

Chile Eclipse 2020 – Lake District & Chiloé

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1/2	Depart London / Arrive Santiago
Day 3	Valparaiso/Winery
Day 4/6	Lake District
Day 7/9	Chiloé Island
Day 10/11	Valdivia + Eclipse
Day 12	Santiago
Day 13	Depart Santiago
Day 14	Arrive London



Departs

December 2020

Focus

Total solar eclipse, landscapes and nature

Grading

A. Day walks – all optional

Dates and Prices

See website (tour code CHL08)

Highlights:

- Witness a total solar eclipse in a spectacular landscape
- Explore the colourful port town of Valparaiso, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Discover the deep blue lakes, snow-capped volcanoes, pristine forests and rushing waterfalls of Chile's Lake District
- Spot Humboldt and Magellanic Penguins on Chiloé, the island of myths and legends



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Introduction

Chile stretches from the tropics almost all the way to Antarctica and is home to an extremely wide variety of landscapes and ecosystems. This tour focuses on two regions of Southern Chile that are famed for their beauty and represent a significant part of Chilean identity. The Lake District is considered by Chileans to represent everything pure, healthy and unspoilt in Chile. Perfectly conical, snow-capped volcanoes form the backdrop to the azure-blue lakes. It is a land of pristine forests cut through by rushing rivers and waterfalls.



The green rolling landscape of Chiloé is a barrier between the Pacific Ocean and the calmer protected Interior Sea where all the settlements are located. The people of Chiloé are renowned for their song, dance and crafts. Much of Chile's folk music is influenced by the gentle summer fogs and harsh winters of Chiloé.

Monday 14th December 2020 is an important date for those fortunate enough to be in the right spot on the Earth. On that day, the shadow of the Moon will race across the Pacific Ocean, reaching the Chilean coast in the middle of the day. Those watching from Chile's Lake District will witness a total solar eclipse as the Sun is high in the sky. These rare events are considered by many to be the most spectacular sight in the whole of the natural world.

The build-up begins about an hour-and-a-quarter before totality with the moon appearing to take a first small 'bite' out of the disk of the Sun. Then, as the minutes pass, the moon's presence becomes more noticeable and after an hour the Sun appears as a slender crescent. Minutes before totality the shadows sharpen and the colours of the surrounding landscape become richer as light levels drop quickly. Brighter stars and planets become visible in the darkened sky and in the last few moments before totality the Sun's rays stream out almost from a single point, creating the remarkable 'diamond ring' effect.

As the Sun finally disappears behind the Moon, totality begins and suddenly everything changes. For a couple of minutes protective glasses can be removed and the eclipse viewed directly in all its glory. The black disk of the Moon is surrounded by pearly streamers that reveal the extended outer atmosphere of the Sun. Closer in, pink solar flares can often be seen erupting from the Sun. Transfixed by the ethereal vision, time seems to stand still. Nothing that you have read can prepare you for totality. No photographs capture the exquisite beauty. This is a time to savour every moment.

All too soon the Sun emerges again with a second diamond ring and totality is over. The period of totality is brief but the memory of those minutes spent in the Moon's shadow will remain with you. Such is the wonder and delight of an eclipse that many people find themselves keen to repeat the experience and start planning for the next eclipse.

Itinerary

Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Days 1 – 2

Santiago

We depart London Heathrow on direct flights with British Airways for an overnight flight to Santiago, the capital of Chile. After arriving at Santiago's international airport the next morning, we will transfer to a comfortable hotel for the first night.

Santiago is a cosmopolitan mix of museums, restaurants, colonial architecture nestled amongst modern buildings, contrasting neighbourhoods and a fantastic central market that is a food lovers heaven. The stunning backdrop of the Andes combined with the cultural and historical heart of the city makes Santiago a great introduction to Chile.

In the afternoon, a tour of the vibrant city will be on offer for those interested, visiting the stately Presidential Palace, the thrumming Plaza de Armas, the beautiful old Post Office and, time dependent, continuing on to the fashionable business districts, stopping on the way to admire the towering statue of the Virgin Mary overlooking the city.

Includes meals on flight plus breakfast and dinner on day 2.

