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GENERAL INFORMATION
Chile has been an important political catalyst within the Americas. It is the first country in the Western hemisphere to elect a socialist president, Salvador Allende Gossens. However, this “Chilean road to socialism” was violently derailed through a military coup d'état supported by the CIA and led by General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte. During Pinochet’s first six months in office after the September 11, 1973 coup at least one thousand people were executed and twice as many were killed during the next sixteen years with many tortured, imprisoned and exiled. The iron fist of the military facilitated the implementation of the first neoliberal economic model in the world and Chile turned into a laboratory for the dogma of Milton Friedman and “the Chicago Boys”.

When Pinochet was ousted from the presidency in 1990, the nation transitioned to civilian rule after eighteen years of military dictatorship. Following a series of democratically elected leaders, Chile elected its first female president, Michelle Bachelet Jeria of the Socialist Party from 2006-2010 and again from 2014-2018. In March 2018, billionaire Sebastián Piñera Echeñique assumed the presidency of the country for the second time, having served previously from 2010-2014. He is supported by the economic and social groups of the Chilean conservative right. At present moment, Piñera has returned to power once again showing the polarization of Chilean politics and society.

Often cited as a model economy or jaguar of the South, Chile’s integration with the global economy has not been without painful adjustment and resistance. While per capita income has risen over the last two decades, income disparity is one of the worst in the continent and environmental problems continue to increase due to its extractive industries. From the onset the Mapuche Nation has led the fight against the neoliberal model that has intensified displacement and dispossession of their ancestral lands. Additionally, the student movement in 2012 started opening up new channels of political dissent and expressions against free market economics and the political elite, while questioning the degree of democracy since civilian rule.

In October of 2019, discontent and the socioeconomic polarization of the last decades culminated in the most powerful mobilizations that the country has ever seen. Led by a new generation of students and instigated by an increase of the metro fares in Santiago, these mobilizations placed the political system and neoliberal model in crisis. In anticipation of international forums that were to take place in Santiago, Piñera had celebrated Chile as an “oasis” and after the first demonstrations he claimed “we are at war”. Through these historic demonstrations Chile once again became a catalyst in the hemisphere opening up the political landscape for a “South American spring” and questioning the ideology of neoliberalism worldwide.

Several indigenous languages, including Aymara and Mapudungun, are spoken within Chile’s fifteen regions, however, Spanish is the predominant and official language of Chile. For many new visitors, adjusting to the local variation of Spanish can be difficult. Chileans tend to speak much faster than natives of neighboring countries, and often drop final syllables and ‘s’ sounds. Additionally, certain consonants can be pronounced more softly than to which foreigners are accustomed.

CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY
Chile has a very distinct geography. Despite being the longest country in the world, the nation is only 224 miles (360 km) at its widest point. The internal geography of Chile is marked by a diverse variety of landscapes, including deserts, forests, grazing lands, volcanoes, lakes, the central valley, and the Andes mountains.

Santiago is located in central Chile, which has a Mediterranean climate. Summers (December to
February) are virtually rainless and quite warm, while the winter months (April to September) may be chilly and wet with changeable weather. Frost and snow occasionally occur inland but rarely on the coast. Annual Santiago area temperatures range from 43 to 88 degrees Fahrenheit.

Temuco is in southern Chile, where it is very wet all year round with a large amount of cloud cover and changeable weather. Annual temperatures in Temuco range from 40 to 85 degrees Fahrenheit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SANTIAGO, CHILE: AVERAGE HIGH/LOW TEMPERATURES (°F)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86/53</td>
</tr>
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</table>

LOCAL CUSTOMS

Chileans are welcoming and warm. For a foreigner it will be easy to establish a personal rapport with them by showing interest and being friendly. Despite that, it is necessary to take into consideration some local cultural customs that might differ from your own. For example, because of their importance in Chilean society, family, studies, and work are potentially the first topics of conversation. There are distinct boundaries between the private and the public often expressed in a different sense of personal space; for example, affectionate kissing and hugging in social events, and the lack of “political correctness” from the US perspective in referring to people with distinct physical characteristics or behavior. All North Americans and Europeans, for instance, are called “gringos,” but this should not be understood as an insult.

