents more views of Los Cuernos. Trekking alone, especially on the backside of the circuit, is inadvisable and restricted by Conaf.

The 'W'

The trail to **Mirador Las Torres** is relatively easy, except for the last hour's scramble up boulders. The trail to Refugio Los Cuernos is the most windy along the W. **Valle Frances** is not to be missed. Plan time to get all the way to the lookout at Campamento Británico. From Valle Frances to Lago Pehoé can get windy, but is relatively easy. The stretch to **Lago Grey** is moderate, with some steep parts. The glacier lookout is another half-hour past the *refugio*.

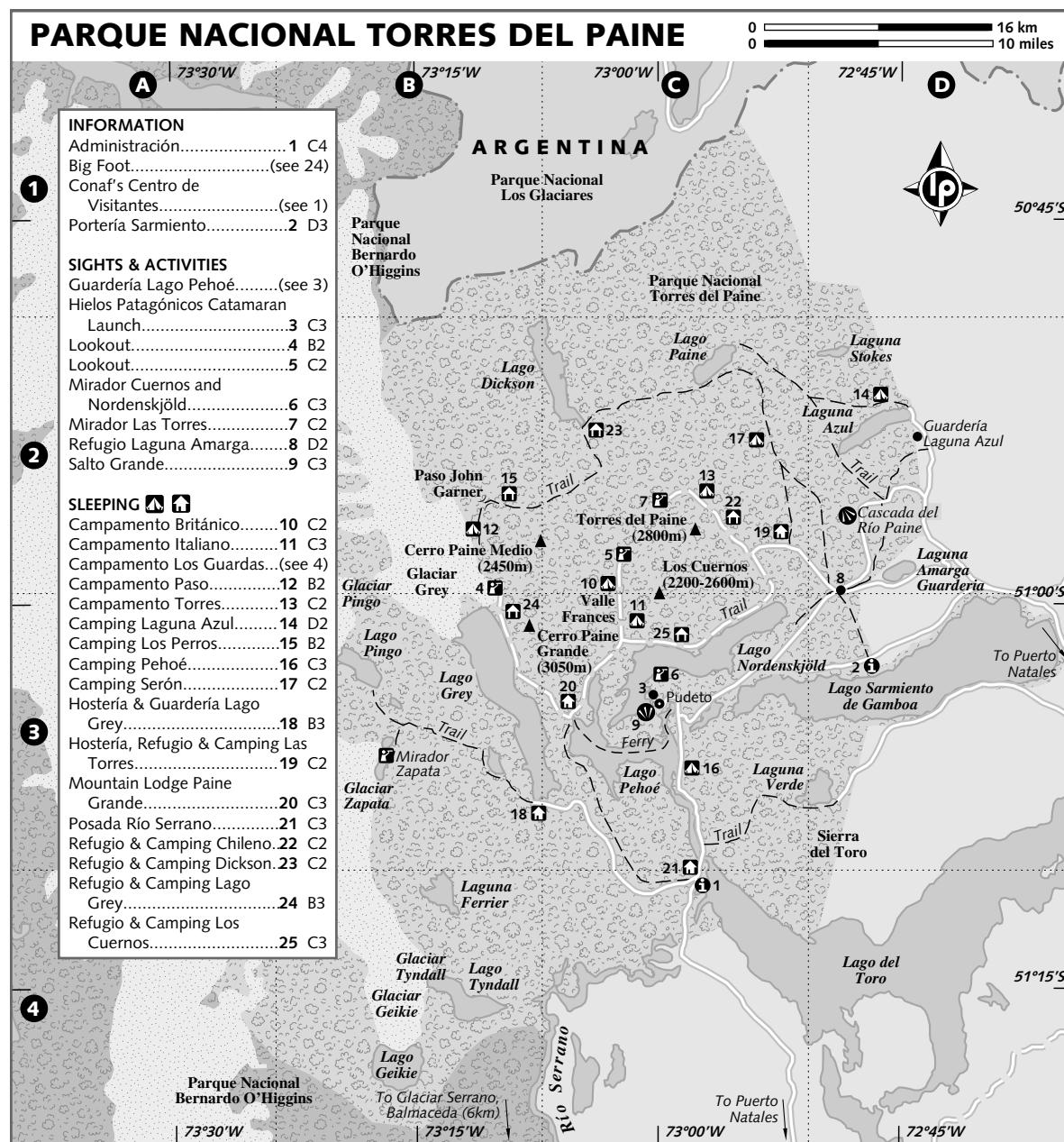
The Circuit

The landscape along the backside of the peaks is a lot more desolate yet still beautiful. Paso John Garner (the most extreme part of the

trek) sometimes offers knee-deep mud and snow. There's one basic *refugio* at Los Perros, the rest is rustic camping. Factor four to six hours between each camp.

Other Trails

Abandoning the beaten path rewards with solitude and new discoveries. From the Laguna Amarga Guardería, a four-hour hike leads through barren land to **Laguna Azul**. Camp on the northeastern shore. Another two hours north the trail reaches Lago Paine. From *administración*, the three-hour hike to Mountain Lodge Paine Grande is an easy, level trail with fantastic views. A truly remote four-hour trail from Guadería Lago Grey follows Río Pingo to the former site of Refugio Zapata.



Continue about another 1½ to two hours to a lookout over **Glaciar Zapata**.

GLACIER TREKKING & KAYAKING

Big Foot Adventure Patagonia (☎ 061-414-611; www.bigfootpatagonia.com; Borjes 206, Puerto Natales) leads ice hikes (US\$75) on Glaciar Grey. Paddle your way out of the park with Big Foot and **Onas Patagonia** (☎ 061-412-707; Eberhard 599, Puerto Natales). Its two- to three-day kayaking trips down Río Serrano aren't budget travel, but offer a unique way to experience the park.

HORSE-RIDING

Due to property divisions within the park, horses cannot cross between the western sections (Lagos Grey and Pehoé, Río Serrano) and the eastern part managed by Hostería Las Torres (Refugio Los Cuernos is the approximate cut-off). **Baqueano Zamora** (☎ 061-413-953; www.baqueanozamora.com; Baquedano 534, Puerto Natales) runs excursions to Lagos Pingo, Paine and Azul, and Laguna Amarga (half day US\$55, lunch included).

Sleeping

Make reservations! Arriving at the park without them, especially in the high season, enslaves you to make camp in the few free options. Travel agencies offer reservations, but it's best to go directly through the concessions. **Path@gone/Andescape** (☎ 061-413-290; www.pathagone.com; Eberhard 595, Puerto Natales) manages Lagos Grey and Dickson. **Vertices Patagonia** (☎ 061-412-742; www.verticepatagonia.cl) owns and runs Mountain Lodge Paine Grande. **Fantastico Sur** (☎ 061-710-050; www.fantasticosur.com; Magallanes 960, Punta Arenas; admission US\$80¢; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10:30am-1:30pm & 3-5pm Sat & Sun) owns Torres, Chileno and Los Cuernos, and Serón *refugios* and campgrounds.

Some *refugios* may require photo ID (ie a passport) upon check-in. Photocopy your tourist card and passport for all lodgings in advance to expedite check-in. Staff can radio ahead to confirm your next reservation. Given the huge volume of trekkers, snags are inevitable, so practice your Zen composure.

CAMPING

Camping at the *refugios* costs US\$6 per site. *Refugios* rent equipment – tent (US\$11 per night), sleeping bag (US\$6), mat (US\$3) and stove (US\$5) – but potential shortages in high season make it prudent to pack your own gear.

Small kiosks sell expensive pasta, soup packets and butane gas. Sites administered by Conaf are free and very basic. Many campers have reported wildlife (in rodent form) lurking around campsites; don't leave food in packs or in tents, instead hang it from a tree.

REFUGIOS

Refugio rooms have four to eight bunk beds each, kitchen privileges (for lodgers and during specific hours only), hot showers and meals. A bed costs US\$17 to US\$30, sleeping-bag rental US\$7, meals US\$7 to US\$12. Should the *refugio* be overbooked, staff provide all necessary camping equipment. Most *refugios* close by the end of April. Mountain Lodge Paine Grande is the only one that stays open year-round, but it has very limited operations.

Getting There & Away

For details of transportation to the park, see p524) in Puerto Natales. Going to El Calafate from the park on the same day requires joining a tour or careful advance planning, since there is no direct service. Your best bet is to return to Puerto Natales.

Buses drop off and pick up passengers at Laguna Amarga, the Hielos Patagónicos catamaran launch at Pudeto and at park headquarters. The catamaran leaves Pudeto for Lago Pehoé (one way/round-trip per person US\$18/32) at 9:30am, noon and 6pm December to mid-March, noon and 6pm in late March and November, and at noon only in September, October and April. Another launch travels Lago Grey between **Hostería Lago Grey** (☎ 061-225-986; www.austrohoteles.cl) and Refugio Lago Grey (US\$30 one way, 1½ to two hours) a couple of times daily; contact the *hostería* for the current schedule.

PARQUE NACIONAL BERNARDO O'HIGGINS

Virtually inaccessible, O'Higgins remains the elusive and exclusive home of glaciers and waterfowl. The national park can only be entered by boat. Full-day boat excursions (US\$60) to the base of Glaciar Serrano are run by **Turismo 21 de Mayo** (☎ 061-411-978; www.turismo21demayo.cl in Spanish; Eberhard 560, Puerto Natales) and **Path@gone** (☎ 061-413-290; www.pathagone.com; Eberhard 595, Puerto Natales).

