

Chile: Coastal Vistas & Vineyards

Bike Vacation Only

Follow the Route of the Sea along the Pacific coast of the “Thin Country” on this journey into the heart of Chilean culture, admiring sweeping vistas, glimpsing penguins and sea lions, and joining local fishermen at their work. You’ll also venture inland, cycling through ancient forests and groves of eucalyptus trees, and exploring towns and cities renowned for their unique architecture and ambiance. Along the way, you’ll sample local wines—and even craft your own blend—while also mingling with the people who call this region home.

Cultural Highlights

Delight in sightings of penguins and sea lions on scenic coastal reels
Savor succulent seafood caught fresh from the sea
Experience South America's answer to the French Riviera in Zapallar
Help local fishermen collect their traps
Marvel at the Reloj de Flores—a large clock made of flowering plants—in Vina del Mar, the “Garden City”
Admire the unique architecture and urban design of Valparaiso on a walking tour
Sample Chilean wine during a tasting at a fifth-generation family winery
Create your own wine blend with expert guidance from a sommelier
Stroll through La Vega local market on a guided tour

What to Expect

This tour offers easy terrain and short mileage rides throughout, and is ideal for beginner cyclists. Longer mileage options with easy-to-moderate terrain offer fun for more avid bikers with rides in the afternoons. Many of the scenic coastal rides are on primary roads with traffic. Our VBT support shuttle is always available for those who would like assistance with hills or do not feel comfortable with some of the more heavily trafficked roads. In order to provide a variety of scenery and rides, there is considerable shuttle transfer time required on this tour. Transfers can range from 45 minutes to 2.5 hours. If you choose to add on the post-trip extension to the Atacama Desert, you will experience elevations ranging from 8,000 feet to 13,000 feet.

Tour Duration: 7 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 10 - 25

Average Cycling Time: 01:00 - 04:00

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

Jan 85°/54°, Feb 84°/53°, Mar 80°/49°, Apr 72°/45°, Oct 71°/45°, Nov 77°/48°

Average Rainfall (in.)

Jan 0, Feb 0.1, Mar 0.2, Apr 0.5, Oct 0.5, Nov 0.2

DAY 1: VBT Bicycle Vacation begins / Warm-up ride / Transfer to Pacific Coast / Welcome reception & dinner in Zapallar

Meet one of your VBT Trip Leaders at The Singular Santiago hotel (Merced 294, Santiago; telephone (+56) 2 230 688 00) at 8:45 a.m. Please contact the hotel to advise them of any travel delays or changes, so the staff can alert your Trip Leaders. When you depart the hotel this morning, please be dressed in your cycling attire for your warm-up ride. You will shuttle (approximately 1.5 hours) to the starting point of your warm-up ride, where you will meet your second Trip Leader.

Leave the hustle and bustle of the Santiago metropolitan area and shuttle northwest toward the Pacific Coast. Crossing the coastal mountain range, you'll travel through the agricultural heartland of Chile. The Mediterranean-like climate of Chile's central region is ideal for growing avocados, peaches, walnuts, olives, almonds, citrus fruits, flowers for export and, of course, grapes for producing the country's excellent wines. Your warm-up ride immerses you in this farming landscape on a scenic and seldom-traveled country road. Following your ride and lunch, continue your journey with a shuttle (approximately 1 hour) to the quaint coastal fishing town of Zapallar and your charming inn overlooking the Pacific.

You'll meet tonight for a cocktail reception before enjoying a delicious welcome dinner at the hotel.

Hotel: Hotel Isla Seca Zapallar

Meals: Lunch, Dinner

Daily Options: 12 miles (19.9 km)

DAY 2: Playas Salinas de Pullally / Papudo

Following breakfast, you'll depart the hotel on your bike for a morning ride along Chile's scenic Ruta del Mar, or Route of the Sea. Enjoy the marvelous vistas as you travel along Chile's central coast. Later, turn off the Ruta del Mar and follow a narrow paved road past small farms to Playas Salinas de Pullally. This beach derives its name from the salt dunes that attracted indigenous populations in the past. Today the

beach is a refuge to surfers and kayakers. There'll be time to explore before you enjoy your included box lunch.

Following lunch, cycle on an easy, quiet rural road before shuttling back to your hotel (approximately 40 minutes). For those looking for a longer ride this afternoon, you may opt to continue on a longer and scenic route to your hotel.

Please note: There will be heavy traffic on the coastal Ruta del Mar during the summer months of January and February, which could cause longer transfer/shuttle times and less desirable riding for guests opting for the longer afternoon ride option.

Upon returning to the hotel this afternoon, relax in the hotel's pool or venture down a hillside path through tall pines to walk along the seaside La Rambla, a series of stone walkways built around giant boulders along the coast. Nearby, you'll come upon a popular beach where you may join local residents sunbathing and swimming in the calm waters of a horseshoe-shaped cove.

