



## Chile hotter than ever

With greater access opening up Chile, this cosmopolitan country of contrasts is gaining momentum on the 'must-do' list of Australian travellers to South America. Here are 10 things you might not know about this spectacular country.

**01** Chile is one of the safest and most stable countries in Latin America. According to the 'Global Peace Index' annual rankings, Chile occupied the 20th place as one of the world's most peaceful nations.

**02** Some grape growing regions in Chile produce Carménère wine, a variety originally from Bordeaux, France. In 1860, the grape variety was believed to have disappeared. However, in 1994, a French expert rediscovered the Carménère stock in Chile, which was believed for a long time to be Merlot. It is currently one of Chile's best known varieties.

**03** Mummification was first carried out in Chile, not in Egypt: the ancient Chinchorro culture in northern Chile- started the art of mummification 7000 to 2000 years before the Egyptians. These mummies are exhibited in the San Miguel de Azapa Museum in Arica.

**04** The famous novels 'Moby Dick' and 'Robinson Crusoe' were probably inspired by stories that took place on two Chilean islands. Moby Dick comes from 'Mocha Dick', a huge whale that attacked the ships near the coast of Isla Mocha (Concepción) and was never captured. Robinson Crusoe was inspired by the story of Alexander Selkirk, who was shipwrecked in 1704 for four years on an island in Chile. The island has the name Robinson Crusoe in tribute to the novel.

**05** From a biological and botanical point of view, Chile is one of the most fascinating spots on the planet. Fifty per cent of Chile's flora is endemic (that is, it is not found in any other place), as is approximately 20 per cent of its wildlife. The species include the Pudú, the smallest deer in the world; and the Colo-Colo, a leopard similar to an Andean Mountain Cat. Some plants in the Valdivian forest (in southern Chile) are remains of ancient groves from Gondwana, such as the Alerce, which at 3600 years old is the second oldest living species in the world.

**06** Although Peru is essentially the birthplace of the potato, today over 99 per cent of all cultivated potatoes worldwide are descendants of a subspecies indigenous to Chile. The most common variety, *Solanum tuberosum*, is native to the southern island of Chiloé. Chile is also the world's largest exporter of grapes, the second largest exporter of salmon, trout, avocados and plums, and the third largest exporter of kiwis, raspberries, and blackberries.

**07** Chile has some of the clearest skies in the southern hemisphere and is considered by scientists as one of the best spots in the world for astronomical observation. Two of the world's most important observatories are found here. Páranla is in the district of Taltal, in the Antofagasta Region

and several scenes from the James Bond movie, *Quantum of Solace*, were filmed there. The Observatory 'La Silla' has a network of 18 telescopes and one of the world's most modern spectrographs known as HARPS, or 'High Accuracy Radial Velocity Planet Searcher'.

**08** In spite of the difficulties for worldwide tourism in 2009, the sustained growth in tourism achieved by Chile in the past few years saw some three million foreign tourists visit the country for its Bicentenary celebrations in 2010.



**09** Chiloé is an island in the Lake Region of southern Chile whose 60 wooden 18th and 19th century Jesuit churches are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. These buildings are architectural masterpieces, many of which were built without nails and represent some of the oldest wooden structures still standing in the world.

**10** The relatively rare semi-precious stone lapis lazuli can be found in Chile where it has been extracted for many years in the Andes near Ovalle. This stone was used by ancient civilisations such as the Egyptians and the Incas.

Information provided courtesy Turismo Chile. For further information visit [www.chile.travel](http://www.chile.travel)



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Australians will gain unprecedented access to South America through a new Qantas service to Chile's capital, Santiago.

**IN EARLY 2012**, Qantas will commence direct flights between Sydney and Santiago, one of Latin America's main gateways and home port of Qantas' oneworld™ partner LAN Airlines. This service will operate three times a week and replace Qantas' current direct flights between Sydney and Buenos Aires. Over time, Qantas will look to increase the frequency of Santiago services to daily.

As the leading premium airline in South America and a oneworld™ member, LAN has an extensive network in South America. The LAN Group includes a number of affiliate passenger airlines in Peru, Ecuador and Argentina.

Qantas chief executive Alan Joyce said flights to Santiago would provide more connection frequencies across the continent than available through Buenos Aires.