You can access Torres del Paine via boat to Glaciar Serrano. Passengers transfer to a Zodiac (a rubber boat with a motor), stop for

lunch at Estancia Balmaceda (US\$15) and continue up Río Serrano, arriving at the southern border of the park by 5pm. The same tour can be done leaving the park, but may require camping near Río Serrano to catch the Zodiac at 9am. The trip costs US\$90 from Turismo 21 de Mayo or **Onas Patagonia** (☎ 061-413-290; www.pathagone.com; Eberhard 595, Puerto Natales).

TIERRA DEL FUEGO

Smoldering blazes from Yagan camps dotting the shore made Magellan baptize these islands Land of Fire. A wedge of mountains, lakes and steppe, it was once home to great herds of roaming guanaco and over four thousand indigenous Yagan, Huash, Alacaluf and Selk'nam. Newcomers transformed it. Missionaries brought 'civilized' ways. Gold-rush opportunists arrived seeking quick riches. Ambitious herders from Croatia and Chiloé came in search of *estancia* work. Extreme weather and isolation cornered many of them into starvation and disaster, and others sped the massacre of native peoples. Still a stronghold of sheep ranches, present-day Tierra del Fuego has found one more treasure to exploit – natural gas. With Chile's half not nearly as accessible as Argentina's, there's even greater reason to slip off to these parts largely unknown.

Porvenir

☎ 061 / pop 5000

Chile's largest settlement on Tierra del Fuego, Porvenir is most often visited as a day trip from Punta Arenas, but this usually means spending only a couple of hours in town and more time than a belly might wish crossing the choppy strait. The **tourist office** (Padre Mario Zavattaro 402) is upstairs from the intriguing **Museo de Tierra del Fuego** (Plaza de Armas), a curious collection of Selk'nam mummies and skulls, musical instruments used by the mission natives on Isla Dawson, and an exhibit on early Chilean cinematography.

Cordillera Darwin Expediciones (☎ 580-747, 099-640-7204; www.cordilleradarwin.com; Av Manuel Señoret 512) organizes excursions to see Peale's dolphins (US\$85, including meals), plus some well-recommended longer, all-inclusive kayaking, camping and horse-riding trips. Call to arrange pick up from San Sebastián.

For a mild adventure (the heating system's creative) stay at **Residencial Colón** (☎ 581-157; Damián Riobó 198; r per person US\$7) or, better yet, **Hotel**

España (☎ 580-160; Croacia 698; s/d US\$9/11), with comfortable beds in sprawling, sunny rooms. For a meal, **El Chispa** (cnr Viel & Señoret; breakfast US\$1.50-3, lunch US\$5-7) cooks up hearty seafood, and **Club Croata** (Av Manuel Señoret 542; mains US\$4-8) is the next best thing to Zagreb.

Transbordadora Broom (☎ 580-089) operates the auto-passenger ferry *Melinka* to Punta Arenas (US\$7 per person, US\$45 per vehicle, 2½ to four hours) at 2pm Tuesday through Saturday, and at 5pm Sunday and holidays. **Aerovías DAP** (☎ 580-089; www.dap.cl; Av Manuel Señoret) flies to Punta Arenas (US\$23) twice daily, except Sunday. Winter schedules can be limited.

Isla Navarino

Forget Ushuaia, the end of the world starts where colts roam Main St and yachts rounding Cape Horn take refuge. With over 150km of trails, Isla Navarino is a rugged backpackers' paradise, with remote slate-colored lakes, mossy *lenga* forests and the ragged spires of the **Dientes de Navarino**. Some 40,000 beavers introduced from Canada in the 1940s now plague the island; it's even on the menu, if you can find an open restaurant. The only town, **Puerto Williams** (population 2250), is a naval settlement, official port of entry for vessels en route to Cape Horn and Antarctica, and home to the last living Yagan speaker.

INFORMATION

With the information kiosk perpetually closed, head to **Akainij** (☎ 061-621-173; Central Comercial Sur 156) travel agency, which also has internet, or **Turismo SIM** (☎ 061-621-150; www.sim ltd.com; Ricardo Maragano 168) for tours and Zodiac transfers to Ushuaia. **Fueguia** (☎ 061-621-251; Prado 245) has recommended French-speaking guiding of the trekking circuits. Banco de Chile has an ATM.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Hiking to **Cerro Bandera** affords expansive views of the Beagle Channel. Start this four-hour round-trip at the Navarino Circuit. The trail ascends steeply through *lenga* to blustery stone-littered hilltops. Self-supported backpackers continue on for the whole four- to five-day **Dientes de Navarino** circuit, enjoying impossibly raw and windswept vistas under Navarino's toothy spires. The world's southernmost ethnobotanical park, **Omora** (www.omora.org) offers trails with labeled flora: go right after the **Virgen**, 4km toward Puerto

Navarino. Tiny **Museo Martín Gusinde** (☎ 061-621-043; cnr Araguay & Gusinde; donation requested; 🕒 9am-1pm & 2:30-7pm Mon-Fri, 2:30-6:30pm Sat & Sun) honors the German priest and ethnographer who worked among the Yagans from 1918-23. A ten minute walk east of town along the coast brings you to **Villa Ukika**, the last Yagan settlement. There's a *hostal* and **Kipa-Akar** (House of Woman), a modest craft shop selling language books and whale-bone knives and jewelry. Ask a villager for help if it's closed.

SLEEPING

Residencial Pusaki (☎ 061-621-116; Piloto Pardo 242; s/d incl breakfast US\$19/21) What's not to love? Under Pati's care you're more cousin-on-holiday than stranger after tagging along to barbecues or pitching in for informal dinners. Rooms are well cared for, with shared bathroom and kitchen privileges.

Hostal Lajuwa (☎ 061-621-267; Villa Ukika; dm incl breakfast US\$20) Immaculate dorm-style rooms in the Yagan community.

Hostal Coirón (☎ 061-621-227; www.hostalcoiron.cl; Ricardo Maragano 168; s/d incl breakfast US\$35/49) A tasteful guesthouse with a sun-speckled living room and kitchen privileges. The plump mattresses utter nary a sigh under weary and well-traveled bones.

Eating & Drinking

Dientes de Navarino (plaza; mains US\$5) Autochthonous Williams, serving seafood platters, *combinados* (pisco and colas) and box wine.

Club de Yates Micalvi (beer US\$4; 🕒 open late, closed Jun-Aug) Welcome aboard the *Micalvi*, a grounded German cargo boat declared a regional naval museum in 1976. It ended up a floating bar, its tilted floors filled with navy men and yachties spinning yarns and downing whiskey and Cokes.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Aerovías DAP (☎ 061-621-051; Centro Comercial) flies to Punta Arenas (US\$82) several times a week. Seats are limited and advance reservations are essential. Transbordador Austral Broom ferry *Patagonia* sails from Tres Puentes to Punta Arenas two or three times a month on Fridays (US\$150 to US\$180 including meals, 38 hours). Zodiac boats head to Ushuaia daily from September to March. Book with Akainij. The 25-minute trip is US\$100 one way. Private yachts making the trip can be found at the Club de Yates.

ISLA ROBINSON CRUSOE

Castaway Alexander Selkirk whittled away years on this craggy Pacific outpost. In spite of its literary fame, this island 670km off the coast of Valparaíso has maintained relative anonymity. Discovered in 1574, Archipiélago Juan Fernández sheltered sealers and pirates for over two centuries, including the British corsairs from whom Selkirk escaped. While Spain founded San Juan Bautista in 1750, the village had no permanent presence until 1877. It garnered world attention when the British Navy sank the *Dresden* in Cumberland Bay during WWI.

The jagged geography of this island (22km long and 7km wide) translates to erratic weather. Prepare for warm to cool temperatures (averaging 22°C) in the rainy season from April to September. A Unesco World Biosphere Reserve and national park since 1935, the island's extraordinary vegetation has affinities ranging from Andean to Hawaiian. Endemic plants have paid dearly for the introduction of mainland species, including the goats that Selkirk supped on. Look for the Juan Fernández fur seal, nearly extinct a century ago, its population now around 9000. With luck you'll glimpse the rare Juan Fernández hummingbird; the male is a garish red.