Here are a few cultural tips to keep in mind:

1. Please remember that although Chile may seem to you to be a socially conservative country, the cultural and social climate is changing even as we speak.
2. Unless it is for work, study, or a business meeting, don’t arrive on time…dinners and parties often start very late at night.
3. Always clearly greet people hello when you arrive, and goodbye when you leave.
4. Greet everyone individually with a kiss or handshake. However, this is not mandatory for large or noisy parties or social events.
5. Announce your intentions to leave 15 minutes before you actually leave.
6. Never belch noisily or yawn without covering your mouth.
7. If you are close to a person or family, you might be invited to watch television in their bedroom. This invitation can be perfectly innocent and should not necessarily be misconstrued as a sexual advance.
8. Like other Latin Americans, Chileans males are often overly persistent in their romantic advances.

Chile is still a very homophobic country, but as new liberal values develop there is an increasing tolerance towards the LGBTQ community. It’s becoming increasingly common to find many alternatives and safe spaces like cafés and discos for gays, lesbians, and bisexuals to meet.

DIET

SIT Study Abroad provides experiential learning opportunities where students become embedded in their host community. As such, we strive to accommodate serious food allergies where possible but simply cannot ensure that all dietary restrictions or non-medically mandated diets can be accommodated.

Students are encouraged to participate in the local food culture as a central aspect of daily life. By trying to replicate your diet at home you may miss out on an important part of your host culture. Due to the unique living and learning community central to all SIT programs, we cannot separate food and eating communally (including with your host family) from the program experience. Please consider local
diet seriously when selecting your program of choice. Your admissions counselor is a great resource in better understanding the local diet.

The local diet in Chile is based on rice, beans, sauces, pasta, soups, fish, bread, meat, vegetables, and fruit. Like in many Latin American countries, the largest meal is usually eaten in the middle of the day. Although vegetarians are rare in Chile, previous students have not had a problem when advance notice is given. For those students who keep to a kosher diet, placement with Jewish homestay families is possible. Gluten-free diets are also possible to accommodate. In Chile, you can look for items with the gluten-free certificate and logo [http://www.fundacionconvivir.cl/certificacion.html#logotipo](http://www.fundacionconvivir.cl/certificacion.html#logotipo)

Note: if you have special dietary needs, including allergies, please inform our office prior to the start of your program. We will advise you on realistic expectations about avoiding or incorporating certain foods within the program context.

SAFETY, SECURITY, AND HEALTH

Maintaining good health is critical to having a successful semester. To help you do that, we have provided [Health Guidelines and Requirements](http://www.fundacionconvivir.cl/certificacion.html#logotipo) for your program.

It is very important that you read the Health Guidelines and Requirements document as early as possible and examine it with your medical provider. The guidelines include recommended immunizations; a suggested calendar for immunizations and other prophylaxes; and valuable information on how to avoid exposure to common carriers of disease.

Students are thoroughly briefed on safety considerations during in-country orientation and are updated throughout the semester if and when circumstances change. For information regarding safety and security, emergency communications, SIT policies, accident and illness insurance, and general program tips, please read the [Safety, Security, and Health](http://www.fundacionconvivir.cl/certificacion.html#logotipo) document and [Student Handbook](http://www.fundacionconvivir.cl/certificacion.html#logotipo).

While Chile is relatively safe, it is always wise to take certain precautions such as you would in any city or other unfamiliar location: before departure, make two photocopies of all important documents and credit cards; leave one copy at home (and tell someone where it is!) and bring one along with you, carried separately from the originals. Bring a money belt or some other safe means to carry your valuables. We will provide a safe place to store your documents while you are in country.

Your homestay environment is a primary resource for safety and security, as families are thoroughly screened, carefully selected, and monitored.

Bear in mind that although public perceptions and attitudes toward LGBTQ issues are changing, a substantial number of Chileans are fairly conservative and may hold religious beliefs unaccepting of homosexuality. If you identify as LGBTQ you may have to “tread lightly” on this topic and work to understand what beliefs and stereotypes people may hold before disclosing your sexual orientation. You should always feel free to talk to program staff with any questions or concerns.