"Direct Qantas flights to Santiago will give Australians the ideal gateway into the key markets of South America, offering convenient connections to Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia," he said.

"There is considerable potential for Qantas to help develop the fast-growing trade, tourism and cultural ties between the Asia-Pacific and South American markets. Australia's location makes it ideally placed to act as a hub for passenger and freight traffic from Asia to South America, presenting an alternative to the United States.

Flying time from Sydney to Santiago is 13 hours and flying time from Santiago to Sydney is 14 hours 25 minutes. For further information contact your travel agent or visit [www.qantas.com.au](http://www.qantas.com.au)

Image: Qantas takes off to Santiago

## Tango in Argentina

**BORN IN THE BROTHELS** of Buenos Aires, the tango truly embodies the passion of the Argentines. Learning the tango will be your first insight into this fascinating Latin American culture when you visit South America with the Contours Collection, which has been opening the eyes of Australian travellers in this vibrant continent for over 35 years.

The 33-day 'Sensational South America' voyage is a perfect introduction to South America with experiences including learning to tango in Argentina through to Chilean wine tastings, a visit to Machu Picchu in Peru, three nights in the Amazon, a trip to the famous Copacabana Beach, Iguazu Falls, Lake Titicaca and hidden-secrets tours in Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Bolivia and Chile.

Prices start at \$14,850 per person and include international and domestic economy class air fares and taxes, accommodation in four and five-star hotels, three nights' accommodation in eco-lodges, all ground transportation in private air-conditioned vehicles, site entry fees, meals, local English-speaking guides, and tips. Each tour departs with a minimum of four clients and a maximum of 18. Further information call 1300 135 391 or visit [www.thecontourscollection.com](http://www.thecontourscollection.com)



Learn to Tango in Argentina

# Discover Machu Picchu

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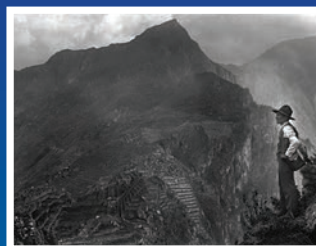
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## Get ready to party in Rio

It may still be more than five months away, but South American adventure experts, Tucan Travel, says there is still a chance to attend the biggest street party in the world, the Rio Carnival in February next year.

**TUCAN HAS BEEN DEVELOPING** tours to include all the magic that Brazil's famous street party has to offer since the company began. This year it will have groups from nearly all styles of its overland adventure tours staying in a range of hotel classes, both near the location of Carnival and by Copacabana Beach.

While many travellers will experience the festivities as part of a longer tour, there are also independent packages that allow people to take part in Carnival without having to be on one of the longer tours.

"Rio is a fabulous party for our clients and with hundreds of thousands of people flocking to the city each year to celebrate, there really is nothing else like it," said Bec Whiffin, Tucan Travel's global general manager.

"There is a lot of work in co-ordinating all these tours, but what it means is that with everything taken care of, clients can concentrate on the serious business of partying – Carnival-style."

A major highlight is the spectacular Sambadrome parade, where samba schools battle it out to win the hearts and minds of the audience with outrageous costumes, fabulous floats and elaborate dance routines set to the infectious rhythm of samba drums. The parades are on all week, but the most spectacular displays occur on Sunday and Monday nights. Outside of the

parade ground, free street pageants and block parties revel from dusk till dawn.

Tucan's Rio Carnival packages include the opportunity to get up close to the action with specially allocated tickets to enter the Sambadrome – as well as inside information from tour leaders about the best of the many "other" parties taking place in Rio that weekend.

The Rio Carnival takes place from Friday 17 February to Tuesday 21 February 2012. For further information visit [www.tucantravel.com](http://www.tucantravel.com)

### TIPS TO GET THE MOST OUT OF RIO CARNIVAL

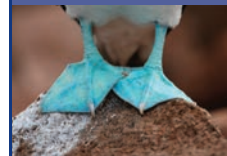
- This is the most popular festival in the world and sells out fast so book early to avoid missing out.
- If you're in a sector 13 seat at Sambadrome you'll have the unique opportunity to recycle outrageous costumes discarded by samba schools – be daring and wear one all night!
- Get out there and samba with the locals at a street party. You'll find no shortage of dance partners to shake your booty with!



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