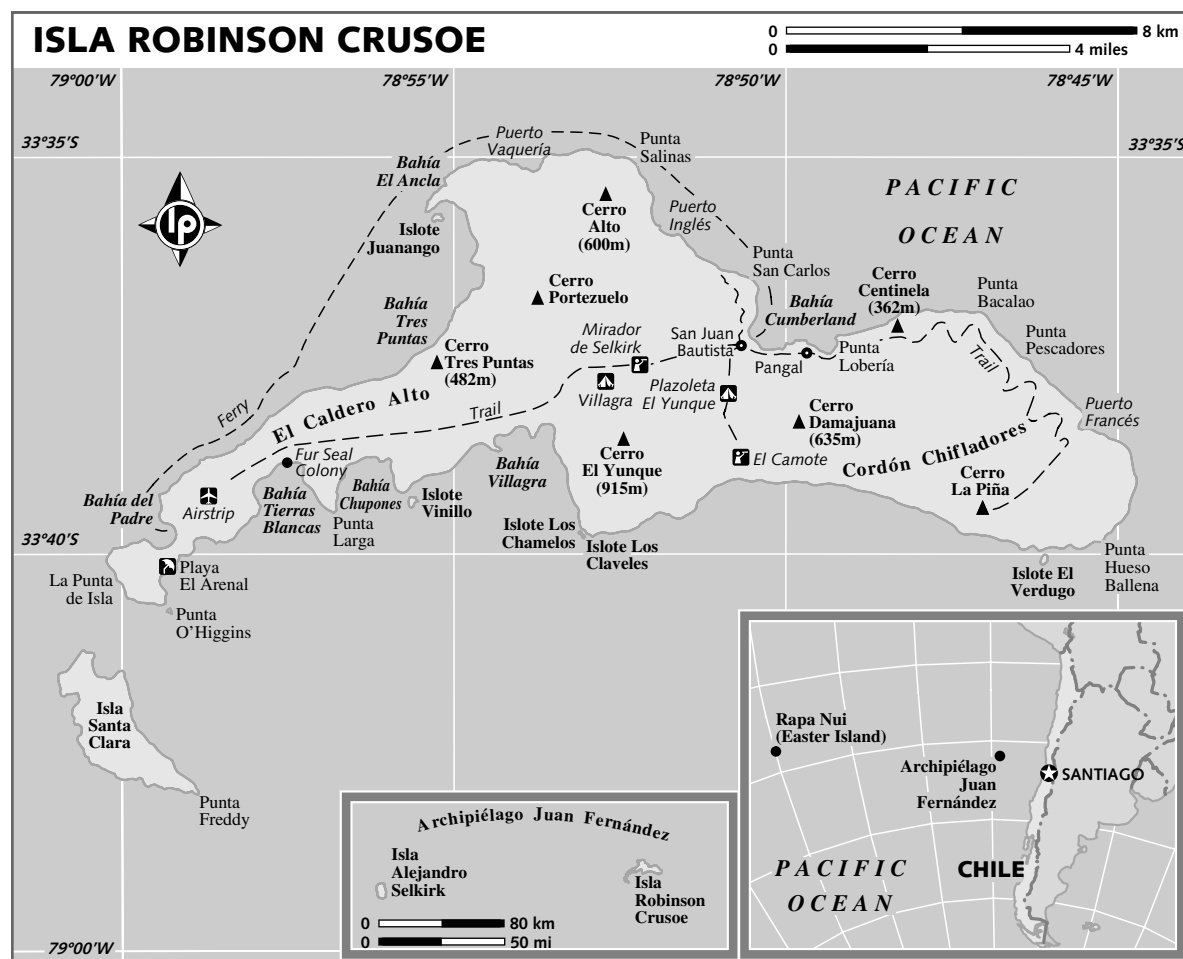
SAN JUAN BAUTISTA

☎ 032 / pop 600

Sheltered by steep peaks and surrounded by horse pastures, the lobster-fishing community of San Juan Bautista overlooks Bahía Cumberland. The island's sole town, it offers US\$20 lobsters off the dock and a glimpse of an isolated life, where secondary-school kids choose between fishing and education some 700km away. There are no ATMs or money changers, so bring cash from the mainland, preferably in small bills. **Centro Información Turista** (Vicente González) is at the top of Vicente González, 500m inland from the *costanera*.

Sights & Activities

In San Juan Bautista travelers can explore a treasure trove of nautical lore, starting at the **cementerio** near the lighthouse, where a polyglot assortment of Spanish, French and German inhabitants are buried, including the survivors of the WWI battleship



Dresden. Cuevas de los Patriotas are the damp caverns where 40-plus patriots from Chile's independence movement lived imprisoned for several years after a defeat at Rancagua in 1814. Directly above the caves is **Fuerte Santa Bárbara**, built by the Spaniards in 1749 to discourage pirate raids. The fantastic island-wide **national park** (admission for 7 days US\$5) is the island's unburied treasure. Its most fragile areas have restricted use; arrange with registered local guides for access (at the kiosk near the plaza). You can hike on your own 3km to **Mirador de Selkirk**, a spectacular panoramic viewpoint where the castaway scoured the horizon for ships. The trail continues south, taking one hour to reach **Villagra** (4.8km) and skirts the cliffs to **Punta La Isla** (13km). Both areas have camping. On the way you'll pass **Bahía Tierras Blancas**, the island's main breeding colony of Juan Fernández fur seals.

Sleeping & Eating

Rates cannily reflect that you are, in fact, stranded in the middle of the Pacific. Camping offers the best bet for budget travelers (but

keep in mind airlines' strict baggage limits). **Hospedajes** cook up a storm.

Camping Los Cañones (Vicente González; camping per person US\$2) Just above the *costanera*; has rocky sites and cold showers.

Camping Elector (☎ 751-066; campsites US\$5) Offers better spots amid shrubbery and flowers. Outside of town en route to Plazoleta El Yunque, the campground has bathrooms, a BBQ and an inside kitchen.

Residencial Mirador Selkirk (☎ 751-028; Pasaje del Castillo 251; d US\$26-43) A comfortable family home with views and island cuisine (mains US\$4 to US\$8).

Refugio Náutico (☎ 751-077; www.islarobinsoncrusoe.cl in Spanish; Carrera Pinto 280; s/d US\$51/86; ☑) This *refugio* offers bright, spacious rooms, woodland views, books and music, and excursion connections.

El Remo (☎ 751-030; plaza; mains US\$3-6) For sandwiches and evening cocktails, including *murtillado*, a rum-infused berry drink.

Aldea Daniel Defoe (☎ 751-223; Alcalde 449; mains US\$8-11) Offers a winning, salty-dog character alongside lobster crêpes and a few Peruvian and Mexican specialties.

CHILE

Getting There & Away

Two companies fly air taxis to the island from Santiago almost daily from September to April, and less frequently the rest of the year. Flights take roughly two hours and accept 10kg of luggage per person. Allow for an extra two or three days' stay when poor weather makes take-offs risky.

Lassa (☎ 02-273-4354; lassa@entelchile.net; Aeródromo Tobalaba, Av Larrain 7941) has the most flights, in a 19-seat Twin Otter. **Aeromet** (☎ 02-538-0267; reserves@tairc.cl; San Juan Bautista La Pólvara 226; Santiago Pajaritos 3030, Oficina 604), aka Transportes Aéreos Robinson Crusoe, is based in the southwestern neighborhood of Maipú and flies out of Santiago's Aeropuerto Los Cerrillos (round-trip US\$542).

English-speaking **Vaikava Expediciones** (☎ 592-852; www.vaikava.cl in Spanish; per person daily US\$200) specializes in spectacular 10-day yacht adventures (six days en route, four days on the islands). Passage might be found with **Armada de Chile: Comando de Transporte** (☎ 506-354; Primera Zona Naval, Prat 620, Valparaíso) whose naval supply ships go six times annually. Costs run about US\$40 per day, for a no-frills, two-day trip.

RAPA NUI (EASTER ISLAND)

CHILE

Far from continents, this isolated world of wonders is a fun house of archaeology, an eerie landscape of cultural clues to mysteries that resist easy explanation. Its landscape of enigmatic statues (*moai*) overshadows subtler assets like crystalline surf, wild horses and grass-sculpted landscapes. Known as *Te Pito o Te Henua* (the Navel of the World) by its inhabitants, tiny Polynesian Rapa Nui (117 sq km) is entirely off the map for most South American trekkers, but those who stretch to go the distance rarely regret it.

The first European to set foot on the island was Dutch admiral Roddeveen and his timing (Easter Sunday, 1722) sealed its moniker. After becoming Chilean territory in 1888 it became known as Isla de Pascua. It is 1900km east of even punier Pitcairn, the nearest populated landmass, and 3700km west of South America.

How such an isolated island became inhabited has long stumped historians and archaeologists. While Thor Heyerdahl's *Kon*

Tiki expedition theorized that Polynesians came from South America, the most widely accepted answer is that they came from southeast Asia, populating the Polynesian triangle of Hawaii, New Zealand and Rapa Nui.

On Rapa Nui, two civilizations formed: the Long Ears of the east and the Short Ears of the west, both of whom built large stone altars, *ahu*, and *moai* to honor their ancestors. Warfare led to destruction of the *ahu* and the toppling of the *moai* (many were recently restored upright). Legend offers that priests moved the *moai* from their carving site at Rano Raraku volcano to the coast by the power of *mana*, with the statues themselves 'walking' a short distance each day. Most say that a sledge was fitted to the *moai*, which was then lifted with a bipod and dragged forward. The use of timber to move the statues would partly explain the island's deforestation. Another religious cult, that of the birdman, equally intriguing, had its ceremonial center at Orongo.

Islanders speak Rapa Nui, an eastern Polynesian dialect related to Cook Islands' Maori, and Spanish. Essential expressions include *iorana* (hello), *maururu* (thank you), *pehe koe* (how are you?) and *riva riva* (fine, good).