Earth tremors are a common occurrence in this country. If you feel the earth move under your feet don’t panic.

There are good medical services in Chile. There are major hospitals offering high quality care in all excursion cities. Our program has standing relationships with medical doctors and psychologists who students can call upon if such services are needed during the program.

HOMESTAYS

As many SIT Study Abroad alumni will tell you, the homestay experience can be one of the most rewarding and most challenging aspects of the program. We hope you will come prepared for the experience and committed to moving beyond cultural immersion as you begin to question,
Family structures vary in every culture. SIT Study Abroad values the diversity of homestay families, and your family may include a single mother of two small children or a large extended family with many people coming and going all the time. Additionally, please bear in mind that, in many countries, the idea of what constitutes a “home” may be different from what you expect. You will need to be prepared to adapt to a new life with a new diet, a new schedule, new people, and new priorities and expectations.

Each program’s homestay coordinator will be responsible for placing students in homestays. These placements are made first based on health concerns, including any allergies or dietary needs, to the extent possible. **Please note: in order to ensure the best fit for students and families, SIT may make final adjustments to homestay placements after student arrival in country. Therefore, SIT will not provide information about your homestay family before you depart for the program.**

On this program, you will be staying in three homestays. The program’s different homestays give you the chance to experience daily life in Chile and Argentina and to develop an in-depth understanding of and appreciation for different cultures. The program includes two homestays in Chile (Santiago and Temuco) and one in Argentina. Once the local program receives information on enrolled students, including data on whether or not they smoke, have allergies to pets, have dietary limitations, etc., the homestay coordinator makes sure each student is placed with the family most appropriate to his/her personal profile.

**OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS**

Additional accommodations during excursions include stays in small hotels. During your Independent Study Project, you will be housed with families. Other options will vary by location, and must be approved by your academic director.

**TRANSPORTATION**

You will use a variety of transportation during the semester including: planes, taxis, buses, vans, and trains. When in the program base, buses, trains, and taxis will be your most common form of public transportation.

**COMMUNICATION**

While you may want to be in regular communication with friends and family from home during the term abroad, please bear in mind that different time zones, unreliable phone lines, and changing program activities can complicate communication.

It’s important to be clear with family and friends about your availability during the term. Many students recommend making an appointment to call home or to receive a call. You should also consider the impact of constant communication with friends and family at home on your cultural immersion.

**PHONES AND E-MAIL**

As part of SIT’s commitment to student safety and security, all students are required to have a working smart phone capable of making and receiving both local and international calls throughout the duration of the program. For that purpose students are required to either (a) bring an open, unlocked smart phone from the U.S. to the program that is able to accept a local SIM card, and is compatible with and usable at the program location, (b) work with the academic director within the first week upon arrival in country to purchase a smart phone locally, or (c) bring a dual SIM smart phone. During orientation, with assistance from SIT Study Abroad staff, students will learn how to use their cellphone, how to purchase and use an appropriate local SIM card, and how to acquire minutes for calls and texting. SIT Study Abroad requires that each student have a local number for communication with the homestay family and program staff.

While we recognize that alternative communication methods can be free or cheaper than cell service i.e. Facetime, Skype, WhatsApp, etc. those programs alone do not satisfy our need for regular communication with the local program staff and partners, nor do they meet our emergency communication needs. Therefore, local cellular capacity on each student’s phone is required for the duration of the program. Students are required to maintain a minimum amount of phone credits at all times.
times for emergency calls. Full compliance with this policy is expected.

A local SIM card for your unlocked smartphone will cost about $15. Students will be responsible for maintaining minutes on their phones and reasonable phone plans are about $22 per month. If you do not have an unlocked smartphone, a smartphone can be purchased locally but are quite expensive and may cost anywhere from $55 to $200.

Although most of your Santiago families will have phones, you will not be allowed to make direct long distance calls from those phones. The SIT office and most of the program institutions have wireless Internet. Skype has also proven to be an inexpensive and simple way to keep in touch with friends and family.