This evening, enjoy dinner at your leisure at your inn's small restaurant or on the outside terrace. Or you may opt to walk along the scenic La Rambla to a seaside restaurant where you may sample the fresh seafood caught daily.

Hotel: Hotel Isla Seca Zapallar

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Daily Options: 20, 26 or 34 miles (33.2, 43.2 or 56 km)

DAY 3: Zapallar & Cachagua by bike / Humboldt Penguins / Fisherman's Catch / Transfer to Concon

This morning, you set off on your bicycle to explore Zapallar. Zapallar's history explains the appeal of this quaint seaside town. The village was settled more than 100 years ago by an affluent Chilean who wanted to develop a modest South American version of the French Riviera. He offered land to his affluent friends and relatives with the condition that they build within a couple years, which they gladly did. Descendants of the original families still own many of the homes, but only the very rich can afford to live in what some have called "The Hamptons of Chile." Today, this elite town boasts lavish homes with impeccable flower gardens.

You'll cycle from your hotel to Zapallar's small fishing port. Fishermen still work as they have for centuries here. Join some of them as they venture out to sea in their small boats. Help collect traps with

crab and possibly the rare rock shrimp found only in these waters. Back on land, you'll continue your morning cycling amid the winding streets lined with cypress and eucalyptus trees, stopping by one of the most famous houses, named "*Hildesheim*," after the name of a German town. This charming house is a perfect replica of a Bavarian house from the 16th century.

Continue your ride to Cachagua, a small seaside town south of Zapallar famous for its Humboldt penguins. In the past, local people and fishermen protected and fed the penguins that migrated here after they were injured or got lost from their colony. Today, this is one of the few Humboldt penguin communities left in South America. This unspoiled island sanctuary is one of Chile's treasured national parks and home to thousands of Humboldt penguins and other birds. Your ride will lead you to the beach to see this tiny island, which is a short distance offshore. Don't forget your binoculars for a more up-close observation.

You'll then continue your ride to the south to reach Maitencillo, a very active destination where you'll see surfers, paragliders, cyclists, joggers and skaters. Here, you'll stop for lunch on your own and a chance to sample *helado*, ice cream, or a *cerveza*, beer, in one of the many local kiosks on the beach. Then, continue your trip on the shuttle (approximately 1 hour) south along the Pacific Coast highway to your next destination, Concon. Your unique seaside accommodation is partially built into huge stone boulders, providing all of the rooms with spectacular ocean vistas with crashing waves below.

Dine on your own by the marina of Concon, or enjoy seaside dining at your hotel.

Hotel: Radisson Acqua Hotel & Spa Concon

Meals: Breakfast

Daily Options: 12 miles (19.8 km)

DAY 4: Viña del Mar / Valparaíso walking tour

Take a leisurely morning ride from your hotel this morning. Enjoy the sound of the crashing waves as you cycle along a lovely coastal route to a site where sea lions, fed and protected on a small island by the Marine Biology University of Valparaíso, sunbathe on offshore rocks. Don't forget your binoculars for a more interesting observation. Then, arrive at Reñaca beach, one of the famous beaches of Viña del Mar, and explore the area before biking back to the hotel. You will have the chance to stop for an outstanding photo opportunity of the huge sand dunes of Concon.

Later this afternoon, shuttle (approximately 45 minutes) to one of Chile's most vibrant cultural centers,

Viña del Mar. This seaside city hosts an annual International Song Festival and an International Film Festival that is considered one of the most important in Latin America. The town is known as the “Garden City,” as you’ll see upon your arrival to the Reloj de Flores—a large clock made of flowering plants. From here, you will walk to the local metro stop to take the metro into the next town, Valparaíso.

Valparaíso is a major Chilean port and was a popular stopover for late-19th-century ships sailing from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean through the Straits of Magellan. The city also supported and supplied the California Gold Rush of the 1850s. Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site due to its unique urban design and distinctive architecture, its cobblestone alleyways and hillside buildings are the focus of your walking tour today. You’ll pause to enjoy some free time to browse the tiny boutiques and art galleries and to enjoy dinner on your own in one of the city’s restaurants overlooking the port.

Hotel: Radisson Acqua Hotel & Spa Concon

Meals: Breakfast

Daily Options: 11 miles (18.8 km)

DAY 5: Casablanca Wine Valley / Kingston Family Winery picnic lunch and wine tastings

This morning, you’ll leave the cool coastal climate and travel inland (approximately 1 hour) to the Casablanca Wine Region. The valley is relatively new to wine growing, as the grapes were planted as recently as the 1980s, but the region is widely known for its white wine grapes, especially Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay. Your ride today traces shaded roads through eucalyptus forests to expansive vistas of vineyards and olive groves. You’ll be rewarded with a tasting of some of the region’s wines and a sumptuous picnic lunch at the fifth-generation American-Chilean Kingston Family Winery.