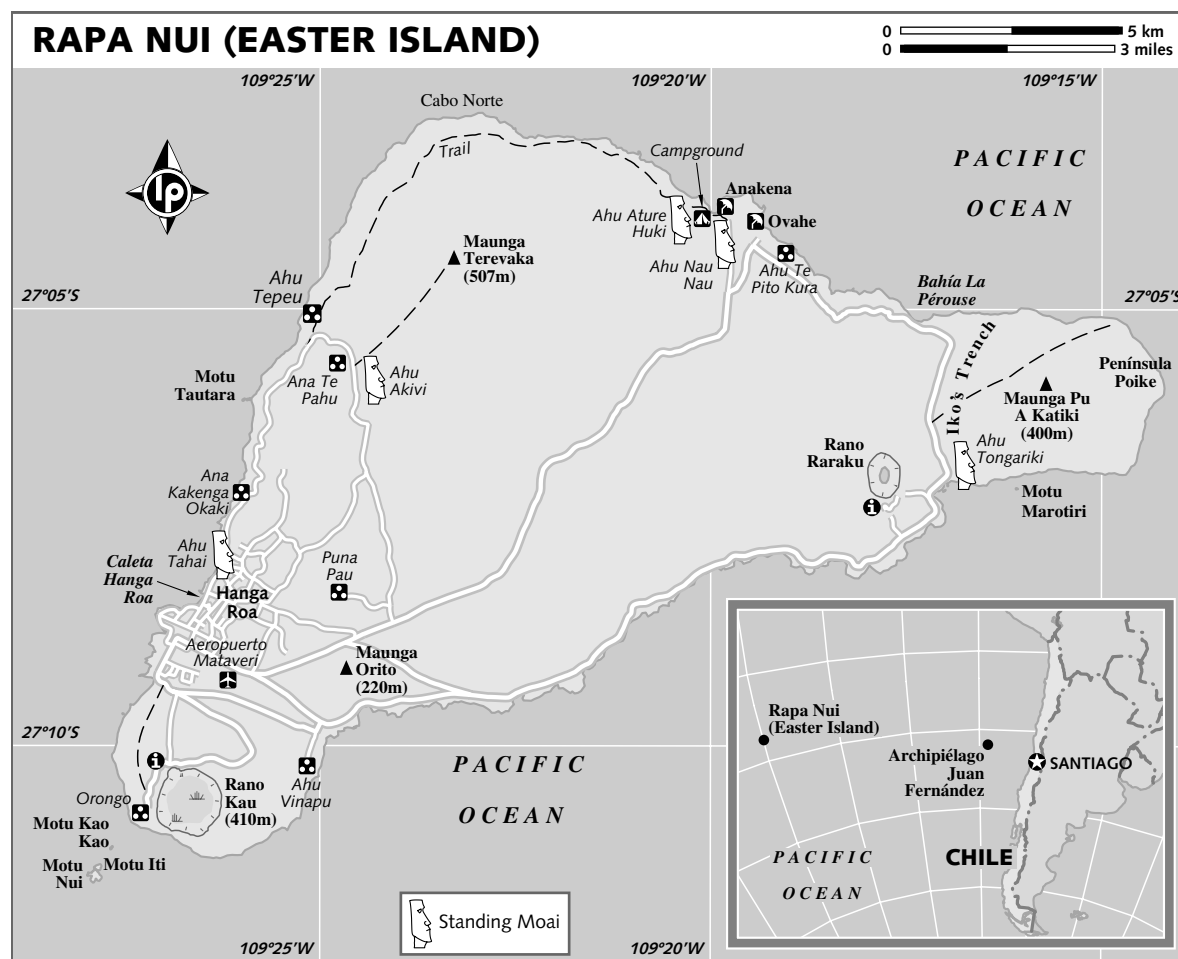
For a fortnight in February island culture is celebrated in the elaborate and colorful **Tapati Rapa Nui festival**. Peak tourist season (and hottest months) is January to March. Off-season it can sometimes feel deserted. Allow at least three days to see the major sites. Rapa Nui is two hours behind mainland Chile, six hours behind GMT (five in summer).

Steep drop-offs, sculpted seascapes, abundant marine life and absolutely crystalline water make for worthwhile diving. Surfers can revel in the big swells off the north and south coasts.

HANGA ROA

☎ 032 / pop 3800

Blue skies and peaceful, meandering streets paint the unhurried appeal of Hanga Roa. While it throbs with tourists in high season, the town has managed to maintain a leisurely pace. Though sprawling, town is easy to navigate. North-south Av Atamu Tekena is the main road, with a supermarket, shops, an arts fair and several eateries. Policarpo Toro is just below, along the waterfront. East-west Av Te



Pito o Te Henua connects Caleta Hanga Roa, a small bay and fishing port, to the church.

Information

Arms and legs are collecting at internet cafés, where a crazy US\$6 or more an hour is charged. *Residenciales* usually provide laundry service. Most businesses, especially *residenciales* and rental agencies, prefer US cash.

Banco del Estado (Av Pont s/n; ☎ 8am-1pm Mon-Fri) Has an ATM for MasterCard only; Visa holders can get cash advances at the counter. US dollars may be changed but traveler's checks have a US\$10 commission.

Conaf (☎ 100-236) On the road to Rano Kau; may give suggestions on hiking.

Entel (Av Tu'u Maheke s/n) Opposite Banco del Estado; expensive charges for calls home.

Hospital Hanga Roa (☎ 100-215;

Av Simon Paoa s/n) One long block east of the church.

Isl@net (Av Atamu Tekena s/n; per hr US\$6; ☎ 9:30am-10pm) Internet; near the main square.

Post office (Av Te Pito o Te Henua) Half a block from Caleta Hanga Roa.

RapaCall (Av Atamu Tekena s/n; per hr US\$6;

Sernatur (☎ 100-255; Tu'u Maheke) Distributes basic maps of the island.

☎ 8:30am-9pm Mon-Fri, 3-8pm Sun) Internet; near the main square.

Dangers & Annoyances

Guard against petty thievery by leaving valuables at home or storing them in lock boxes at your lodgings. Sunblock, sunglasses, long-sleeved shirts and a hat are requisite battle gear for the strong sun.

Sights & Activities

Rapa Nui 101 for new arrivals, **Museo Antropológico Sebastián Englert** (☎ 551-020; Sector Tahai; admission US\$2; ☎ 9:30am-12:30pm & 2-5:30pm Tue-Fri, 9:30am-12:30pm Sat & Sun), north of town, displays *moai kavakava* (the strange 'statues of ribs') and replica *rongo-rongo* tablets. Intricate wood carvings at **Iglesia Hanga Roa**, the island's Catholic church, fuse Rapa Nui tradition with Christian doctrine. There's also a very cool Sunday service in the Rapa Nui language.

Dive enthusiasts can head to **Orca Diving Center** (☎ 100-375; Caleta Hanga Roa; 1 dive US\$50). Bring proof of certification. Next door, **Hare Orca** (☎ 550-375; Caleta Hanga Roa s/n) rents body

boards (US\$15) and surfboards. Beginners should head to Caleta Hanga Roa.

Plenty of operators tour the island's main sites for around US\$40 per day or US\$25 per half day, such as well-established **Kia Koe Tour** (☎ 100-852; Atamu Tekena s/n) and **Haumaka Archeological Guide Services** (☎ /fax 100-274; haumaka@entelchile.net; cnr Avs Atamu Tekena & Hotu Matua).

Sleeping

Book well ahead for the busy season. Residential proprietors wait at the airport to scoop up clients. The following include breakfast unless otherwise noted.

Camping Mihinoa (☎ 551-593; www.mihinoa.com; Av Pont s/n; campsites per person US\$10; 📶) Without a speck of shade, the island's sole camping area is enhanced by grassy grounds and waves crashing nearby. There's kitchen privileges, bike and tent hire (US\$17) and laundry service. Located south of the center.

Ana Rapu (☎ 100-540; www.anarapu.cl; Av Apina s/n; campsites per person US\$10, s/d US\$20/30; 📶) A convivial budget option. Perks include horse-riding excursions, laundry and internet.

Residencial El Tauke (☎ 100-253; Av Te Pito o Te Henua s/n; s/d US\$15/30) Mundane but clean rooms fill this privileged location just off the main drag.

Residencial Miru (☎ 100-365; Atamu Tekena s/n; r US\$15) This welcoming home has basic rooms and kitchen privileges. Breakfast is US\$5.

Hostal Chez Oscar (☎ 551-261; chezoscar@123mail.cl; Av Pont s/n; s/d US\$20/35) Rooms are cramped but a leafy garden and affable hosts perk up this find.

Residencial Chez Erika (☎ 100-474; Av Tuki Haka He Vari s/n; s/d US\$25/35) Rooms are colorful and unfussy in this relaxed and tidy spot.

Hostal Aukara (☎ 100-539; aukara@entelchile.net; Av Pont s/n; s/d US\$40/70) Rooms are tidy enough in this quaint location featuring a gallery filled with its proprietor's works. It's walking distance from the action.

Eating

Fresh juice and fish are the best offerings in an otherwise bland (and pricey) island diet.

Supermercado Kai Nene (Av Atamu Tekena s/n; ☎ 9am-1pm & 5-8pm Mon-Sat) For self-catering.