Day 3

Valparaíso

Today will be a full day excursion to Valparaíso and the Casablanca Valley. The historic city of Valparaíso is Chile's oldest port. It is also home to the country's Senate and Chamber of Deputies, which moved here from the capital in 1989, when Chilean democratic governance was re-established. The city's many hills are covered with a multi-coloured panorama of painted houses crowding every nook and cranny, ensuring a spectacular backdrop to your visit. During your tour, you will see the historic city centre, whose fine 19th-Century architecture has earned it a place on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Then you will travel to a viewpoint overlooking the city via one of Valparaíso's signature funicular elevators, two dozen of which were built at the turn of the 20th Century to connect the upper and lower sections of the city. You will also visit the parliamentary building and Plaza Sotomayor's memorial to the heroes of the War of the Pacific.

Following this you will stop by an impressive vineyard in the Casablanca Valley (and possibly indulge in a tippie) before returning to Santiago for the evening.

Includes breakfast and lunch.

Day 4

Puerto Varas

Today we return to the international airport for the short flight to Puerto Montt. On arrival we drive the 20km to our hotel in the town of Puerto Varas, pausing to admire the regional emblem, and largest tree species in South America, the Patagonian Cypress or Alerce in Spanish (*Fitzroya cupressoides*), at Lahuen Ñadi Natural Monument on the outskirts of Puerto Montt. These towering trees can live for up to 3000 years and reach 60 metres in height. Winding our way through the park's lush Valdivian rainforest, this will be a walk to remember as we are dwarfed by the magnificence of our surroundings. The hotel is set in a quiet location five minutes' walk from the centre of Puerto Varas, and Lake (or Lago) Llanquihue can be seen from each room. Heating and hot water (including the swimming pool and spa) are supplied through geothermal energy.

Includes breakfast and lunch.

Day 5

Chile's Lake District

For two full days we explore Chile's Lake District, starting with a full day tour into the wonderful region surrounding Puerto Varas. Spectacular views towards the Osorno and Calbuco volcanoes can already be enjoyed during the drive along Lake Llanquihue. The first stop of the day is by the wild 'Saltos de Petrohue', a collection of rapids and waterfalls that dance over lava rock created by the surrounding volcanoes. It is the waters of the Petrohue River itself that have eroded and shaped these rocks over thousands of years. The journey continues with a drive towards the 2,660m high Osorno volcano. The road ends at an elevation of 1,200m, by a mountain cabin, where the unforgettable views range from the mighty towering heights of the Osorno volcano and the neighbouring volcanoes of Calbuco, Antillanca and Tronador, to the profoundly blue Llanquihue Lake. We will hike across the volcano's immense lava fields, the panoramic views improving with every metre of elevation gained. We will return to Puerto Varas in the afternoon.



Includes breakfast and lunch.

Day 6

Frutillar and Puerto Octay

This full day excursion, starting from Puerto Varas, will introduce you to the small towns of Frutillar and Puerto Octay, both set on the shores of Lake Llanquihue. Your first stop, a short drive north of Puerto Varas, will be delightful Frutillar, where 19th-Century German immigrant houses have been lovingly restored. Frutillar's brightly-coloured flower gardens and open-air museum, featuring a water mill and functional open-air smithy, will transport you back to another time – a feeling augmented by the abundance of delicious German 'kuchen' cakes, which can be procured and savoured throughout the town. After this leisurely stop in Frutillar your tour will continue through green fields to Puerto Octay, on the north coast of Lake Llanquihue. Along the way you'll stop at a viewpoint offering a picture-perfect panorama of the lake with snow covered islands and volcanoes in the distance. Puerto Octay, also founded by German settlers, is a quaint village on a small peninsula, with charming houses and a beautiful main square. You'll have time to wander its streets and enjoy its historical museum before returning to Puerto Varas in the late afternoon.

Includes breakfast and lunch.

Day 7

Chiloé

After breakfast we drive from Puerto Varas to the small port of Pargua, from where we take a 30-minute ferry across the Chacoa channel. Once on the island of Chiloé we make our way through the verdant landscape to a local family farm near Ancud where a special meal will be prepared. The people of Chiloé ("Chilotes") like to celebrate special occasions with a typical "Curanto": a rich meal of seafood, fish, a variety of meats and, of course, Chiloé potatoes, all cooked in an earth oven. During this entertaining excursion, you will be deeply immersed in the island's culture and taught how to prepare a Curanto by a local family. Fires will be lit upon your arrival at the hotel in Castro, and then you can help prepare the ingredients for the Curanto. Once everything is covered up with earth and big leaves you will learn to prepare "Milcao", a typical regional snack made from potatoes, and enjoy a tasty pisco sour. If you feel adventurous, you can also explore the surroundings on small hiking paths whilst awaiting the great event: the uncovering of the curanto and, of course eating it! After the Curanto we head towards the colourful town of Castro, our base for two nights.

