



OUTCAN Guide | Life in Chile

LOCATION

- **Country:** Chile
- **City:** Santiago (capital)
- **Base:** Embassy Posting
- **Mission Acronym:** STAGO

OTHER INFO TO CONSIDER

- **Residency Registration:** Foreigners must register with the National Immigration Service (Departamento de Extranjería) within 90 days of arrival.
- **Visa Requirements:** Canadians can stay visa-free for up to 90 days. For longer stays, apply for a temporary resident permit or visa.

POPULATION

- **Size:** Approximately 6 million people in Santiago (July 2024)
- **Ethnicity:** Predominantly Chilean with a mix of Indigenous, European, and other ancestries.

LANGUAGE(S)

- **Official Language:** Spanish
- **Local Languages:** Spanish is the predominant language in most interactions. English is not widely spoken in the local community, although in the neighborhoods where SQs are many people speak or understand English. Taxi drivers and public transportation operators do not speak English. Street and shop signs are in Spanish. Most popular restaurants offer English menus and waiters can speak some English.
- **French:** French is not spoken or understood in the local community, except around the French Lycée in Vitacura where there is a large francophone population. Taxi drivers and public transportation operators do not speak French. Street and shop signs are in Spanish.
- **Limited availability of English /French books locally.** Local selection is expensive compared to Canadian prices. Recommended that employees bring a supply to mission.

COST OF LIVING

- **Currency:** Chilean Peso (CLP)
- **Exchange Rate:** 1 CAD = 620 CLP (July 2024)

QUALITY OF LIFE

- **Climate:** Varies from the desert climate in the north to Mediterranean in the central region and cold, rainy in the south. Santiago experiences hot, dry summers and cool, wet winters.
 - Air contamination (smog) In Santiago these can be from industrial and vehicle emissions, industrial activities, road dust, agriculture, construction, and heating (kerosene heaters are still widely used during winter and wood burning is allowed in outer regions). They can also be due to natural events such as wildfires or volcanic eruptions which can raise fine particle concentrations hundreds of miles from the event. Ground-level Ozone (O₃) is also an issue. Ground-level ozone shouldn't be confused with the ozone layer in the sky, which protects us from ultraviolet radiation. Ground-level ozone comes mostly from burning fossil fuels for transportation and industry. Ozone levels peak between noon and 6 p.m. during the summer months. To reduce your exposure to smog and its potential health effects, health Canada recommends: Check the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) in your community especially during Chilean winter. Download an app called Aire Santiago to get latest figures for the metropolitan region of Santiago and know when it is safer to avoid activities outside. Avoid or reduce exercising near areas of heavy traffic, especially during rush hour; and if you have a heart or lung condition, talk to your health care professional about additional ways to protect your health when smog levels are high.
 - [Outdoor air pollution and health: Overview - Canada.ca](#)
- **Natural Disasters:** Earthquakes are a significant risk in Chile due to its location on the Pacific Ring of Fire.

LAWS AND CULTURE

- **Drug Laws:** Strict regulations on illegal drugs. Penalties for possession and trafficking are severe.
- **Alcohol:** Legal drinking age is 18. Alcohol is widely available, but drinking in public places is restricted.
- **Driving:** The legal blood alcohol limit is 0.03%. Penalties for driving under the influence are strict.
- **Cultural Influence:** Chilean culture is a mix of Indigenous, Spanish, and other European influences, with a strong emphasis on family, music, and traditional cuisine.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

- **Driving:** An international driving permit is recommended. Traffic conditions in Santiago can be congested.
- **Crime:** Petty theft and pickpocketing are common, especially in tourist areas. Violent crime is less frequent but can occur.

HOUSING

- **Support:** Embassy postings, families are allocated a place based on the local housing committee's recommendation.
- **Availability:** A range of housing options including apartments and houses in Santiago and other major cities for those not on an Embassy posting.

EMPLOYMENT

- **Spousal Employment:** Limited opportunities. Employment in the local economy may be subject to local regulations and taxes.
- **Op Tempo:** Varies depending on position. Travel within the region may be required.