Tarapu (☎ 551-863; Av Atamu Tekena s/n; mains US\$3; ☎ 9:30am-4pm Mon-Sat) Shoestringers embrace the picnic boxes and cheap sandwiches (even veggie) at this family-run dive.

Ariki o Te Pana (Av Atamu Tekena s/n; mains US\$4-13; ☎ Mon-Sat) This no-frills den serves formidable

cheese and tuna *empanadas*, cold drinks and large lunches.

Merahi Ra'a (☎ 551-125; Av Te Pito o Te Henua s/n; mains US\$10-17; ☎ closed Thu) Ultrafresh and abundant seafood fuel the popularity of this harborside restaurant. A picture menu will help you decipher the *matahuira* from the *kana kana* (fish).

Jardín del Mau (☎ 551-677; Av Policarpo Toro s/n; mains US\$14-18; ☎ closed Tue) Vegetarians rejoice over the decent selection of pasta and lasagna in this seaside plain-Jane.

Drinking

Aloha Pub (cnr Atamu Tekena & S Englert; ☎ closed Sun) Offers a mellow backdrop to recharge your batteries.

Entertainment

Toroko (Av Policarpo Toro s/n; ☎ Thu-Sat) This scruffy but animated disco features island pop and modern tunes.

Piditi (Av Hotu Matua s/n; ☎ Thu-Sat) Simmers with fun seekers, especially on Saturday. The cover charge at both is about US\$4 (men only). Drinks are expensive, and the action gets going after 1am.

PARQUE NACIONAL RAPA NUI

Teeming with caves, *ahu*, fallen *moai* and petroglyphs, the **national park** (admission US\$10) encompasses much of Rapa Nui's land and all the archaeological sites. Pay the admission fee in Orongo for unlimited visits. The following sections skim the surface of island offerings. Wherever you go, respect the archaeological sites: walking on the *ahu* or removing/relocating rocks of archaeological structures is strictly taboo. Handle the land gently and the *moai* will smile upon you.

Near Hanga Roa

A short hike north of town, and lovely at sunset, **Ahu Tahai** has three restored *ahu*. Ahu Tahai proper is in the middle, with a solitary *moai*. Ahu Ko Te Riku is to the north, with a top-knotted and eyeballed *moai*. Ahu Vai Uri has five eroded *moai* of varying sizes. Along the hills are foundations of *hare paenga* (elliptical houses) and walls of 'chicken houses.'

Four kilometers north of Tahai, **Ahu Tepeu** has several fallen *moai* and a village site. On the nearby coast, **Ana Kakenga** has two windows open to the ocean. **Ahu Akivi** is the site of seven *moai*, unique because they face the sea but like

all *moai* they overlook the site of a village. At the equinoxes their gaze meets the setting sun.

Anakena

With lovely white sands fringed by palm fronds, this popular beach is the legendary landing place of Hotu Matua. Browse the two major archaeological sites of **Ahu Nau Nau** and its picture-perfect row of *moai*, and the hillside **Ahu Ature Huki** whose lone *moai* took Heyerdahl and a dozen islanders nine days to lever up.

Ahu Te Pito Kura

Overlooking Bahía La Pêrouse, a massive 10m-high magnetic *moai* lies facedown with its neck broken. It is the largest *moai* ever moved from Rano Raraku and erected on an *ahu*. Its resemblance to the uncompleted figures at Rano Raraku suggests that this *moai* is also one of the most recent. Its name derives from the nearby polished round stone, *te pito kura* (navel of light).

Ahu Tongariki

Dazzling in scale and setting, 15 *moai* line up along the largest *ahu* built. A 1960 tsunami demolished several of the *moai* and scattered topknots far inland, but the Japanese company Tadano re-erected 15 *moai* in the early 1990s.

Rano Raraku

An ethereal setting of half-carved and buried *moai*, Rano Raraku delights the senses. Referred to as 'the nursery,' the *moai* were quarried from the slopes of this extinct volcano. Wander through the rocky jigsaw patterns of unfinished *moai*. There are 600, with the largest 21m tall. At the lip of the crater you will find a silent reedy lake and an amphitheater full of handsome heads. The 360-degree view is a knockout.

Rano Kau

The star attraction of Rapa Nui is Rano Kau and its crater lake, a cauldron of *tortoral* reeds. Shelved 400m above and abutting the gaping sea cliff is the **Orongo Ceremonial Village** (admission US\$10), a fragile outcrop 9km south of Hanga Roa where bird-cult rituals were performed. Step lightly here to preserve the delicate setting. In the apex of cult ceremonies, competitors raced to retrieve an egg of the sooty tern from the small *motu* (islets) just offshore. The young men descended the cliffs and swam

out to the islands (with the aid of rafts) to search for an egg. The first in the egg hunt became birdman for the year. Visitors will find a cluster of boulders covered in petroglyphs depicting Tangata Manu (the birdman) and Make Make (their god). Walking or biking is possible but it's a rather steep 9km trip from town. Hiking around the crater takes a full day and a supply of water.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Lan (☎ 600-526-2000; Atamu Tekena s/n, Hanga Roa) is the only airline serving Rapa Nui. Four flights per week go to/from Santiago and to/from Papeete (Tahiti). Round-trip fares from Santiago range from US\$630 to US\$900. Reconfirm your ticket two days before departure since flights are often overbooked.

Travelers coming from Asia or Australia can stop here en route to/from South America, via Auckland (New Zealand). Take an Air New Zealand flight to Papeete, to connect with Papeete–Rapa Nui–Santiago service.

GETTING AROUND

Bicycle

Rent mountain bikes in Hanga Roa for US\$16 per eight hours or US\$25 per day. Take a test spin so you won't end up with faulty shifters or saddle sores. There's an air pump at the gas station.

Car

In Hanga Roa, **Comercial Insular** (☎ 032-100-480; Atamu Tekena s/n) rents Suzuki 4WDs at US\$50 to US\$60 for eight hours. Established hotels and tour agencies also offer rentals (as do individuals, but without insurance). Make sure the car has all the necessary equipment should a tire go flat.

Taxi

Taxis cost a flat US\$3 for most trips around town. Longer trips can be negotiated, with the cost depending mainly on the time. Round trip from Hanga Roa to Anakena costs US\$20.

CHILE DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATIONS

Places book up fast in the most popular towns during high season, so make reservations before you arrive. Summer and holiday weekend prices may be 10% to 20% higher than the

rest of the year. Sernatur and most municipal tourist offices have lists of licenced budget lodgings. HI has a hostel in almost every main city, but aren't always the best value. Purchase cards at affiliated hostels or their **office** (☎ 02-233-3220; Hernando de Aguirre 201, Oficina 602, Providencia, Santiago) for US\$14.

A couple of pamphlets highlight some popular places; look for 'Backpacker's Best of Chile,' 'Hostels for Backpackers' and SCS Scott's listings. From north to south, you'll find a definite network of European-run hostels with ample amenities. Especially in the Lakes District, family homes offer inexpensive rooms, most often with kitchen privileges, hot showers and breakfast. Most accommodations include breakfast, though it is usually just bread and instant coffee. Fancier hotels often include the 18% IVA in the price, which should be subtracted from the tourist price for foreign travelers (smaller hotels may not be equipped to handle this step though). Make sure to agree on this before taking a room.

For camping, your best resource is Turistel's *Rutero Camping* guide. Most organized campgrounds are family oriented with large sites, full bathrooms and laundry, fire pits, a restaurant or snack bar. Many are costly because they charge a five-person minimum. Try asking for per person rates. Remote areas may offer free camping without facilities. Camping gas, referred to as *vencina blanca*, is carried in *ferreterias* (hardware stores) or larger supermarkets.

ACTIVITIES

Chile is paradise for the active. First on everyone's list is **trekking**, with Torres del Paine (p524) topping the list. Areas around Paríacota and Lago Chungara (p468), Parque Pumalín (p510), Nahuelbuta (p478), Puyehue (p495), Cochamó Valley (p501) and Isla Navarino (p527) are other favorites. Trails in many parks are not well marked or maintained. Some are simply old cattle roads. The government-funded **Sendero de Chile** (www.sen derodechile.cl) is in the process of linking and properly signing a network of trails north to south, with some sections already in place. For those going **climbing**, get permission to scale peaks on the border (Ojos de Salado) from Chile's **Dirección de Fronteras y Límites** (Difrol; ☎ 671-2725; Teatinos 180, 7th fl, Santiago).

Surfing (see p471) breaks run up and down the coast of Middle and Northern Chile.

Iquique also has South America's best conditions for **paragliding** and **landsailing**.

Rafting or **kayaking** is world-class here. Most popular is the Futaleufú River (p510), but don't overlook the Liucura (p488) and Trancura (p485) outside Pucón, or the Petrohué near Puerto Varas (p497). For sea kayaking, head to Chiloé (p506) and the fjords around Parque Pumalín (p510).

Mountain biking favorites include around San Pedro de Atacama (p455), Ensenada, on Lago Llanquihue (p500), Ojos de Caburgua (p485), and along the challenging Carretera Austral. Two-wheeled travel has its challenges. Cars kick up rocks on gravel roads, summer in the south brings *tábanos* (horseflies) and winds along the southern stretch of Carretera Austral are fierce. Most towns in Chile have a repair shop.