Includes breakfast and lunch.

Day 8

Chiloé

Our journey continues along the northern coast of Chiloé, before reaching the Puñihuil penguin colony. Puñihuil houses the "Pingüineras" – a rocky landscape consisting of three volcanic islands, all protected by the Chilean Forest Service (CONAF) and declared a natural monument. It is considered one of the greatest natural treasures of the region as Humboldt and Magellanic Penguins nest alongside one another from October to March each year – a rare occurrence! A variety of other animals, such as Kelp Gulls, Red-legged Cormorants and Marine Otters, can also be observed here. We will get an introduction to the history of the "Pingüinera" and then, weather permitting, will take a boat trip to explore the islands and experience their wildlife.

Includes breakfast and lunch.



Magellanic Penguin

Day 9

Valdivia

After another night in the historic port of Ancud at the northern end of Chiloé, we will make our way to Valdivia, pausing for lunch along the way. Upon arrival, (time permitting), we will take a short panoramic tour of the city.

Valdivia has a great art scene and is known for its craft beers and German influence. A university city, it's full of restaurants, coffee shops and bars, offering a great range.

Back in 1960, the city suffered the most powerful earthquake, registering 9.5, subsequently triggering a giant tsunami which left a trail of destruction as far as Japan. The waves set off by the earthquake continued across the Pacific for a week and aftershocks continued for a month after the first tremor. As a result of the severity of the earthquake, most of the buildings are more modern and low-rise, one of the few original buildings is Casa Anwandter, a German colonial house that is now a museum.



Our hotel is situated in a peaceful district along the banks of the Calle-Calle, one of the broad rivers that intersect the city. The centre of the city and the colourful fish market are a pleasant ten-minute walk along the river bank where you are likely to encounter some of the South American Sea Lions that inhabit the stretch of river by the fish market in the hope of catching some of the discarded fish.

Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 10

Pucon/Araucaria Forest

Today we will explore deeper into this beautiful region of lakes and volcanoes. Driving north-east from Valdivia we cross rich arable lands towards the town of Villarrica at the western end of a lake of the same name. As we approach, we are met with views of the near perfect cone of one of the region's more active volcanoes: Volcan Villarrica. The volcano's last eruption occurred in 2015 and steam continues to issue from vents near the summit.

Heading further into the mountains we encounter temperate forests of the Southern beeches (Genus: *Nothofagus*) and the magical stands of Monkey Puzzle trees (*Araucaria araucana*). The Monkey Puzzle is a species much admired in the gardens of stately homes in England but is native to a small region of Chile and Argentina. The sight of these fine trees set against snow-capped volcanoes is outstanding. If we are lucky, we will see Black Woodpecker and Slender-billed Parakeet.

As this is the evening before eclipse day there will be a presentation to inform everyone about the eclipse site and describe in detail the celestial event that will unfold the following day. Includes breakfast, buffet lunch and dinner.

Day 11

Eclipse Day

The day starts with a journey north along the rugged Pacific coast, passing colourful fishing villages and into the path the eclipse will take. Our plan is to view the eclipse from the shores of Lago Budi, a shallow brackish lake. The prospect of clear skies is higher in this part of the eclipse track than anywhere else in Chile. The reduced presence of cloud in this area is a result of the suppression of cloud formation by cooling air flowing in from the Pacific. This effect can be seen up to 30 km inland.

With a population of more than one million the Mapuche people constitute the largest ethnic group within Chile living mainly in the region between the river Bío Bío south to Chiloé Island. In the Lago Budi region over 70% declare themselves to be Mapuche and it is amongst this community that we will spend the day and set up for the eclipse of the sun. To facilitate comfortable observation we will have shade, chairs and toilets, along with some local snacks to keep us going and of course, the company of our guides.

The Mapuche culture and language came under great pressure during the Pinochet era when many people were evicted from their land but in recent times more enlightened policies have supported their culture and the establishment of the Indigenous Act has protected their lands. Our time with the Mapuche will include an insightful talk about their view of the cosmos and a boat trip on the lake which should offer good numbers of wading birds and breeding Black-necked Swans.

The eclipse will occur in the middle of the day with the Sun (and Moon) high in the sky at an altitude of 71.5° at totality. The following times are approximate as they depend upon the exact position of our viewing site.

