

CHILE GEOGRAPHY AND WINE GROWING REGIONS

The **geography of Chile** is extremely diverse as the country extends from a latitude of 17° South to Cape Horn at 56° (if Chilean claims on Antarctica are included Chile would extend to the South Pole) and from the ocean on the west to Andes on the east. Chile is situated in southern South America, bordering the South Pacific Ocean and a small part of the South Atlantic Ocean. Chile's territorial shape is among the world's most unusual. From north to south, Chile extends 4,270 km (2,653 mi), and yet it only averages 177 km (110 mi) east to west. On a map, it looks like a long ribbon reaching from the middle of South America's west coast straight down to the southern tip of the continent, where it curves slightly eastward. Diego Ramírez Islands and Cape Horn, the southernmost points in the Americas, where the Pacific and Atlantic oceans turbulently meet, are Chilean territory. Chile's northern neighbors are Peru and Bolivia, and its border with Argentina to the east, at 5,150 km (3,200 mi), is the world's third longest.

From North tip of Chile to Santiago = 2000 km

From Santiago to Puerto Montt (end of normal Chilean land, prior to National Park region = 1000 km.

Central Chile

Main article: [Zona Central, Chile](#)

Central Chile (Chile Central), home to a majority of the population, includes the three largest metropolitan areas—Santiago, Valparaíso, and Concepción. It extends from about 32° south latitude to about 37° south latitude.

The climate is of the temperate [Mediterranean](#) type, with the amount of rainfall increasing considerably and progressively from north to south. In the Santiago area, the average monthly temperatures are about 19.5 °C (67.1 °F) in the summer months of January and February and 7.5 °C (45.5 °F) in the winter months of June and July; the average monthly precipitation is no more than a trace in January and February and 69.7 mm (3 in) in June and July. In Concepción, by contrast, the average monthly temperatures are somewhat lower in the summer at 17.6 °C (63.7 °F) but higher in the winter at 9.3 °C (48.7 °F), and the amount of rain is much greater: in the summer, [Concepción](#) receives an average of 0.8 inch (20 millimeters) of rain per month; in June and July, the city is pounded by an average of 10 inches (253 mm.) per month. The numerous rivers greatly increase their flow as a result of the winter rains and the spring melting of the Andean snows, and they contract considerably in the summer. The combination of abundant snow in the Andes and relatively moderate winter temperatures creates excellent conditions for Alpine skiing.

The topography of central Chile includes a [coastal range](#) of mountains running parallel to the Andes. Lying between the two mountain ranges is the so-called Central Valley, which contains some of the richest agricultural land in the country, especially in its northern portion.

The area just north and south of Santiago is a large producer of fruits, including the grapes from which the best [Chilean wines](#) are made.

Exports of fresh fruit began to rise dramatically in the mid-1970s because Chilean growers had the advantage of being able to reach markets in the Northern Hemisphere during winter in that part of the world. Most of these exports, such as grapes, apples, and peaches, go by refrigerator ships, but some, such as berries, go by air freight.

The southern portion of central Chile contains a mixture of some excellent agricultural lands, many of which were covered originally with [old-growth forests](#). They were cleared for agriculture but were soon exhausted of their organic matter and left to erode. Large tracts of this worn-out land, many of them on hilly terrain, have been reforested for the lumber, especially for the cellulose and paper industries. New investments during the 1980s in these industries transformed the rural economy of the region. The pre-

Andean highlands and some of the taller and more massive mountains in the coastal range (principally the [Cordillera de Nahuelbuta](#)) still contain large tracts of old-growth forests of remarkable beauty, some of which have been set aside as national parks. Between the coastal mountains and the ocean, many areas of central Chile contain stretches of land that are lower than the Central Valley and are generally quite flat. The longest beaches can be found in such sections.

The vineyards of Chile

The vineyard covers 200 000 ha in valleys running from the Andes to the Pacific Ocean. Chile was the sixth largest wine producing country in 2015 with a production of about 1,280 million liters (source OIV) and the fifth largest wine exporter.

European grape vines, *Vitis Vinifera*, arrived with the spanish conquistadors and missionaries around 1555, the variety planted then was País. It was brought to Mexico by Hernán Cortés in 1520. In the 19th century, french immigrants and investors changed the chilean vineyard with their knowledge, new techniques and new varieties like Cabernet sauvignon, Carmenère, Malbec, Merlot and Sauvignon blanc. An interesting and surprising point, Chile has remained free of Phylloxera.