Email and Internet access are also available through internet cafés.

MAILINGS
Unlike receiving a package here in the US, receiving a package at your program site is usually expensive and problematic. Customs agents must inspect all packages and you, as the recipient, are responsible for duty and storage fees. In addition, there are cases of items being lost in the mail or taking so long to reach the recipient that the recipient is nearly back in the US by the time the items are received. For these reasons, sending packages should be done only for emergency situations. Additionally, sending valuables is highly discouraged.

For this program, DHL and FedEx services are available in country. Despite cheaper prices, reliance on the US Postal Service is not advised due to delays and unreliability. When given the option, it’s always a good idea to send packages certified and with a tracking number that allows the sender to track the package.

If it is necessary for someone to send you mail then posted letters and packages should be sent to the following address:

Student Name
C/o Roberto Villaseca
SIT Av. Brasil 153 Barrio Brasil,
Santiago Centro, Chile

MONEY
In addition to tuition, SIT Study Abroad program fees cover room and board throughout the program. When room and/or board are not taken with the group, students will be given a stipend to cover related expenses. SIT will cover daily commuting costs, if any, and excursions that are part of the normal program itinerary. During the ISP period, students will receive a stipend for basic room and board only, based on the cost of living at the program base. Any domestic travel, interpretation services, or supplies necessary for the ISP are the students’ responsibility. Please plan accordingly.

Most students access funds from their US bank accounts using their VISA or MasterCard debit cards. Any debit card that is linked to the PLUS or CIRRUS networks should also work at ATMs in country. Credit cards (VISA, American Express, MasterCard) will work in major cities, including Santiago. ATMs are very easily accessible in Santiago and throughout Chile. However, even if you plan to use an ATM card you should also bring cash (approximately US$150). Traveler’s checks are not recommended because they generally have a high exchange rate and can only be changed in Exchange Houses (casas de cambio) and not in banks. In case of an emergency it is possible to get cash advances on major credit cards in Chilean banks.

The official currency of Chile is the Chilean peso, which is divided into 100 centavos.

Check current exchange rates: http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/

If using a debit and/or credit card, you should contact your bank and/or credit card companies regarding your travel plans. If you don’t inform these companies that you will be away, they will often assume the card has been lost or stolen and will put an immediate hold on the card. You should also check on costs of withdrawal, as these costs vary and can sometimes be very expensive. Renewing and receiving reissued credit and debit cards while on the program will be an expensive and highly inconvenient process. Before you leave for your program, please check the expiration dates on your cards to ensure that they will not expire while you are abroad. It is also very important that you make photocopies of all your debit/credit card information
and leave them with someone you trust in case your card(s) is/are lost or stolen.

Following are suggestions for spending money during the program, including estimates for textbooks, ISP-related expenses, medical expenses, personal spending, and gifts. Figures are based on recent student evaluations, though individual spending habits vary widely and these costs are averages.

A suggested total amount of money to budget ranges from **US$1850 to $2,550**. To determine where you might fall in this range, please examine your spending habits during a typical semester at your home school and consider any exceptional expenditures you may have on the program, including travel costs for your planned ISP or a specific personal expense.

Please budget approximately:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal spending (from past student suggestions)</td>
<td>$1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books, printing, supplies</td>
<td>$75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottled water</td>
<td>$2/1.5 liters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up-front medical costs</td>
<td>$60/visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential ISP travel expenses</td>
<td>$50-400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-country registration fee</td>
<td>$15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell phone costs</td>
<td>$100, plus minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical Internet café</td>
<td>$2-3/hr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Estimated total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1850-2,550 USD</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**VISITORS AND FREE TIME**

SIT strongly discourages and will not provide support for any visitors to students during the term, due to the rigorous nature of the program and the disruption that such visits cause in program flow and group dynamics. Students should be sure that relatives and friends are aware of this policy and that visits are scheduled for dates after the formal conclusion of the program. Students will not be excused from program components to attend to visitors. See the Attendance and Participation section of the **Student Handbook**.