	Universal Time (UT)	Local time (CLT)
Start of Partial Eclipse (C1)	14:39	11:39
Start of total eclipse (C2)	16:00:44	13:00:44
End of total eclipse (C3)	16:02:52	13:02:52
End of Partial Phase (C4)	17:29	14:29

The duration of totality will be around 2 minutes 8 seconds.

We must keep our travel plans flexible on eclipse day. With an eye on the latest forecasts we must be prepared to alter our plans if the circumstances look more favourable in one place than another.

We will enjoy lunch with the Mapuche and time permitting we will see the traditional Mapuche game of Palin which is similar to hockey and explore the area around the community, heading out by traditional boat to Cuevo del Zorro Island

The return drive to Valdivia will be in the late afternoon.

Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 12

Santiago

We bid farewell to Valdivia and fly back to Santiago. You will have time to explore the city further before your final night in Chile. The hotel is centrally located and close to a number of parks with fountains and sculptures, where people of all ages enjoy socialising in the warm summer evenings. Includes breakfast and final night's dinner

Days 13 and 14

In Flight

After breakfast this morning, we must return to Santiago airport for the final time. Our flight usually departs in the early afternoon, arriving back into London the following morning. However, some flights depart in the early hours of Day 14, arriving back into London later that same day.

Includes breakfast and meals on flights.

Extensions:

Why not extend your time in South America – we have a range of extensions which can be added to your Eclipse tour and it is possible to change the number of days or combine extensions and add them pre or post tour.

Easter Island:

Head over to Easter Island for a 4 night stay, seeing the incredible moai that dominate the island. Whilst there are no native mammals, there are Maori Rats 'Rattus exulans', as well as geckos and lizards that were brought over by early settlers. Native birds include Frigatebird, Masked Booby and Red-tailed Tropicbird plus introduced Chimango Caracara and Common Diuca-finch, which you should see on your excursions over the island. 4 Night stay including flights, 3 full days guided excursions, 3 star traditional hotel on a bed and breakfast basis from £1,859.00 per person, based on 2 people travelling and sharing a room.

Iguazu Falls:

Explore the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Iguazu Falls, an impressive 2.7km wide. With a guided tour of both the Argentinian and Brazilian sides of the Falls you will get to see panoramic views as well as getting up close to the thundering waterfalls. An added bonus is the wildlife - around 400 species of birds and 80 species of mammals that inhabit the national parks that surround the falls. 2 Night stay including flights, 2 guided excursions, 4 star hotel on a bed and breakfast basis from £1,095.00 per person, based on 2 people travelling and sharing a room

Peninsula Valdez:

Based in Puerto Madryn in the north of Patagonia, this 2 night extension is a wildlife delight! South America's largest penguin colony is here (half a million Magellanic Penguins) plus also South American Sea lion, Southern Elephant Seal, Orcas, Southern Right Whales, Guanaco, South American Grey Fox, Large Hairy Armadillos and Patagonian Hog-nosed Skunk. Birdlife is prolific here and amongst the many species are Tawny-throated Dotterel, Patagonian Canastero, Burrowing Parrot, Chilean Flamingo and Chimango Caracara. 2 Night stay including flights, 2 guided excursions, 4 star hotel on a bed and breakfast basis from £1,395.00 per person, based on 2 people travelling and sharing a room

Holiday Inclusions / Extra Expenses

The following are included in the price of the holiday:

- International and domestic flights in economy class
- Accommodation throughout
- Meals: 11 breakfasts, 9 lunches and 5 dinners
- All transport and guiding
- Park fees and reserve entry fees

The following are not included and should be budgeted for:

- Drinks (though your guides will keep a supply of bottled water on the bus for you to help yourself to during the day)
- Discretionary tipping
- Any other personal spending e.g. souvenirs

Tour Grading

We have graded this tour A - easy to moderately difficult at times. There is no major trekking on tour, but there will be plenty of daytime walks in a variety of habitat types and in some of the major forest reserves of Chile. All walks are optional and taken at a leisurely pace, but they will often be over hilly, rocky or forested terrain.

Accommodation

All of the hotels are of a good international standard. All the rooms have private facilities. Most of the hotels have swimming pools.

Your Safety & Security

Risks to your safety and security are an unavoidable aspect of all travel and the best current advice on such risks is provided for you by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, it is essential that you refer to the Foreign Office website (<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/chile>) regularly prior to travel.

How to Book Your Place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card to hand, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website.