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Providing Incredible Expeditions

# The Patagonia Mountaineering School Welcome Manual

Welcome to The Patagonia Mountaineering School. This document is here to give you information about Chile, getting here, where to stay, what to bring, etc. We've also included a copy of our gear list for you print out, as well as providing a few other tips.

We look forward to meeting you. In the meantime, we're here to answer any questions you may have:

- [info@patagoniamountaineeringschool.com](mailto:info@patagoniamountaineeringschool.com): Email us at any time.
- [www.patagoniamountaineeringschool.com](http://www.patagoniamountaineeringschool.com): Here you'll find information about the expedition, gear lists, and all the pre-trip forms.
- +1-763-219-1833 (USA)
- +44-20-8144-4017 (UK)

## BEFORE YOU LEAVE

**Fitness** – Many students find our expeditions to be very challenging. You will be living in an extremely remote environment, carrying a heavy pack over rough terrain, undertaking a full regime of interactive classes, all while adjusting to a new environment.

As such, your initial level of fitness will make a huge difference to your enjoyment of the expedition. We very much want you to be successful and learn as much as possible.

Start exercising now. It's not too important what you do, swim, jog, or walk up hills; you want to train for long term endurance and stamina. We recommend before leaving that you take at least a few hikes with a heavy backpack (50 lbs/22kg or 40% of your body weight, whichever is less). With your pack, plan to hike for two or three hours. While hills are good, you want to avoid steep downhill while carrying a heavy bag as this may hurt your knees. By mixing regular endurance training with a few hikes, you should be able to quickly adjust to the demands of the expedition. If you have any worries about your health, talk to us and your doctor beforehand.

**Learn some Spanish** – Most people in Patagonia speak no English. You will get more out of the trip if you are able to learn the basics. Some suggestions:

- *Pimsleur* do a good progressive audio only course so you can learn in the car. Their basic beginner's course is about \$20 US.
- *Rosetta Stone* CD-Rom courses are great but more expensive.
- The *Michel Thomas* course is also recommended and is good for learning grammar.

If you would like to take the opportunity to learn some Spanish while you are in Chile, there are classes available at the Baquedano School in Coyhaique ([www.balasc.cl](http://www.balasc.cl)). We've learnt Spanish there with Patricio Guzmán, the school director. You can do a home stay for full immersion or have classes. Pat is a great guy, very entertaining; we recommend him.

## COMMUNICATION

### ***Pre-Expedition***

Coyhaique has plenty of internet places and a few cafes with wireless internet access (If you can't live without your laptop). There are also plenty of 'Centro de Llamados' (Call centres). If you need to have something posted to you, we have a mailbox in Coyhaique. Please make sure your delivery company will send to a P.O. Box. If not, we can provide a physical address.

### ***In the Field***

We will carry a satellite phone in the field and will be in sporadic contact with our base coordinator. In an emergency, you can be contacted via our email address and the message will be passed onto us in the field as quickly as is possible.

**PHONE NUMBER:** +1-763-219-1833 (US)  
+44-20-8144-4017 (UK)  
+56-9-9519-5328 (Chile, 24 Hour Emergency)

**POSTAL ADDRESS:** The Patagonia Mountaineering School  
Lote 1E, Sector El Verdin,  
Casilla 130  
Coyhaique, Chile

**EMAIL ADDRESS:** [info@patagoniamountaineeringschool.com](mailto:info@patagoniamountaineeringschool.com)

## PASSPORT / VISA REQUIREMENTS

To enter into Chile you need a full valid passport, valid for **at least 6 months** after your departure date. If you hold a UK, US, Canadian, Australian, or New Zealand passport, you don't currently need a visa for Chile. When you arrive you will be issued with a 90 day tourist visa. **There is an arrival tax for some nationalities (up to \$144 USD).**

Please contact your nearest Chilean Embassy to obtain up-to-date relevant visa requirements and information about arrival tax.

## ARRIVAL / DEPARTURE INFORMATION

**Arrival in Santiago and Getting to Coyhaique-** The main international airport for Chile is located in Santiago (airport code: SCL). From Santiago, you want to continue on to Balmaceda (airport code: BBA), the nearest airport to Coyhaique. Good fares can be found from most major cities to Santiago and continuing to Balmaceda at [www.lan.com](http://www.lan.com) (LAN is the Chilean national airline).

When you arrive in Santiago, you will need to clear immigration and customs before going on to your domestic flight. Just follow the arrows and you won't get lost; many of the signs are in English. If you're unsure of where to go or what to do, many of the airport staff speak at least a little English as well.

Once you've gone through customs, you will walk through a set of double doors that will pour you out into the main international arrival concourse. Here, turn right, run the gauntlet of taxi drivers, and walk about 50 meters to the elevator. Take the elevator up to the third floor. You are now in the domestic check-in terminal. LAN Chile's desk is just to your right. While the domestic baggage allowances are different than international allowances, the airlines will allow you to carry an "international" amount of luggage with you on your domestic flight if you're connecting.

Make sure you have some Chilean Pesos before departing from Santiago. You can obtain Pesos at any of the airport ATMs or with one of the money exchange services located at the airport. There are no facilities for exchanging money at the Balmaceda airport and you will need some Pesos to use the airport shuttle.

