

Chile and Easter Island Exploration

December 27, 2019 – January 8, 2020
\$6,549 Per Person, Double Occupancy from Chicago



Day by Day Itinerary

Friday, December 27 – CHICAGO / EN ROUTE (I)

We depart Chicago's O'Hare Airport this afternoon by scheduled service of American Airlines and travel to Miami International Airport in preparation for this evening's connecting flight to Santiago, Chile.

Saturday, December 28 – SANTIAGO (I,HD)

As the sun begins to rise on the Chilean coast, we will arrive in Santiago where we'll meet our Chilean Tour Guide who will accompany us on vacation. This morning, we'll discover Santiago's rich culture, architecture, and natural beauty up close with an introductory tour of the capital city. We'll explore the heart of the city, which revolves around the Plaza de Armas, made up of historic attractions, and visit the Catedral Metropolitana. The cathedral is considered the most important one in Chile and is the seat of the Archdiocese of Santiago de Chile. Afterward, we'll stroll along the bustling pedestrian Paseos Ahumada before stopping to tour the immaculately preserved Palacio de la Moneda, Chile's presidential headquarters. We're then headed to Parque Metropolitano de Santiago to ride the funicular to the top of Cerro San Cristóbal for a sweeping view of Santiago and the Andes. Our tour will come to an end as we travel through the Barrio Concha y Toro, one of Santiago's best-preserved neighborhoods, characterized by its cobbled streets and old mansions built by the flourishing upper class in the early 20th century.

Sunday, December 29 – SANTIAGO (Viña del Mar, Valparaíso & Casablanca Valley) (B,L)

This morning we leave Santiago to explore the Central Valley and its' two main cities; the elegant and sophisticated Viña del Mar inspired by the French Riviera, and the historic port city of Valparaíso. We'll begin with a visit to Viña del Mar, as we take in the manicured boulevards lined with palm trees, stately palaces, a sprawling public beach, and expansive parks, most notably the Reloj de Flores symbolizing this town as the Garden City. Then we'll travel to neighboring Valparaíso, one of the country's most important seaports. As a major port for ships traveling between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans prior to the opening of the Panama Canal, Valparaíso is known as the "Jewel of the Pacific." Set into a hill overlooking the ocean, the Valparaíso of today is a vibrant center of Chilean culture and a UNESCO World Heritage site. We'll enjoy a panoramic tour to experience Valparaíso's weathered beauty and bohemian vibe as we view the modern Congreso Nacional building, Parque Italia, Victoria Square, and the Plaza Sotomayor, Valparaíso's main square centered around the Monumento a los Heroes de Iquique. Afterward, we'll return to Viña del Mar where we'll enjoy lunch at Castillo del Mar, a 19th century castle with a spectacular sea view. On our return to Santiago we'll travel through the Casablanca Valley before stopping to visit Viña Casas del Bosque. We'll tour the traditional family vineyard and cellars set in the magnificent valley overlooking the grape fields.

Monday, December 30 – SANTIAGO / PUERTO NATALES (B,HD)

Today, we depart Santiago and take to the skies for Punta Arenas, located on the Straits of Magellan in southern Patagonia. On arrival, we'll board our waiting motor coach and travel north to the

small fishing town of Puerto Natales. Located on beautiful Last Hope Sound, Puerto Natales is our gateway into Torres del Paine National Park.

Tuesday, December 31 – PUERTO NATALES (Torres Del Paine National Park) (B,L,HD)

Today, we venture to Torres del Paine National Park, Chile's most dazzling national park. We'll begin our day with a visit to Cueva del Milodón, arguably the most important paleontological and archaeological site in Southern Patagonia, where remains of a prehistoric ground sloth were found in 1895. From here, we'll travel through a diverse landscape of hills and pampas grasslands before stopping for lunch in Cerro Castillo. Afterward, we'll enter spectacular Torres del Paine National Park, part of the United Nation's World Biosphere Reserve system. We'll revel in the scenic vistas of the park's iconographic Torres del Paine, see the roaring Salto Grande waterfall run from turquoise Lake Nordenskjöld into the crystalline waters of Lake Pehoe. Simultaneously, we'll view the horn-like mountain tops of Cuernos del Paine and stroll through an old lenga forest to view the beauty and magnitude of Grey Glacier, a 2-mile wide river of ice that descends from the Southern Ice Field.