Please note that any visitors during the course of the program must plan their own independent accommodations; SIT Study Abroad homestay families can accommodate only their assigned student and, due to cultural and contractual understandings with SIT, should not be asked to host students’ guests.

During the program, students follow an intense schedule of classes and field-based learning assignments, even during the ISP. Free time for pursuing an independent interest or hobby during the program will be limited. Your admissions counselor can advise you about particular interests you may have. For example, if you must keep in shape for your next athletic season, or if you play a musical instrument and want to know whether to bring it, we can help you to understand your schedule and any concerns or limitations that may exist. Please note that you will not have a long break during the program, such as Thanksgiving or Spring Break.

**Travel outside of peninsular Chile during the 15-week program (other than for medical or family emergencies or program-sponsored excursions) and/or participation in extreme or adventure sports is strictly prohibited** according to the **Conditions of Participation**, which you signed. No student will be authorized to leave peninsular Chile before the final evaluation session. Your oral ISP presentation at this session is an integral part of your final ISP grade.

Opportunity for independent travel during the program is limited and cannot be guaranteed due to the rigorous schedule and disruption independent travel may cause to semester responsibilities. Requests to travel independently will be considered on a case by case basis by the academic director. Further details regarding the independent travel policy can be found in the **Student Handbook**.
LUGGAGE
Please pack lightly and include only necessary items. You should be able to carry all your luggage significant distances on your own. Try to minimize both the number of bags and weight of your bag(s) since you will likely be acquiring more belongings while abroad. We recommend a small daypack, which will also be useful for short excursions when on the program.

If carrying prescription medications, you should carry a letter from your doctor to prevent any concerns at customs or in transit. (Please see the “General Health Tips” section in the Safety, Security, and Health pre-departure document.)

Please check the current requirements of the Transportation Security Administration (http://www.tsa.gov) as well as those of the airline on which you are flying for domestic and international baggage restrictions.

CLOTHING GUIDELINES
While informal dress is acceptable and common in most settings, it is essential to keep a neat, clean appearance. Jeans with holes, sloppy T-shirts, and tank tops are discouraged. People in offices, development agencies, etc., are apt to be much more open and responsive if the visitor shows respect by dressing accordingly. It is not necessary to be fashionable, just neat and clean. It is very important to have at least one set of clothes for formal occasions and one set of clothes that can get dirty during community service projects. Dressing in layers is the most sensible solution to Chile’s varied seasonal and geographic climates.

You will experience a seasonal change during this semester. Be sure to pack accordingly. It is advisable to bring clothes that can be used for both seasons. The south of Chile can be rather cool and rainy, while the north is warm on the coast and cold at higher altitudes. Bring a pair of sturdy shoes or hiking boots, which will keep your feet warm and dry even in the rain and mud. Several houses and buildings do not have air conditioning or central heating systems. Warm coats, socks, gloves, and sweaters are highly recommended.

EQUIPMENT
Be sure to bring a lightweight sleeping bag, which you will need for the excursions as well as for your rural homestay. We also recommend that you bring a small flashlight that will come in handy during this portion of the program.

COMPUTERS AND OTHER ELECTRONICS
It is strongly recommended that you bring a laptop computer. If you bring a laptop, the computer will be your personal property and responsibility. It is recommended that you insure your computer, smartphone, or other valuables for full coverage in the event of loss or theft. SIT is not responsible for any duty tax you may have to pay when you enter the country, theft, or loss.

You will have convenient computer access at Internet cafés in Santiago. The cost for computer use is about US $2 or $3/hour. You can also purchase a USB port wireless mobile connection for your computer for about US $40. Program staff will be happy to assist you in finding the correct connection for your computer once you arrive in Chile. The SIT office also has wireless Internet.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to rent a laptop locally. If a student’s computer breaks, it is possible to find technical service, however, Mac support is limited.

Please see the following website for information about electricity, voltage and electrical adapters. http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/. Electricity in Chile runs on 220-volt current and uses European-style connecting plugs. Therefore, if you plan to bring any small appliances, be sure to take along a 110-volt and plug converter appropriate for your appliance. These can be purchased at any Radio Shack store in the US. They are also available in Chile.