There are 4-7 flights daily to Balmaceda. They all stop first in Puerto Montt, so please don't get off the airplane there... When you arrive in Balmaceda, collect your bags from the conveyor belt. If you turn around, there are three companies offering shuttle services into Coyhaique. The shuttle costs 4000 Chilean Pesos (about \$10 US). Any of the three shuttle services is fine. They will give you a little piece of paper, and you will pay when you arrive at your hotel (they will take you right to the hotel). Again, please note that there is no ATM or money exchange at the Balmaceda airport. You will need to bring Chilean Pesos from home or use an ATM or exchange some in the Santiago airport.

You will probably stay the night in one of the many hotels or hostels in Coyhaique to accommodate our early meeting time on day 1. See below for a listing of good hotels/hostels in Coyhaique and Santiago.

**Day 1 Schedule-** We will pick you up at your hotel between 8 am and 10 am on day 1, depending on the trip. We'll send you an email with the exact time about a week before you depart. After everyone is picked up, we will be taken to The Patagonia Mountaineering School basecamp. At basecamp, we will have a group brunch/briefing. We will then do a gear check with everyone, do any last minute shopping, and prepare any other last minute details before the expedition begins.

### [PRE/POST EXPEDITION ACCOMODATION](#)

Santiago, the largest city in Chile (population 8,000,000), has just about anything you could ask for. It is a modern cosmopolitan city, complete with the normal advantages and drawbacks. There are many places to go shopping (far more than Coyhaique, the location of our basecamp) so please plan to have all shopping done by the first day of the expedition.

As with all major cities, there are many accommodation options. Below are just a few, but many more in all price ranges can be found with a quick look on Google.

- Hyatt Regency Santiago: Av Kennedy 4601. Very nice, a bit off the main public transportation routes. [www.santiago.regency.hyatt.com](http://www.santiago.regency.hyatt.com). \$100+ per night.
- Hotel Montecarlo: Victoria Subercaseaux 209. [www.hotelmontecarlosantiago.com](http://www.hotelmontecarlosantiago.com). 3 Star hotel with great views of Cerro Santa Lucia. \$40 per night
- Youth Hostel/Albergue Juvenil: Cienfuegos 151. +64-2-671-8532. Good, friendly staff. \$15 per night

Coyhaique, (population 30,000) is the largest settlement in the Aysen region. It has a good range of shops, a few big supermarkets and is quite a pleasant place if you just feel like hanging out on either end of the trip.

It has a good range of accommodation. All are within walking distance of the main plaza, it's a small town. Here are some that we like:

- Hostal Belisario Jara: If you feel like splashing out, I'd recommend this place; clients who've stayed here have raved about it. Around \$92 US for a double. [www.belisariojara.com](http://www.belisariojara.com) .
- Hospedaje Gladys: Moraleda 60: Simple, clean, centrally located, really nice lady that runs it. The owner speaks some English. Breakfast included. About \$25 US per person.
- Hospedaje Tres Hermanos, Colon Again simple clean, nice lady. No breakfast. About \$15 per person.

The Chile Handbook ([www.moon.com](http://www.moon.com)) has some good accommodation information. If you want any more specific information about accommodation, please email or call us.

### [INSURANCE](#)

It is **REQUIRED** that you have adequate medical and evacuation insurance for the duration of your stay. Please note that many household polices and cheap backpacker polices do not provide adequate cover. Most don't insure climbing/mountaineering. If you are coming from the UK, The British Mountaineering Club has great climbing insurance. From the USA, the best insurance we can find is available through IHI.

In the unlikely event that you do have an accident you must be covered for all contingencies including **mountaineering and emergency air evacuation**.

## **CURRENCY**

The Chilean currency is the Peso. For an up to date currency conversion, visit the website: [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com).

It's easiest if you travel with a credit or debit card. Santiago and Coyhaique have plenty of ATM machines. There are also some 'Casas de Cambio' (money exchanges) in both Santiago and Coyhaique where you will be able to exchange popular currencies such as American Dollars, Euros, or British Pounds.

## **MEDICAL INFORMATION**

It is unlikely that you will need vaccinations for Chile, but this is dependent on countries you have visited previously. If you have any medical concerns, we **highly recommend** that you visit a doctor before coming on the expedition. In the field, we can be a week or more away from help, so you need to get things sorted before you come. It is your responsibility to disclose to The Patagonia Mountaineering School any health concerns that you have. We reserve the right to refuse you a place on the expedition if you have medical concerns that may affect your ability to participate in the expedition. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have all the recommended vaccinations and take any prescribed or advised medication.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Your guides are certified Wilderness First Responders and will carry group first aid kits out in the field. We will leave a detailed route plan both with CONAF (National park Administration) and with the Carabineros (the Police). We will also be in regular contact with our Base Coordinator to give updates on our location and to receive weather forecasts.

Your insurance must cover field evacuations in the event on an emergency. We place a huge emphasis on risk management with everything we do. Discussions about safety, risk assessment, and judgement will be a commonplace while in the field. We reserve the right to expel someone from the trip if they fail to follow health and safety procedure.

**Please feel free to contact us with any questions you may have.  
We're looking forward to seeing you soon!**