HEALTH CARE

- **Access:** Private doctors and specialists are comparable in standards and training to those in Canada. It is not advisable to seek medical assistance in public hospitals unless this is an emergency.
- **Language:** English-speaking doctors are available in major cities. Please note that Emergency admission staff, nurses, and orderlies will speak no English or French. The mission provides a list of doctors, specialists, and dentists.
- **Special Needs:** Services are available but can be limited. Consult with medical officers for specialized care.
- **Pregnancy and Birth:** Comprehensive care is available in private hospitals.
- **Dental:** Private dental care is available. Payment is required upfront, with reimbursement through health insurance. Dentists offer similar services to Canada with a small percentage offering services in English.
- While OUTCAN, families of Canadian Armed Forces members are enrolled in comprehensive medical coverage through the [Public Service Health Care Plan](#), which is administered by [MSH International](#). Families are covered for dental care through the [Public Service Dental Care Plan](#) by [Canada Life](#). Look for places that direct bill to your insurance where possible.

SCHOOLING

- **Schools:** Several international schools are available, offering various curricula. Uniforms are mandatory for some grades in most schools.
 - **Examples:**
 - The International School of Santiago (IB)
 - Santiago College (British Curriculum)
 - Lycée Français de Santiago (French Curriculum)
- **Special Needs:** Services are available but can be limited. Consultation with schools and education management is advised.
- **Availability:** Childcare services are available, though English-speaking staff may be less common.
- Consult with [CEM](#) and schools prior to any commitments.

TRANSPORTATION

- **Airport:** Santiago International Airport (SCL)
- **Public Transport:** Buses, metro, and taxis are available in Santiago. The city's metro system is extensive and reliable.
- **Driving:** An international driving permit is recommended for driving in Chile.

RESOURCES AND AMENITIES

- **Military Family Services:** No specific center in Chile, but remote support is available through the global MFS team: globalmfs-sfmmondiaux@cfmws.com
- **Mental Health Resources:** Comprehensive mental health services are available through the public and private sectors.
 - Family Information Line: FIL-LIF@cfmws.com
 - [CFMWS | Mental Health | CFMWS](#)
 - For additional resources or questions please reach out to your Global MFS Team: globalmfs-sfmmondiaux@cfmws.com
- **Internet:** High-quality internet service is available in urban areas.

ACTIVITIES

Natural Wonders

- **Torres del Paine National Park:** Located in Patagonia, this park is famous for its stunning landscapes, including mountains, glaciers, and lakes. Popular activities include hiking, trekking, and wildlife spotting.
- **Atacama Desert:** The driest desert in the world, known for its unique landscapes, salt flats, and geysers. Visit Valle de la Luna and El Tatio Geysers.
- **Easter Island:** An isolated island with mysterious Moai statues and rich Polynesian history. Accessible by flight from Santiago.

Historical and Cultural Sites

- **Santiago:** Explore the historic center, including Plaza de Armas, La Moneda Palace, and the Metropolitan Cathedral. The Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes offers a glimpse into Chile's art history.
- **Valparaíso:** A UNESCO World Heritage site known for its colorful houses, funiculars, and vibrant street art. The city is a hub for culture and arts.
- **Pablo Neruda's Houses:** Visit the homes of the famous poet in Santiago (La Chascona), Valparaíso (La Sebastiana), and Isla Negra.

Modern Attractions

- **Sky Costanera:** The observation deck at the top of the Gran Torre Santiago, offering panoramic views of the city and the Andes.
- **Bellavista Neighborhood:** Known for its bohemian vibe, with numerous bars, restaurants, and nightclubs. Visit the Patio Bellavista for dining and shopping.
- **Mall Parque Arauco:** A large shopping center in Santiago with a wide range of stores, restaurants, and entertainment options.

Beaches

- **Viña del Mar:** A popular beach destination near Santiago, known for its sandy shores, gardens, and lively promenade.
- **Pichilemu:** A renowned surfing spot with beautiful beaches and a laid-back atmosphere.

RESTRICTIONS TO CONSIDER

- **Common Law Relationships:** Recognized but may have limited legal support compared to marriage.
- **Same-Sex Couples:** Legal and increasingly accepted. Same-sex marriage is recognized.
- **Medications:** Prescription medications are regulated. Some narcotics and controlled substances require special authorization.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Canadian Travel Advisories
<https://travel.gc.ca/destinations/chile>

- CIA World Factbooks (One Pager from the US)
<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/chile/>
- Living Abroad (from Gov.UK)
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-in-chile-guidance>

FOR MORE COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION, PLEASE FEEL FREE TO REACH OUT TO THE RESOURCES BELOW

- Global MFS Team: globalmfs-sfmmondiaux@cfmws.com