Wednesday, January 1 – PUERTO NATALES / PUNTA ARENAS (B,L,HD)

This morning we depart Puerto Natales and travel to Punta Arenas' Prat Pier, the departure point for an adventure to Magdalena Island. Uninhabited by humans, one of Chile's most important penguin colonies is found on Magdalena Island, located in the Strait of Magellan. Decreed Los Pingüinos Natural Monument, each year, from November through to January, roughly 150,000 Magellanic penguins arrive off the Chilean coast to meet and mate. This natural monument will mesmerize us with its beautiful landscape and picture worthy images. We'll have an opportunity to mingle with these beautiful birds and observe how they live in communities. In addition, we'll likely see additional wildlife including cormorants, common seagulls, dolphin gulls and Chilean skuas. Scattered bunches of Eared Seals and South American Fur Seals can also be found along the shoreline. Following our tour, we'll return to the mainland and travel to into Punta Arenas, the southernmost city on Earth, situated astride one of the world's historic trade routes.

Thursday, January 2 – PUNTA ARENAS / SANTIAGO (B)

Today, we depart Punta Arenas and take to the skies for Santiago. On arrival we'll transfer to our downtown hotel where the remainder of the day is at leisure.

Friday, January 3 – SANTIAGO / EASTER ISLAND (B,I,HD)

This morning we depart Santiago and take to the skies for Easter Island, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1995. The most remote island on the planet may be best-known for its mo'ai (statues), world-renowned icons of archaeology, and mysterious remnants of a vanished culture of Polynesian origin. Our base for exploring Easter Island is Hanga Roa, the island's only permanent settlement.

Saturday, January 4 – EASTER ISLAND (B,RD)

Today, we'll step back in time and be introduced to an era of Rapa

Nui's pre-history. When the mo'ai statues and the ahus (altars) were destroyed and chaos was imminent, a new order rose: the reign of the birdmen. Our exploration of Easter Island begins with a visit to Ana Kai Tangata, a cave with impressive rock-art paintings depicting the arrival of the Manutara bird. We'll then travel towards Rano Kau, home to a crater lake which is one of only three natural bodies of fresh water on the island. Here, we'll visit the archaeological site of Orongo, a ceremonial village where annual competitions were held to elect the Tangata Manu (Birdman), who held a position of power on the island. The ceremony was carried out until approximately 150 years ago when the first Christian missionaries arrived.

This afternoon will begin with a visit to Ahu Akivi. Although most ceremonial platforms and their respective mo'ai are found along the coast, inland there are about twenty-five raised platforms. The mo'ai here were restored by Dr. William Mulloy in 1976, and consist of seven standing mo'ai facing the rising sun. According to legend, these seven statues represent seven exploratory young men sent to investigate the island. Next, we'll explore Ahu Vai Teka. Although there is no statue now, one is believed to have existed initially, and was orientated towards the rising sun of the equinox. Then, we'll travel to the archaeological site at Puna Pau, the sole source of the red volcanic rock used to carve the Pukao (hats) that sit atop the mo'ai.

Tonight we'll enjoy an unforgettable experience while we learn about the historical legends and myths of Rapa Nui. This unique show will allow us to be more than mere spectators.

Sunday, January 5 – EASTER ISLAND (B,L,HD)

Another exciting day of exploration lies ahead, beginning with the Ahu Nau Nau mo'ais on the palm tree-lined beach at Playa Anakena. This magical place is considered the birthplace of the history and culture of Easter Island. Next, we'll visit Ahu Te Pito Kura, the location of the largest mo'ai successfully moved and erected. We'll also see the sacred stone known as the Energy Rock, which has a great amount of magnetic power. Next, we'll stop at the extinct Rano Raraku volcano to visit the Rano Raraku Quarry where the

mo'ai of the island were carved from the volcanic rock, and where an estimated 400 mo'ai remain in several stages of completion. Following a picnic lunch, we'll travel to Ahu Tongariki, one of the visually striking sites on the island. Tongariki is not only the largest reconstructed site on the island, but also throughout Polynesia. On our return to Hanga Roa, we'll visit the ancient tribal site of Ahu Akahanga which offers an introduction into the history and understanding of village life of the ancient Rapanui people.

