

Guía Verde – Santiago

Expanding green spaces, overhauling public transport and regulating industry, Santiago is throwing off its suffocating reputation as one of Latin America's most polluted cities. Chile's ecological movement is bearing fruit in its increasingly green capital. By Kate Joynes-Burgess.

Where to stay

Old world opulence doesn't stop the **Ritz Carlton-Santiago** (Calle El Alcalde 15, +56-2 4708500; www.ritzcarlton.com; habitación doble desde USD\$429) from standing out as a 'Give Back Getaway'. The Ritz Environmental Action Conservation Team (REACT) implements measures to reduce its environmental footprint. The lavish hotel in Santiago's swanky Las Condes *comuna* runs conservation activities for guests including initiatives to protect Chile's endangered palm trees.

- Go even greener by staying at **Villa Virginia**, 40 minutes from the city centre (Virginia Subercaseaux 2450; +56-2 849 5043 / 853 1036 / 853 1293; www.fundacionorigen.cl; contacto@fundacionorigen.cl; habitación doble desde CLP60690, desayuno gourmet incluido). The recently renovated 19th century hacienda in Pirque municipality is operated by sustainability-focused Fundación Origen. Comfortable rooms overlook lush gardens maintained using eco-friendly horticultural methods. Chefs whip up natural treats including artisan breads and organic dishes.

Where to eat

A forerunner on Santiago's green scene, **El Huerto** (Orrego Luco 054; +56-2 233 2690; www.elhuerto.cl; restaurantelhuerto@gmail.com; cena para dos CLP16000) has served healthy international cuisine since 1980. Don't miss their *mezze del oriente* (seis platillos árabes), ample selection of organic wines and artisan beers. Founder Jose Fliman's inspiration came from working at "una cooperativa macrobiótica en Amsterdam en los 70s". His holistic centre in smart Providencia contains relaxed sister café La Huerta (best for breakfast), yoga and cookery schools.

- Culture vultures flock to **La Isla Café-Restaurant** (Irarrázaval 3465; +56-2 341 5389; info@laislaorganica.cl; www.laislaorganica.cl; cena orgánica para dos CLP15600) in trendy Plaza Ñuñoa, with its late-night bar, live music venue and secluded garden. La Isla offers an alternative, wholly organic – and vegetarian – menu but carnivores need not despair. Excellent meat, fish and *marisco* options are also available. Try the fragrant Thai chicken curry or gourmet cheese platter with merkén salsa, a blend of spices - smoked ají cacho de cabra (un tipo de chile), comino, and semillas de cilantro - derived from Mapuche gastronomy.

Where to shop

- Eco-evangelist Catalina Barranco is the brains behind elegant **L'organique** deli in Las Condes (Alonso de Camargo 6079; +56-9 9336 7644;

- www.organicmaker.com). Her certified Organic Maker products include Chilean wine, Peruvian coffee and Belgian chocolate, which can be delivered to your hotel. They also stock adorable organic cotton clothing for babies and infants by Ser Organico (www.ser-organico.cl).
- British toiletries company Lush boasts its only Latin American store within exclusive Parque Arauco mall (Av Kennedy 5413, Local 405; +56-2 212 8129; www.lush.cl). Created from organic honey, olive oil, fruit and vegetables, their products look and smell good enough to eat. Upstairs Likuid (Local 273; +56-2 202 3395; www.likuid.cl) supplies funky Dutch urban fashions from Kuyichi using 98% organic Peruvian cotton.
 - Embracing Chile's indigenous roots, the fair-trade tienda de la **Fundación Artesanías de Chile** (Calle Bellavista 0357; +56-2 777 8643; artesanias@artesaniasdechile.cl; www.artesaniasdechile.cl) in Bohemian Bellavista offers eye-catching woollen textiles hand-woven by Mapuche craftswomen using traditional techniques and natural vegetable dyes.

What to do

- Explore Santiago with **La Bicicleta Verde** (Santa María 227, Oficina 12; +56-2 570 9338 / Cel +56 99 8202 2097; Tours@LaBicicletaVerde.com; www.labicicletaverde.com; reservations required) offering easy-going bike tours by day (CLP 15,000) or night (CLP30,000). Alternatively hire a mountain bike and scale the Cerros Santa Lucía y San Cristóbal (CLP9000 for four hours). City authorities have promised a 550km network of ciclovías for the metropolis by 2012.
- Escape to the Tuscan-style organic **Viña De Martino** (Manuel Rodríguez 229, Isla de Maipo; +56-2 819 2959; tfarfan@demartino.cl; www.demartino.cl; advance booking required), an hour bus-ride from Barrio Brasil's Terminal San Borja (CLP1600 ida y vuelta, departures every 12 minutes). Specialist tours of the organic vineyard, certified by Germany's Bio Garantie since 2000, are offered to visitors interested in agro-ecological methods (CLP20,000 each, minimum 4 people). Standard wine-tasting tours are also available.