



CHILENEWS

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Did You Know?

Located just 119 kilometers from Santiago, Valparaíso is Chile's leading port and the seat of the Legislature. Buildings throughout the city cling daringly to the Valparaíso's 42 hills. Pedestrians use picturesque elevators known as *ascensores* to glide to the top, defying both gravity and the passage of time.

Chile enjoys universal suffrage. The minimum voting age is 18 including foreigners with legal permanent residence of at least 5 years in Chile. In the most recent balloting (for President, in January 2000), 8,084,476 people voted (90.49% of those registered).

Chile has 32 national parks, 47 national reserves and 13 natural monuments. Some of these are part of protected areas, including 2,407,034 hectares that belong to seven World Biosphere Reserves.

The Bottom Line

5.4% growth was logged by the Chilean economy in 2000.

Economy and Culture at IDB Assembly

More than finance and economics will be on the agenda in Santiago from March 19-21. The 42nd Annual Meeting of the Assembly of Governors of the Inter-American Development Bank, IDB, will share the stage with cultural activities, sports events and technology displays organized by the Ministry of Finance to bring enhanced community propinquity to the meeting.

A fine arts competition brought together some 300 works young Chilean artists who used different styles and techniques to express the path to the bicentennial. A selection of the artwork will be on display at the Estación Mapocho Convention Center (official site of the gathering) during the Assembly. The Convention Center will also house a get-together of the primary international companies involved in the Internet business on March 15-21: Cyber America Expo. Needy children and adolescents will participate in the Children's Olympics: soccer stars Edson Arantes do Nascimento, better known around the world as "Pelé," and Chile's own Iván "Bam Bam" Zamorano will attend the closing ceremonies.

As of February 27, the famous *arpillera* (patchwork artistry) and oil paintings of folklore singer Violeta Parra will be displayed in the United States in tribute to the music, poetry and audiovisual arts surrounding her work. On March 1, a concert of her most memorable songs will be offered, with arrangements for chamber orchestra and chorus, at the IDB cultural center in Washington, DC.

Schools On-Line

In Chile, 100% of publicly funded high schools and 50% of elementary schools are connected to the Internet. In the early 1990s, this was little more than a challenging dream: to provide access to the opportunities and knowledge offered by the new technologies in support of learning and the training of all students in Chile, including those in the farthest-flung locations.

Tips

According to Price Waterhouse Coopers, Chile tied the U.S. as the world's second most transparent country for foreign investment. The international consulting firm reached that conclusion in a report published during the recent World Economic Forum gathering in Davos, Switzerland. The study notes that Chile is one of the nations offering the greatest "clarity and best terms" for investors.

The city of Santiago—founded in 1541 by Spanish conquistador Pedro de Valdivia—celebrated its 406th anniversary last February 12. Chile's capital covers 556 km², stretches from the Andes Mountains to the Maipo River valley and is home to 5,831,294 people.

With that goal in mind, the administration of former President Patricio Aylwin set the "Enlaces" Inter-School Information Technology Network in motion in 1992.

Today, 2,600,000 children and teenagers benefit from the system, some 93% of students at publicly subsidized schools. This year, an additional 930 rural establishments joined the network, bringing an 100,000 new students and 10,000 teachers into the system.

The goal over the next five years is to cover 100% of subsidized rural schools and invest 100 million dollars in computer equipment.

Chilean Carnations for the World

Thanks to the initiative of seven women in the city of Quillota, in the central region, England and Argentina are receiving Chilean carnations.

The idea is a result of programs by the Instituto de Desarrollo Agropecuario, Indap (agriculture and livestock development institute) to promote flower growing in the area, where the climate is perfect for rooty species, such as carnations. The program has also helped train female heads of household in creating their own sources of income, thus improving their quality of life and that of their family. Some participants have received instruction both in Chile and in Spain.

Today, the women's company—Agroclavel—has 30 greenhouses with 5,000 plants each and an annual production of 1.3 million carnations. Thanks to a technical assistance agreement, they hope to double their surface area this year.

Ancient Ice

In southern Chile, where the land splinters into thousand of islands and ocean water fills fjords and channels, ships travel to the glaciers that come down to the sea. One such glacier is the San Rafael, a gigantic white tongue of ice whose tip floats on the waters of the lagoon of the same name.

Each year, over 20,000 tourists visit the site, journeying in modern vessels to the lagoon and continuing on in smaller boats to approach the glacier and enjoy a glass of Scotch whiskey with thousand-year-old ice.

For the first time, the number of local mobile telephony users has surpassed that of land-line subscribers. Mobile services increased by 51.8% in 2000, as compared to 1999, and totaled 3,459,520 subscribers.

Chile's ambassador to the World Trade Organization (WTO), Alejandro Jara, will serve as chairman of the organization's Trade and Environment Committee throughout 2001.

In an effort to offer visitors a new view of the glacier, the Corporación Nacional Forestal, Conaf (national forestry service) has built walkways along the edge of the lagoon and into the vegetation of the National Park where the glacier is located (at 1,742,448 hectares, the park is the nation's largest). The landscape and the opportunity to spy native fauna, such as the *pudú*, a small Chilean deer, and black necked swans are key attractions along the new circuit.

The first sighting of the San Rafael glacier was recorded in 1654 when pirate Francis Drake undertook an expedition in Chile's southern channels. Five vessels set sail from the island of Chiloé headed for the Strait of Magellan. Halfway through their journey, they came across the natural wonder and baptized it San Rafael in recognition of the date: September 29, the Archangel's day.

Betting on Rehabilitation

As of the first half of this year, 120 prison inmates will become students. The opportunity lies in the first technical high school in Latin America to open its doors inside a jail. The new facility was inaugurated in Valparaíso on February 14.

The new school seeks to enhance prisoners' ability to rejoin the community and provide them with the tools they will need following their release. Intellectual, moral and technical and professional training is to be provided, with the type of education offered making this school special.

Public and private resources were used to fund the school's construction, equipment and academic features. The Technical/Professional High School will offer courses of study in metallic construction and electricity, English, math, world history, technical drawing, computers, finance and administration.

Some 89 primary schools and eleven high schools operate in Chile's correctional establishments.

Agenda

February 26-March 1: Visit by Foreign Minister Soledad Alvear to Washington where she will meet with Secretary of State Colin Powell, Trade Representative Robert Zoellick, and members of Congress from both parties. Discussions will center on the negotiations for a free trade agreement between Chile and the U.S.

Q & A

Foreign Trade

What is Chile's position vis-à-vis foreign trade?

Chile is a nation open to the world and firmly committed to free trade. The accent in foreign policy is on the Americas and relations with the rest of the world through solid alliances. Chile has fostered export development and created incentives for foreign investment while seeking a varied, flexible presence on the international stage that combines trade opening with the protection and promotion of investments.

What mechanisms does Chile use to interface with the world?

Chile has chosen a strategy of open regionalism based on three fundamental pillars: unilateral openness, in place for two decades; multilateral trade negotiations, in which Chile participates actively; and negotiated opening at the bilateral and regional levels, a system used with increasing intensity since the early 90s. Comparatively, very few other nations have as broad a network of economic agreements as Chile.

What are Chile's primary markets?

Chile today enjoys a market of 434 million consumers who receive preferential service thanks to the nation's trade agreements with Mercosur, Canada, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Peru. The nation is in the process of negotiating a free trade agreement with Central America and Panama and is expanding its commercial ties with Bolivia. Conversations are also underway on a trade accord with the European Union and for a free trade agreement with the United States.

Chile is a founding member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), is involved in the formation of a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and plays an active role in Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), for which it will serve as the seat of the 2004 Summit.

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