Monday, January 6 – EASTER ISLAND / SANTIAGO (B,I)

Today, we depart Easter Island and take to the skies for Santiago. On arrival we'll transfer to our downtown hotel for an evening at leisure.

Tuesday, January 7 – SANTIAGO / EN ROUTE (B,L,I)

Late this morning we depart our hotel and travel south to the Maipo Valley, known for its fertile and blessed soils which gave life to the Chilean wine industry. We'll enjoy a traditional lunch at Restaurant Doña Paula, a national monument. It was here that General Bernardo O'Higgins and his 120 soldiers took refuge after a battle against the forces of the Spanish Crown. Afterward, we'll tour the neighboring Santa Rita Vinery. Surrounded by extraordinary natural beauty, this vinery, founded in 1884 by Domingo Fernández Concha, has become a premium destination for its historical interest and the quality of the wines they produce. Then, as all good things must come to end, we'll travel to Santiago's Comodoro Arturo Merino Benítez International Airport in preparation for our return journey home.

Wednesday, January 8 – MIAMI / CHICAGO (I)

Early this morning we return to Miami International Airport where we'll proceed through Immigrations. After claiming our check luggage, we'll re-deposit our checked luggage with an airline representative for the connecting flight to Chicago. No better time to reflect on memories of our *Chile and Easter Island Exploration* to last a lifetime and to celebrate the beginning of new friendships made along the way!

***** Welcome Home *****

Visit myniu.com to make your reservation.

The Tour Price Includes:

- Pre-trip assistance.
- Informational packet.
- Alumni staff assistance for a worry-free travel experience.
- Economy-class air transportation by scheduled service of American Airlines and LATAM Airlines.
- Transportation by deluxe private motor coach with accompanying Tour Guide.
- Accommodations in first-class hotels.
- All meals as shown in the Day by Day Itinerary.
- Sightseeing as detailed in the Day by Day Itinerary including applicable entrance fees.
- Luggage handling and portage charges for one suitcase per person at the hotels.
- Taxes for included ground services, **and airline taxes and fuel surcharge of \$140 per person.**

The Tour Price Does Not Include: Items of a personal nature such as passport fees; luggage handling at airports; gratuities to the motor coach driver(s), Tour Guide, and Step-on Guides; travel insurance; and meals other than those stated above.

TOUR CONDITIONS

Tour Deposit and Payment: Reservations may be made by check or credit card (Visa, MC, or Discover). Tour prices do increase every year and it is possible that increases could occur after the printing of this brochure in advance of your tour's departure.

Tour Pricing: This is a package tour in which land tour costs and special group airfares have been combined in the most advantageous way. Should you wish to make any deviation from the package tour by changing your departure and/or return dates, the advantages of the package tour price may be eliminated, and additional charges will be assessed.

Travel Insurance: Travel insurance is very important and can be purchased through USI Travel Insurance Services. This insurance is designed to cover you and your trip investment from trip cancellation/interruption penalties and provide medical expense, medical evacuation, baggage and personal effects loss, and accidental death coverage, as well as emergency assistance. There is an advantage to early enrollment in this travel insurance program. Purchasing coverage within 21 days (Plus and Elite Options) of your initial trip deposit can make you eligible for 1) Pre-existing Medical Condition Exclusion Waiver, and 2) Optional Cancel for Any Reason Coverage (Elite Option). If you wish to take advantage of the special above provisions, you must enroll within 21 days of the date your initial trip deposit is received. Contact Travel Insurance Services at 1-800-937-1387.

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For more information contact the NIU Alumni Association at 815-753-1512 or visit the Travel section at myniu.com to make your reservation.

\$100 of the trip cost is tax-deductible as a charitable donation.

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