

# STUDYING ABROAD SUSTAINABLY in CHILE



## QUICK TIPS

- Fly less, bus more.
- Your money matters.
- Use public transportation.
- Investigate the impact.



## PRELIMINARY NOTES:

The months I spent abroad—both summer and semester—were some of the happiest and most meaningful of my time at Harvard. I hope you find the same on your own adventure. To help, I have included some of the lessons I learned about trying to live sustainably and ethically while in Santiago, Chile. I hope it helps inform the ways you might be able to incorporate sustainable practices into your time abroad.

## MAJOR SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES:

### FLY LESS, BUS MORE!

Traveling is one of the best parts about being abroad. It gives you the chance to more fully understand the place you will be living. That being said, there are more and less sustainable ways to travel. Flying is by far the most carbon-intensive form of transport. So, before jumping on that flight to Rio or Lima for the weekend, think about the trips you might be able to take locally. I found that although five months felt long at first, it was not nearly enough time to see everything I wanted in Chile. I ended up leaving the country only for my program's trip to Buenos Aires—and I was all the more happy because of that decision. Without the pressure to see everything, I started to deeply understand the place I had intentionally chosen to begin with and all its regional distinctions.

### ADVENTURE TOURISM: YOUR MONEY MATTERS!

Chile has a unique geographical landscape that includes vast desert, rainforest, and the iconic Patagonian mountains. While in Chile I saw a field of geysers explode, kayaked on a glacial lake, hiked through a lava field, and saw a Puma touring El Parque Nacional Patagonia at night. It is a beautiful and diverse country, making tourism foundational to the economy. And most tourism consists of international visitors, so where you invest your money matters. In the Atacama, most tourist stops charge an entry fee that goes directly back to the local community. However, there are also popular hot springs and other attractions run by international hotels. Try to think about how your movements and actions will impact both the communities and land you're visiting!

### USE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION!\*\*

Santiago is a massive, sprawling city. However, it is also equipped with great public transportation systems. The metro has 9 lines, 136 stations and 140 kilometers of tracks—it will truly get you anywhere!<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the trains are often less than a minute apart. Santiago is also in the process of converting its massive micro system to all electric buses. The buses are also very effective—

<sup>1</sup> [Conoce la "estación fantasma" de la Línea 3: fue construida hace 30 años y no será utilizada, biobiochile.cl](https://www.biobiochile.cl)



there was a stop right across the street from me—though they may take longer during rush hour (a real nightmare time to travel!). I found I only needed to take an uber late at night, so while taxis and Ubers might seem easier, consider using public transport to cut down on those emissions (and costs)!

\*\* Always prioritize your personal safety when choosing your road travel or public transportation options. Ensure the transportation is safe, pick reputable companies, travel during daylight hours, and be aware of opportunistic crime.

## IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE—THEY'RE ALREADY HERE!

Climate change is already having an impact in every country, but some countries are experiencing more acute changes. In Chile, climate change is already widely regarded as one of the greatest threats to the world. Indeed, Chile has already seen the devastating effects of climate change - glaciers have shrunk by miles, and lakes have dried up.<sup>2</sup> I strongly recommend you read a bit about the changes and explore how this manifests both in the physical environment, and culture. While in Chile, I visited a glacier which had shrunk by nearly half in recent decades, and also participated in a march in Santiago. Firsthand experiences such as these will draw your attention to the way climate change impacts peoples and nations distinctly—for example, how Chile's environmental movement is linked with indigenous rights.

—NEIL SHEA, CASA-SANTIAGO



<sup>2</sup> In Chile, Many Regard Climate Change As The Greatest External Threat, NPR.org

