
I. THE COUNTRY

Area and Geography

Chile is a long, narrow ribbon of land stretching almost 4 320 km (2 700 miles) along the southwestern coast of South America. Although one of the longest countries in the world, it ranges from only 96 km to 400 km (60 mi. and 250 mi.) wide. Chile is wedged between the Andes mountains on the east and the Pacific Ocean on the west; it borders Peru on the north, and Bolivia and Argentina on the east. Southern Chile is an archipelago with Cape Horn at its tip. Here the Atlantic and Pacific oceans meet.

Chile has four distinct and well-defined geographic regions: the northern desert (one-fourth of the country's land area), the high Andean sector, the central valley, and the southern lake district and archipelago. In order to decentralize the administration of existing and potential natural resources, the country has been divided into 12 regions and a metropolitan area which includes the capital, Santiago, and its surroundings.

The northern part of Chile (regions I, II, III and IV), which includes some of the most barren desert in the world, is rich in mineral deposits such as copper, gold, sulphur, phosphates and nitrates. The fishing industry is also important in this area. The central valley (regions V to X) has the largest population and contains most industrial and agricultural development. Due to the climatic conditions, forestry is of considerable importance in this area. The far south of Chile (regions XI and XII) which includes Tierra del Fuego, the largest island in the southern archipelago, is mostly dedicated to cattle and sheep raising. The area produces natural gas and supplies about 50 per cent of the oil consumption of Chile.

Climate

Chile has a generally mild climate. In the far north, summers are warm and winters are very mild; in the lake region, it is cooler with more rainfall; in the far south (Tierra del Fuego), summers are short and