The most renowned wine regions of Chile are from north to south:

- Elqui Valley
- Limarí Valley
- Choapa Valley
- Aconcagua Valley
- Casablanca Valley
- San Antonio Valley
- Maipo Valley
- Cachapoal Valley
- Colchagua Valley
- Curicó Valley
- Maule Valley
- Itata Valley
- Bío Bío Valley
- Malleco Valley

Guide to the Top 5 Wine Regions of Chile

Any vacation to Chile is not complete without exploring the aromas and flavors that flow out of the Chilean wine valleys. The Spanish first established the vineyards in Chile back in the mid-16th century, and since then the wine regions have expanded and flourished serving many international markets such as the United States and Europe.

As well as being one of the largest and best wine producers in the world, the wine regions of Chile are some of the most beautiful with such varied landscapes surrounding them.

With the Pacific coastline to the west, the Andes Mountains to the east, Patagonia to the south and the Atacama Desert to the north; Chile's wine regions are truly breath-taking and therefore fit in easily around your Chile travel itinerary. Enjoy discovering and exploring the wonderful varieties of Chilean wine in our guide to the top 5 wine regions in Chile!

Colchagua Valley

The Rapel Valley in Chile's central valley is home to the Colchagua Valley which has become more well known than the region it is contained within. Located about 110 miles south of Santiago and on the southerly border of the Rapel Valley is Colchagua Valley which is recognized as one of the best wine regions in Chile and is great to explore during your vacation in Chile!

Known for its full-bodied Carménère, Syrah and Malbec, it is not uncommon to find the Colchagua Valley feature regularly on the world's leading lists of wines.

The cool Pacific Ocean breezes transformed this formerly quiet valley into the most important new red wine regions with leading wineries such as Casa Lapostolle and Montes producing intense and aroma filled wines.

Maipo Valley

Perhaps Chile's most historic region, some of the grape plantings in the Maipo Valley date back to the time of the Spanish conquistadors in Chile. It wasn't until the importation of Bordeaux grapes from France in the 19th Century that the region really began to make a name for itself and really take shape. Today, it is home to some of the best Cabernet-based wines in the world with wineries such as Concha y Toro's Don Melchor and Santa Rita's Casa Real leading the way.

As the closest wine region to the city of Santiago the vineyards stretch eastward from Chile's capital to the mighty Andes Mountains making the valley the perfect way to spend the day or weekend exploring Chile's best Cabernet wines.

The interesting wine region of Alto Maipo rises from the base of the Andean mountains up to heights of 2,600ft. above sea level. In the morning the sun, has to scale the heights of the Argentinean side of the Andes before many of these grapevines bask in the morning light. The combination of the warm afternoon sun and cool mountain breezes creates the bold yet elegant Cabernets found here.

Limari Valley

Aside from the Elqui Valley which lies a further 50 miles north of the Limari Valley near to the Atacama Desert, it remains one of the most northernmost wine regions of Chile. Situated 200 miles north of Chile's capital of Santiago, this wine valley lies near to the equator which is not traditionally associated with winegrowing.

The vineyards of the Limari Valley stand out with their brilliant green vines against the brown earthy colors of the surrounding dry, arid areas around it.

With its own unique microclimate caused by its proximity to the Atacama Desert and the Pacific has led to three of Chile's largest wineries; Concha y Toro, San Pedro and Santa Rita to produce wines here. Visiting the Limari Valley will repay you with fresh Sauvignon Blancs, Chardonnays and Syrahs all of which have a special mineral edge. Find out about Concha y Toro's harvest time in the Limari Valley in this interesting video below:

Aconcagua Valley

Just 40 miles north of Santiago de Chile, the snow-capped peak of the Aconcagua Mountain holds the essential fresh water needed by the wine valley below.

Not only is the Aconcagua Valley known for the imposing Aconcagua Mountain, which is the highest in the Americas but it is now making a name for itself in the production of wines.

With one of the warmest areas in Chile for the production of fine grapes and with some cooler high-altitude areas, Cabernet Sauvignon and more recently Syrah grapes have had the most success here. Surrounded by the breath-taking scenery of the Aconcagua Mountain, Viña Errázuriz is perhaps the most popular and important winery in this wine region of Chile, so make sure to keep an eye out for the wines of Aconcagua!

Casablanca Valley

Finding itself in the history book of Chilean wine is by no means a small feat by the wine producers in the Casablanca Valley.

Northwest of Santiago, the first grapes made it to the Casablanca region as recently as the 1980s when Pablo Morandé also known as '*El Pionero*' ('The Pioneer') decided to plant Chile's first cool-climate vineyards.

Casablanca Valley today is thriving and has produced some of the best Sauvignon Blancs, Pinot Noirs, Chardonnays and Syrahs in Chile with all the attraction and aromas of coastal wines.

Matetic vineyard produces some fantastic and crisp Sauvignon Blancs whilst Veramonte is perhaps the most well-known winery in the Casablanca region, capturing the attention of wine experts from around the world.