

Tourist Attractions

The Metropolitan Park: When it comes to well-manicured parks, the capital city has them in spades. The largest and highest of them is the Parque Metropolitano (the Metropolitan Park), northeast of the city center. Among its attractions are two outdoor pool complexes, a botanical garden, an observatory, and the national zoo. The southwest end of the park is crowned by San Cristóbal, a hill that marks the city's highest point.

Cerro Santa Lucía: In the central district of Lastarria lies Cerro Santa Lucía, a shining jewel in the midst of the city. While offering excellent views of the cityscape with the Andes beyond, the hill also boasts two 200-year-old fortresses, well-manicured gardens, and the neo-classical Fountain of Neptune at its southern base.

This is the historical heart of the city, and its first Spanish settlers clustered their homes around its base. It is a quintessential component of the history of Santiago.

Plaza de Armas: Set in the middle of the frenetic business center of Santiago, the Plaza de Armas is itself a microcosm of the country's rich cultural heritage.

Hawkers compete to sell snacks and souvenirs, old men play chess, and businesspeople spend their lunch break on a park bench. Towering palm trees provide shade above the large fountain and some of the best-sculpted statues of Santiago.

The plaza lies directly across the street from the impressive neo-classical **Catedral Metropolitana** (Metropolitan Cathedral), with its opulent frescoed ceilings, gold-leaf altar, and stained-glass windows.



Plaza de Armas

Pablo Neruda's home in Santiago: Chile's famous Nobel laureate author, Pablo Neruda, maintained three residences, including La Chascona in the Bellavista neighborhood of Santiago (the others are in Valparaíso and Isla Negra, with the latter being my favorite to visit).

Vandalized in the upheaval following Pinochet's coup in 1973 (Neruda died the same year), La Chascona has been lovingly restored to how it was during the author's life. The property is located at the foot of Saint Cristobal Mountain and well worth a visit.

Costanera Center Tower: No matter where you are in the greater metropolitan area, you will be within sight of South America's tallest building, the Costanera Center Tower. From the 62nd story, the view of the sprawling city and the snow-covered Andes is dramatic indeed. Nearly all of Santiago's points of interest are within view.

Palacio de La Moneda, Chile's White House: Palacio de La Moneda, Chile's presidential mansion, originated as a mint house at the end of the 18th century for the Spanish crown.

Only one president has actually resided in La Moneda, but it remains a symbolic building, which offers a true look into a very significant slice of Chilean history.

The neo-classical structure is situated at the end of Paseo Bulnes, the pedestrianized thoroughfare running north from Parque Almagro.

Tours (1.5 hours, 3pm and 4.30pm Mon.-Thurs., 3pm Fri.) are free.



La Moneda, Chile/ Palace

Parque Bicentenario: For fans of parks, a trip to Parque Bicentenario is a great way to spend a morning or afternoon. Having only been inaugurated in 2007, this modern park is located in the heart of the Vitacura community, bordering the south side of the Mapocho river.

At 74 acres, this is a rather large and consistently stylish park. One of the most popular parts of the park is the large man-made lagoon, featuring lengthy boardwalks and beautiful views of water and the city skyline. It is also home to dozens of black-neck swans and other unusual fowl and fish, which can be fed by visitors. This lagoon takes up much of the Southern half of the park, alongside multi-levelled grassy fields and gardens.



Parque Bicentenario, near Financial District Buildings.