Multiday **horse-riding** trips access Andean terrain you can't get to otherwise. Try Pucón (p485), Río Puelo Valley (p501), Puyehue (p495) and around Torres del Paine (p526).

The **skiing** season runs from June to October. Santiago has some rental shops; otherwise resorts rent full packages. Head out to Volcán Villarrica (p489), Chillán (p474) and any of the resorts near Santiago (p432).

Hedonists prefer **soaking** in therapeutic hot springs. With volcanic activity all along its spine, Chile offers the gamut from the humble find-your-own to fancy spas with fluffy towels. Try Puritama (p458) outside San Pedro de Atacama, Los Pozones (p488), by Pucón, or Puyehue (p495). Also check out areas around Lliquiñe and Coñaripe. Another fun detour, **wine tasting** can be done in the vineyards of Middle Chile (p469) and around Santiago (p432).

BOOKS

Lonely Planet's *Chile & Easter Island* provides detailed travel information and coverage. The annually updated, very informative Turistel series has separate volumes on northern, central and southern Chile, plus an additional one on camping. Good travel companions are Sara Wheeler's *Travels in a Thin Country*, Charles Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle*, and Nick Reding's *The Last Cowboys at the End of the World: The Story of the Gauchos of Patagonia*, Francisco Coloane's *Cape Horn and other Stories* and the anthology *Chile: A Traveler's Literary Companion* (ed Katherine Silver).

BUSINESS HOURS

Shops in Chile open by 10am, but some close at about 1pm for two to three hours for lunch then reopen until about 8pm. Government offices and businesses open from 9am to 6pm. Banks are open 9am to 2pm weekdays. Tourist offices stay open long hours daily in summer, but have abbreviated hours in the off-season. In many provincial cities and towns restaurants and services are closed on Sunday. Museums are often closed on Monday. Restaurant hours vary widely. Many restaurants do not open for breakfast and quite a few close for the lull between lunch and dinner.

CLIMATE

Northern Chile has good weather year-round. Pack warm clothes – even in the summer – to deal with foggy mornings and high-altitude destinations. January and February are the rainy months, making some off-track travel difficult.

Santiago and Middle Chile are best enjoyed from September to April, with the autumn harvest a prime excuse to dally in this wine-growing region. Santiago can be unbearably hot and smoggy from December through February.

Head to the Lakes District and Patagonia from October through April – but be prepared for rain. Campers should bring a synthetic sleeping bag. Windy conditions rule the far south. Sun protection – hats, sunglasses, blocks etc – is essential.

Throughout Chile, including the islands, mid-December to mid-March is the high season, which means increased prices, crowded lodgings, tons of tourists (this is when most Chileans travel), and overbooked flights and buses.

The South America Directory (p1057) has more information and climate charts.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Compared with other South American countries, Chile is remarkably safe. Petty thievery is a problem in larger cities and in bus terminals. Keep an eye on all belongings, and take advantage of secure left-luggage services at bus terminals and *hospedajes*. Beach resorts are prime territory for thievery in summer, and some of Valparaíso's neighborhoods are best avoided. Photographing military installations is strictly prohibited. Natural dangers include earthquakes – Chile has suffered some big

ones – and strong offshore currents. Choose your swimming spots carefully. Look for signs '*apta para bañar*' (swimming okay) and '*no apta para bañar*' (no swimming). Chile's canine gangs will follow you everywhere, but are usually harmless.

DISABLED TRAVELERS

Chile still neglects the needs of people with disabilities. Bus assistants will help you on and off buses, but finding lodgings that don't have stairs, or have hallways large enough for wheelchairs, is difficult. Still, Chileans are very hospitable and accommodating. Family lodgings are likely to go above and beyond to assist.

ELECTRICITY

Chile operates on 220 volts at 50 cycles. Two and three rounded prongs are used.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

For information on visas, see p540.

Embassies & Consulates in Chile

Chile has embassies and consulates in the following countries:

Argentina Antofagasta (☎ 055-220-440; Blanco Enca-lada 1933); Puerto Montt (☎ 065-253-996; Cauquenes 94, 2nd fl); Punta Arenas (☎ 061-261-912; 21 de Mayo 1878); Santiago (Map pp424-5; ☎ 02-582-2606; www.embargentina.cl; Vicuña Mackenna 41, Centro)

Australia (☎ 02-500-3500; consular.santiago@dfat.gov.au; Isidora Goyenechea 3621, 12th fl, Las Condes, Santiago)

Bolivia Antofagasta (☎ 055-259-008; Jorge Washington 2675); Arica (☎ 058-231-030; www.rree.gov.bo; Patricio Lynch 298); Calama (☎ 055-341-976; Latorre 1395); Iquique (☎ 057-421-777; Gorostiaga 215, Dept E, Iquique); Santiago (☎ 02-232-8180; cgbolivia@manquehue.net; Av Santa María 2796, Las Condes)

Brazil Punta Arenas (☎ 061-241-093; Arauco 769); Santiago (Map pp424-5; ☎ 02-425-9230; www.embajada.debrasil.cl; Maclver 225, 15th fl)

Canada (☎ 02-362-9660; enqserv@dfait-maeci.gc.ca; Tajamar 481, 12th fl, Las Condes, Santiago)

France (☎ 02-470-8000; www.france.cl; Av Condell 65, Providencia, Santiago)

Germany Arica (☎ 058-231-657; Prat 391, 10th fl, Oficina 101); Punta Arenas (☎ 061-212-866; Av El Bosque s/n, Lote 1, Manzana 8); Santiago (Map pp424-5; ☎ 02-463-2500; www.embajadadealemania.cl; Las Hualtatas 5677, Vitacura)

Ireland (Map pp424-5; ☎ 02-245-6616; Isidora Goyenechea 3162, office 801; Las Condes, Santiago)

Israel (☎ 02-750-0500; San Sebastián 2812, 5th fl, Las Condes, Santiago)

Netherlands Punta Arenas (Map p519; ☎ 061-248-100; Sarmiento 780); Santiago (☎ 02-756-9200; www.holanda-paisesbajos.cl; Las Violetas 2368, Providencia)

New Zealand (☎ 02-290-9802; embajada@nzembassy.cl; El Golf 99, Oficina 703, Las Condes, Santiago)

Peru Arica (☎ 058-231-020; 18 de Septiembre 1554); Iquique (☎ 057-411-466; Zegers 570, 2nd fl); Santiago (☎ 02-235-4600; conpersantiago@adsl.tie.cl; Padre Mariano 10, Oficina 309, Providencia)

UK Punta Arenas (☎ 061-211-535; Catarata del Niágara 01325); Santiago (Map p519; ☎ 02-370-4100; consular.santiago@fco.gov.uk; Av El Bosque Norte 0125, 3rd fl, Las Condes, Santiago); Valparaíso (☎ 032-213-063; Blanco 1199, 5th fl)

USA (☎ 02-232-2600; santiago.usembassy.gov; Av Andrés Bello 2800, Las Condes, Santiago)

Chilean Embassies & Consulates Abroad

Chile has diplomatic representation in most parts of the world.

Argentina (☎ 4808-8600; www.embajadadechile.com.ar; Tagle 2762, Buenos Aires)

Australia Canberra (☎ 02-6286 2430; www.embachile-australia.com; 10 Culgoa Circuit, O'Malley, ACT 2606); Melbourne (☎ 03-9866 4041; www.chile.com.au; 13th fl, 390 St Kilda Rd, VIC 3004); Sydney (☎ 02-9299 2533; cgsydney@telpacific.com.au; 18th fl, 44 Market St, NSW 2000)

Bolivia (☎ 591-279-7331; cgchilp@ceibo.entelnet.bo; Calle 14 8024, La Paz)

Brazil (☎ 55-2552-5349; chilerj@veloxmail.com.br; Praia Do Flamengo 344, Rio de Janeiro)

Canada Montréal (☎ 514-499-0405; www.cgchile.montreal.cjp.net; 1010 Sherbrooke St W, Suite 710); Ottawa (☎ 613-235-4402; www.chile.ca; 50 O'Connor St, Suite 1413); Toronto (☎ 416-924-0106; www.congechiletoronto.com; 2 Bloor St W, Suite 1801); Vancouver (☎ 604-681-9162; www.chilevan.ca; 1185 W Georgia, Suite 1250)

France (☎ 01-47 05 46 61; www.amb-chili.fr in French or Spanish; 64 Blvd de la Tour Maubourg, Paris, 75007)

Germany Berlin (☎ 030-726-2035; www.embajada.consuladoschile.de; Mohrenstrasse 42); Frankfurt (☎ 069-550-194; Humboldtstrasse 94)

New Zealand (☎ 04-471 6270; www.embchile.co.nz; 19 Bolton St, Wellington)

Peru (☎ 511-611-2211; www.embachileperu.com.pe; Javier Prado Oeste 790, San Isidro, Lima)

UK (☎ 207-436 5204; embachile@embachile.co.uk; 12 Devonshire Rd, London)

USA Chicago (☎ 312-654-8780; www.chile-usa.org; 875 N Michigan Ave, Suite 3352, IL 60611); Los Angeles (☎ 323-933-3697; www.consuladoschile.org; 6100 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 1240, CA 90048); Miami (☎ 305-373-8623; cgmiamius@earthlink.net; 800 Brickell Ave, Suite 1230, FL 33131); New York (☎ 212-

980-3366; www.chileny.com; 866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 601, NY 10017); San Francisco (☎ 415-982-7662; cgsfchile@sbcglobal.net; 870 Market St, Suite 1058, CA 94102); Washington, DC (☎ 202-785-1746; consulado@embassyofchile.org; 1734 Massachusetts Ave NW, 20036)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

In January and February every Chilean town and city puts on some sort of show with live music, special feasts and fireworks. Tourist offices have exact dates. Religious holidays and the mid-September Fiestas Patrias mark other festivities.