After lunch, continue inland to the foothills of the Andes (transfer time approximately 2 hours, depending upon traffic). Your home for the next two nights is the regal Hotel Casa Real, surrounded by the Santa Rita vineyards, which have been making wine since 1880. With only 16 luxurious rooms, this Tuscan-inspired villa will be exclusively yours.

After settling into your accommodations, this evening you’ll be treated to a welcome reception on Casa Real’s veranda, followed by a gracious candlelit dinner served in the villa’s intimate dining room.

Hotel: Hotel Casa Real

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Daily Options: 12 or 23 miles (20.3 or 38.3 km)

DAY 6: Andean foothills / Santa Rita Vineyards / Wine making / Chilean barbecue farewell dinner

After breakfast, begin your ride through the Santa Rita Vineyards. Your scenic morning follows country roads flanked by magnificent ancient trees. You'll pass local farmers in their ponchos, many still using horses as their means of transportation. Feel free to stop and sample delicious pan amado, homemade bread, and fresh empanadas, savory turnovers, along the way. You'll share a picnic lunch at the end of your ride.

Later, shuttle (approximately 45 minutes) back to Casa Real, where you may tour the impressive Museo Andino, or Andean Museum, located just steps away in the vineyard. The museum houses more than 1,800 pieces of art from several Andean cultures, as well as artifacts from as far away as Easter Island and the Atacama Desert. Or you may enjoy a relaxing swim in the pool or a stroll through the expansive gardens, where you can admire the second-tallest bougainvillea in the world, or walk through the Santa Rita vineyards to the monument marking where the "lost Carmenere grape" was recently discovered. In 1863, the phylloxera aphid invaded European vineyards, destroying all the grapes by 1870. However, European vinifera was grafted to American rootstock, which was impervious to the insect, and eventually the European vineyards bounced back. The Carmenere grape was thought to be lost forever until it was discovered in 1994, here in Santa Rita's vineyards.

Later, you'll learn about blending wines from an expert Santa Rita sommelier. Create your own wine blend to your specific palette's desire. Your concoction will be bottled and labeled as your very own. Afterward, you'll be treated to a typical Chilean barbecue for a festive farewell dinner on the lovely patio of the Casa Real (weather permitting).

Hotel: Hotel Casa Real

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Daily Options: 20 or 31 miles (32.6 or 52 km)

DAY 7: Transfer to Santiago / La Vega Market / VBT Bicycle Vacation ends

This morning, transfer to Santiago for an included walking tour of La Vega, Santiago's Central Market. After the tour and lunch on your own, you'll transfer to the Santiago airport, where your tour concludes at 3:00 p.m. Departure flights prior to 6:00 p.m. are not recommended; you will need to make your own transfer arrangements to the airport if you have an earlier departure.

All guests: Please note: VBT transfer times and departure points are finalized in advance and cannot be modified for individual guests. If you extend your stay beyond the scheduled program dates, return transportation to the airport will be at your own expense.

Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Radisson Acqua Concon Hotel & Spa (Days: 3,4)

The Radisson Acqua Concón Hotel & Spa enjoys a stunning location, set among dramatic seaside boulders. Attractive sea-view rooms are generously outfitted with all the modern amenities, including complimentary WiFi, flat-screen televisions, free bottled water, and spacious desks. The hotel's roof terrace offers outdoor sunbathing by its intimate pool. On cooler days, enjoy the indoor pool carved into the hotel's rock foundation. During your stay, treat yourself at the Acqua Spa, soothe body and mind with an indoor seawater pool, and indulge in a selection of massage services, beauty techniques, and skin treatments. Note that the Radisson Acqua Concón Hotel & Spa is not air-conditioned.

Casa Real (Days: 5,6)

This Tuscan-inspired hotel is nestled in a beautiful natural environment. Located in the heart of a century-old, 120-acre (49-hectare) park, the regal hacienda was once the manor house of the Santa Rita Winery and is imbued with its history and traditions. The park boasts the second-tallest bougainvillea in the world, as well as numerous gardens and paths for tranquil walks. You might also relax in the small swimming pool and pool house. The hacienda's small chapel was restored by a craftsman from the Vatican's Sistine Chapel. As the villa has just 16 rooms, your group has the entire place to itself. Note that the Hotel Casa Real is not air-conditioned.

Hotel Isla Seca Zapallar (Days: 1,2)

Hotel Isla Seca Zapallar is a unique, European-style boutique hotel designed to reflect the history of the city. This 4-star luxury property has stunning ocean views and offers first-class service. The hotel's restaurant has an exquisite menu prepared from fresh and local ingredients. Rooms are decorated in a classic and cozy style; 400-thread-count cotton sheets, lush pillows, and French amenities are just a few

of the special touches you'll enjoy. The hotel's location puts you a short walk away from the nearby coastal path that leads to Zapallar's beautiful swimming beach. Note that the Hotel Isla Seca Zapallar is not air-conditioned.