Students can choose to bring a digital recorder or music player for interviews, language classes, or entertainment. Those who wish to incorporate video into their ISP project should bring their own camera.
GIFTS
As you might imagine, it is best to be prepared with a gift to offer your homestay family in gratitude for their hospitality and as a means to share a part of your culture with them. We suggest one or two gifts that the whole family can enjoy. You may also wish to consider gifts for people outside your homestay family. Try to choose gifts that represent you or the part of the country and/or community you live in. Think about what your city, state, or local artisans produce. Draw upon your personal interests or hobbies for ideas. Pack a couple of small gifts for children, such as small games, bubbles, or a Frisbee. Even if your homestay family does not have small children, chances are that you will engage with children in your homestay community. Once you are on the program and learn more about the local culture, you will discover other ways to thank your family. Remember to bring pictures of your friends and family to share.

Former students have recommended calendars, picture books, postcards, music, or gifts from your college bookstore. Think about what your city, state, or local artisans produce. Draw upon your personal interests or hobbies for ideas. Extra T-shirts and music can be brought as general gifts for people you meet outside of your family. Please also bring small gifts/remembrances for your two short-term host families.

WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT OBTAIN IN COUNTRY
Imported (North American) brands of toiletries, medicines, vitamins, etc., can be bought in Chile. Locally made brands are also generally fine. For women, there are local as well as US brands of tampons available.

ALUMNI CONTACTS
If you have further questions, please contact your admissions counselor and/or ask an alumni contact: https://studyabroad.sit.edu/admissions-aid/application-process/contact-a-former-student/.

Don’t miss the Packing List on the next page!
These packing guidelines are based on suggestions from past students and your academic director.
SIT Study Abroad

- Flight, Passport, and Visa Information

2/18/2020

**GENERAL**
- 1 dressy outfit suitable for a wedding or important meeting and something for going out in the evenings
- 3–5 casual pants or skirts
- 4–5 blouses or shirts (one fairly dressy)
- 2–3 pairs casual pants
- Jeans
- T-shirts and shorts
- An outfit that can get dirty during community work sessions
- 2–4 sweaters or warm tops
- Layers of warm clothing
- Light, water-resistant jacket
- Underwear (10-day supply)
- Socks
- Pajamas
- Slippers and bathrobe (but shouldn’t be too bulky)
- 1 pair comfortable walking shoes
- 1 pair sneakers
- 1 pair heavy duty, water-resistant shoes or hiking boots
- 1 pair sandals
- Wet weather shoes/sandals (could be one of above pairs)
- Swimsuit
- Raincoat or jacket (or shell plus fleece liner)
- 1–2 bath/beach towels

**TRAVEL DOCUMENTS**
- Passport
- Immunization Record or Yellow WHO Card (see the Safety, Security, and Health document for more information)
- 2 photocopies of your passport stored separately from your actual passport
- Photocopy of visa *(if applicable)*

**HEALTH/TOILETRIES**
- Adequate supply of any medications you use regularly including birth control
- Small first aid kit with Band-Aids, hydrogen peroxide, moist towelettes, and over-the-counter drugs for minor pain, diarrhea, anti-itching, and motion sickness, as approved by your doctor. Insect repellent, especially for fleas; topical cream for flea bites
- Sunscreen (at least SPF 15)
- Extra eyeglasses or contacts (saline solution is available but expensive in Chile)

**OTHER IMPORTANT ITEMS**
- An open, unlocked smart phone (see Phones section for more details)
- Lightweight sleeping bag
- Sunglasses and/or hat
- Travel alarm clock
- Flashlight/headlamp
- Fold-up umbrella
- Homestay family gifts
- Spanish/English dictionary
- Laptop computer for writing papers
- Small tape recorder for interviews

**OPTIONAL**
- Travel guide if you plan to do post-program travel (Lonely Planet is recommended)
- Camera and film
- Voltage and plug adaptors
- College or university ID
- Waterless anti-bacterial hand soap/cleansing towelettes
- Ziploc storage bags
- Durable water bottle and iodine/chlorine to sterilize water