Festival Costumbrista These typical fiestas take place all over. For an authentic Patagonian rodeo, go to Villa Cerro Castillo.

Festival de la Virgen del Carmen Some 40,000 pilgrims pay homage to Chile's virgin in Tirana in mid-July, with lots of street dancing and masks.

FOOD & DRINK Chilean Cuisine

Chile's best offerings are its raw materials: in the market you can get anything from goat cheese to avocados, pomegranates, good yogurt, fresh herbs and a fantastic variety of seafood. What Chilean cuisine lacks in spice and variety it makes up for in abundance. Breakfast tends toward meager with instant coffee or tea, white rolls and jam. Fuel up with a hearty *menú del día* (inexpensive set meal) lunch with *cazuela* (soup), a main dish of fish or meat with a starch and some bland vegetables. Central markets and *casinos de bomberos* (firefighters' restaurants) offer cheap meals. Snacks include the prolific *completo* (a hot dog smothered in mayo, avocado, tomato and ketchup) and *humitas* (corn tamales). *Empanadas* are whopping and either fried, with cheese or shellfish, or *al horno* (baked) with meat, called *pino*.

Those who want a little spice on the table can pick up a bottle of *ají Chileno*. A melted ham and cheese sandwich is a *barros jarpa*, with steak it's a *barros luco*, while beefsteak and green beans make a *chacarrero*. *Lomo a lo pobre* is steak topped with fried eggs and french fries. *Chorrillana* is a heart-choking platter of fried potatoes, grilled onions, fried eggs and steak. Seafood is abundant and incredible. *Caldillo de ...* is a hearty soup of fish (often congrio) spiced up with lemon, cilantro and garlic. *Chupe de ...* is seafood baked in a medley of butter, bread crumbs,

cheese and spices. *Paila marina* is a fish and shellfish chowder.

People in the south eat a lot of potatoes in every form, as well as summertime lamb roasted on a spit (*asado de cordero*). German influence provides a variety of strudel, *küchen* and cheesecake. In Chiloé look for *milcao* (potato dumplings) and *curanto*, which combines fish, shellfish, chicken, pork, lamb, beef and potato in a heaping bowl fit for two.

Drinks

Over 700 million liters of wine are produced annually in Chile, don't miss out on your share. Carmenere is wonderful and unique to Chile (a phylloxera plague wiped out the variety in Europe). Cabernet sauvignon and the increasingly popular Syrah are other good bets. Decent bottles start at US\$4, and for the ultrafrugal a box of Gato Negro is better than nothing.

Chile's (and Peru's) best invention is the *pisco sour*, grape brandy combined with lemon juice, egg white and powdered sugar. *Pisco* and *Coke* is a *piscicola*, or *combinado* with any soft drink. *Bebidas* (soft drinks) are adored; local brands include the ultrasugary Bilz and the unfortunately named Pap. Water is safe from the tap in the south. *Mote con huesillo*, sold by street vendors, is a refreshing peach nectar with barley kernels and rehydrated peaches.

Instant Nescafé is a national plague. Entrepreneurial would-be expats could start up espresso bars (there are a few). Mate (Paraguayan tea) is consumed heavily in Patagonia. *Yuyos* (herbal teas) are very common.

Kunstmann and Cólono are Chile's best beers. A draft beer is called *schop*.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELERS

Chile is still a conservative, Catholic-minded country and many frown upon homosexuality here; however, younger generations are far more tolerant. Provincial areas are definitively far behind in attitudes toward gays. Santiago's gay scene (and general tolerance) has improved in leaps and bounds during recent years. Perhaps because it was underground for so long, the gay scene has awoken with particular vigor. Most gay bars and nightclubs can be found in Barrio Bellavista.

Gay Chile (www.gaychile.com) has the lowdown on all things gay, including current events, Santiago nightlife, lodging recommendations, legal and medical advice and personals. While

in Santiago, keep an eye out for Chile's first magazine oriented toward gays and other socially disenfranchised groups, **Opus Gay** (www.opusgay.cl in Spanish), teasingly named after the conservative Catholic Opus Dei group.

Chile's main gay-rights organization is **Movimiento Unificado de Minorías Sexuales** (MUMS; www.orgullogay.cl in Spanish).

HEALTH

Hospitals in Chile are reasonable but private *clínicas* are the best option for travelers. Except for in the Atacama Desert and in Santiago, tap water is safe to drink. Altitude sickness and dehydration are the most common concerns in the north, sunburn in the ozone-depleted south – apply sunscreen and wear sunglasses. No vaccinations are required to travel in Chile, but those traveling to Rapa Nui should inquire about current restrictions or documentation requirements. Tampons are not available in smaller towns. For more information, see the Health chapter (p1090).

HOLIDAYS

Government offices and businesses close on the following national holidays:

Año Nuevo (New Year's Day) January 1

Semana Santa (Easter Week) March/April, dates vary

Día del Trabajador (Labor Day) May 1

Glorias Navales (Naval Battle of Iquique) May 21

Corpus Christi May/June; dates vary

San Pedro y San Pablo (St Peter's & St Paul's Day) June 29

Asunción de la Virgen (Assumption) August 15

Día de Unidad Nacional (Day of National Unity) first Monday of September

Día de la Independencia Nacional (Independence Day) September 18

Día del Ejército (Armed Forces Day) September 19

Día de la Raza (Columbus Day) October 12

Todos los Santos (All Saints' Day) November 1

Inmaculada Concepción (Immaculate Conception Day) December 8

Navidad (Christmas Day) December 25

INTERNET ACCESS

Most areas have excellent internet connections and reasonable prices. Rates range from US\$1 to US\$6 per hour.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Chile.com (www.chile.com in Spanish) A Yahoo-like website with good sections on nightlife and slang.

Chile Information Project (www.chip.cl) Informative materials on everything from human rights to out-of-the-way destinations.

Chiloé (www.chiloeweb.com) The best source of information about the island.

Patagonia Chile (www.patagonia-chile.com) Comprehensive tourism listings.

Rehue Foundation (www.xs4all.nl/~rehue) Links to Mapuche history, issues and events.

Sernatur (www.sernatur.cl) Information from the national tourism organization.

South America Travel Directory (www.planeta.com/chile) Worthwhile links to ecotourism, environmental organizations, towns and more.

MAPS

In Santiago, the **Instituto Geográfico Militar** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 02-460-6800; www.igm.cl in Spanish; Dieciocho 369, Centro; ☒ 9am-5:30pm Mon-Fri) sells 1:50,000 topographic regional maps for about US\$15 per sheet. These are the best hiking aids available for trekkers (but can be outdated – in some cases rivers have altered course!). The maps can be browsed and bought via the website. Conaf in Santiago allows photocopying of national park maps. JLM Mapas publishes tourist maps for all major regions and trekking areas at scales ranging from 1:50,000 to 1:500,000. They are easy to use and helpful, but don't claim 100% accuracy.

Online maps vary in quality: **Plano Digital de Publiguías** (www.planos.cl in Spanish) has online city maps but it is a frustrating website to navigate. Santiago maps are available on **Map City** (www.mapcity.cl in Spanish). Some local government websites have interactive maps that allow you to search for a street address in major cities. Those traveling by car should invest in a current *Turistel* (in Spanish), an indispensable road guide with separate editions for north, central and southern regions.

MEDIA

El Mercurio (www.elmercurio.cl), Chile's oldest conservative daily is finally getting some competition with the more left-leaning *La Tercera*. *Últimas Noticias* and others grab your attention with front-page bus crashes and butt shots. The financial publication **Estrategia** (www.estrategia.cl) is the best source for exchange rates. The **Santiago Times** (www.chip.cl) serves the English-speaking population. Regional papers offer local news and event information. The alternative the *Clinic* provides cutting-edge editorials and satire about politics and Chilean society.

Chilean TV embraces vapid gossip and talent shows. The rural population without phone service (mostly in Patagonia and the Chiloé islands) are dependent on radio broadcasting messages for communication.

MONEY

The Chilean unit of currency is the peso (Ch\$). Bank notes come in denominations of 500, 1000, 2000, 5000, 10,000 and 20,000 pesos. Coin values are 1, 5, 10, 50, 100 and 500 pesos. It can be difficult to change bills larger than Ch\$5000 in rural areas. Gas stations and liquor stores usually oblige, just make an apologetic face and ask, '¿Tiene suelto?'

Exchange rates are usually best in Santiago, where there is also a ready market for European currencies. Chile's currency has been pretty stable in recent years. Throughout the book we have used the exchange rate of 510 pesos to US\$1, but fluctuation may occur. The value of the dollar seems to decline during peak tourist season and shoot back up again come March. Paying a bill with US cash is sometimes acceptable, especially at tour agencies (check their exchange rate carefully). Many top-end hotels publish rates in US dollars with a lower exchange rate than the daily one. It's best to pay all transactions in pesos.

Money transferred by cable should arrive in a few days; Chilean banks can give you money in US dollars on request. Western Union offices can be found throughout Chile, usually adjacent to the post office.

ATMs

Chile's many ATM machines, known as *red-banc*, are the easiest and most convenient way to access funds. Your bank will likely charge a small fee for each transaction. Most ATMs have instructions in Spanish and English. Choose the option 'foreign card' (*tarjeta extranjera*) before starting the transaction. You cannot rely on ATMs in San Pedro de Atacama (the one ATM breaks down), Rapa Nui or in small Patagonian towns.

Bargaining

Buying items in a crafts market is the only acceptable time to bargain. Transport and accommodation rates are generally fixed and prominently displayed, but during a slow summer or in the off-season, ask politely for a discount, '¿Me podría hacer precio?'

Credit Cards

Most established businesses welcome credit cards although it's best not to depend on it. Consumers may be charged the 6% surcharge businesses must pay. Credit cards can also be useful to show 'sufficient funds' before entering another country.

Exchanging Money

US dollars are the preferred currency for exchange. Cash earns a better rate than traveler's checks and avoids commissions. To exchange cash and traveler's checks, *casas de cambios* are quicker than banks but offer poorer rates, as do removed destinations. Plan to exchange in larger cities. In very touristy areas, hotels, travel agencies and some shops accept or change US dollars. Street changers don't offer much difference in rate. The American Express representative is **Blanco Viajes** (☎ 02-636-9100; Gral Holley 148, Providencia, Santiago). Traveler's checks can be cashed at Banco del Estado and most exchange houses; ATMs are easier.

Exchange rates at press time included the following:

Country	Unit		Ch\$ (peso)
Australia	A\$1	=	398
Canada	C\$1	=	464
euro zone	€1	=	661
Japan	¥100	=	444
New Zealand	NZ\$1	=	350
UK	UK£1	=	985
United States	US\$1	=	527

POST

Correos de Chile (post offices) are open from 9am to 6pm weekdays and 9am to noon Saturday. Send essential overseas mail *certificado* to ensure its arrival. Parcel post is quite efficient, though a clerk may inspect your package before accepting it. Vendors near the post office wrap parcels for a small charge. Within Chile, an ordinary letter costs US42¢, or US\$1.30 for a faster service. An airmail letter or postcard costs about US57¢ to North America and US70¢ to Europe and Australia.

To send packages within Chile, sending via *encomienda* (the bus system) is much more reliable. Simply take the package to a bus company that goes to the destination. Label the package clearly with the destina-

tion and the name of the person who will pick it up.

In Santiago, *poste restante* or *lista de correos* (general delivery mail) costs approximately US35¢ per letter. Instruct correspondents to address letters clearly and to precede your name with either Señora or Señor, as post offices in Chile divide lists of correspondence by gender. Mail is held for one month.

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

Hikers are obliged to carry out trash and follow a leave-no-trace ethic. Be particularly respectful to the *ahus* in Rapa Nui and with other monuments. Increasingly scarce seafood delicacies like *locos* (abalone) and *centolla* (king crab) should not be consumed during their breeding seasons. Don't buy carvings and crafts made out of protected species (cardón cactus in the north and *alerce* in the south). Follow requests to put used toilet paper in the trash basket (most places). The best and easiest way to earn karma points in Chile is to be pleasant and courteous.

SHOPPING

Deep-blue lapis lazuli is almost exclusive to Chile. Hand-knit woolens are inexpensive and plentiful in the south, particularly Chiloé. You'll find Mapuche design jewelry and basketry in the Araucanía. Artisan products in the north resemble those of Peru and Bolivia. Edibles worth lugging include *miel de ulmo* honey from the south, *mermelada de murta*, a red berry jam, and canned papayas from Elqui Valley. Cities often have good antiquing, most notably Valparaíso's Plaza O'Higgins.

STUDYING

Spanish-language courses are available in Santiago and several southern cities.

With Chilean headquarters at Coyhaique, the **National Outdoor Leadership School** (in USA ☎ 307-332-5300; www.nols.edu) offers a 75-day 'Semester in Patagonia,' teaching mountain wilderness skills, sea kayaking and natural history for university credit. Santiago's **Vinoteca** (☎ 02-335-2349; Isidora Goyenechea 2966, Las Condes) organizes wine courses. **Abtao** (☎ 02-211-5021; www.abtao.cl; El Director 5660, Las Condes, Santiago) organizes selective courses on Chilean ecosystems and wildlife.

TELEPHONE

Chile's country code is ☎ 56. The two largest telephone companies, Entel and Telefónica CTC, have call centers from which you call directly from private cabins; most close by 10pm. Some call centers will place the call for you then tell you in which *cabina* your call is transferred. Long-distance calls are based on a carrier system: to place a call, precede the number with the telephone company's code: **Entel** (☎ 123), **Telefónica CTC** (☎ 188), for example. To make a collect call, dial ☎ 182 to get an operator. International rates are reasonable.

Each telephone carrier installs its own public phones which take only their calling cards or coins. You can buy *tarjetas telefónicas* (calling cards) from kiosks. A local call costs Ch\$100 (approximately US20¢) per minute, and only Ch\$85 outside of peak hours (8am to 8pm weekdays, 8am to 2pm Saturday). Cell-phone numbers have seven digits, prefixed by ☎ 09. Drop the 0 prefix when calling cell-to-cell. If calling cell-to-landline, add the landline's area code. Cell phones sell for as little as US\$50 and can be charged up by prepaid phone cards. Cell phones have a 'caller-pays' format. Calls between cell and landlines are expensive and quickly eat up prepaid card amounts.

TOILETS

Chuck your used toilet paper in the waste bin as Chile's fragile plumbing usually can't handle it. Public bathrooms charge a small fee (US20¢), or you can try to find a (generally cleaner) restaurant loo. Toilet paper is not a given – carry it with you.

TOURIST INFORMATION

The national tourist service, **Sernatur** (☎ 600-737-62887; www.sernatur.cl in Spanish) has offices in Santiago and most cities. Their helpfulness varies widely but they generally provide brochures and leaflets. Many towns have municipal tourist offices, usually on the main plaza or at the bus terminal.

TOURS

The only way to get to remote calving glaciers, summit an active volcano, or raft a river is on tour. Opportunities for unguided activities abound, just plan carefully. Operators may say they have English-speaking guides, but sometimes you have to pay extra for this

service – ask first. Rural tourism offers local Spanish-speaking guides at a reasonable fee and access to places you otherwise would never have known about.

VISAS

Nationals of US, Canada, Australia and the EU do not need a visa to visit Chile. Passports are obligatory and are essential for cashing traveler's checks, checking into hotels and other routine activities.

Note that the Chilean government collects a 'reciprocity' fee from arriving US (US\$100), Mexican (US\$15), Australian (US\$34) and Canadian (US\$55) citizens in response to these governments imposing a similar fee on Chilean citizens applying for visas. The reciprocity payment applies only to travelers arriving by air in Santiago and is valid for the life of the passport. The payment must be made in cash, and exact change is necessary.

On arrival, you'll be handed a 90-day tourist card. Don't lose it! If you do, go to the **Policía Internacional** (☎ 02-737-1292; Gral Borgoño 1052, Santiago; ☎ 8:30am-5pm Mon-Fri), or the nearest police station. You will be asked for it upon leaving the country.

It costs US\$100 to renew a tourist card for 90 more days at the **Departamento de Extranjería** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 02-550-2484; Agustinas 1235, 2nd fl, Santiago; ☎ 9am-2pm Mon-Fri). Many visitors prefer a quick dash across the Argentine border and back.

See p535 for information regarding embassies and consulates.

VOLUNTEERING

Experienced outdoor guides may be able to exchange labor for accommodations during the busy high season, but usually only if they can stick out the entire season. **Experiment Chile** (www.experiment.cl) organizes 14-week language-learning and volunteer programs. Language schools can often place students in volunteer work as well. The nonprofit organization **Un Techo Para Chile** (www.untechoparachile.cl in Spanish) builds homes for low-income families throughout the country, and has contact information for prospective volunteers on the website. The annual *Directorio de Organizaciones Miembros* published by **Renace** (Red Nacional de Acción Ecológica; www.renace.cl in Spanish) lists environmental organizations, which may accept volunteers.

WOMEN TRAVELERS

No worries, Chilean men are downright circumspect next to their hot-blooded neighbors. In the north or central areas they are quick with *piropos* (come-ons), but these hormonal outbursts evaporate upon utterance – don't dwell on them. The biggest bother is being constantly asked how old you are and if you're married. Many *Chileanas* are intimidated by their foreign counterparts and they can be difficult to befriend at first.

WORKING

Finding work as an English-language instructor in Santiago is feasible, but don't expect excellent wages. In the south there is an increasing need for English teachers and translators for the salmon industry. Reputable employers insist on work or residence permits (increasingly difficult to obtain) from the **Departamento de Extranjería** (Map pp424-5; ☎ 02-550-2400; Agustinas 1235, 2nd fl, Santiago; 🕒 9am-2pm Mon-Fri).

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