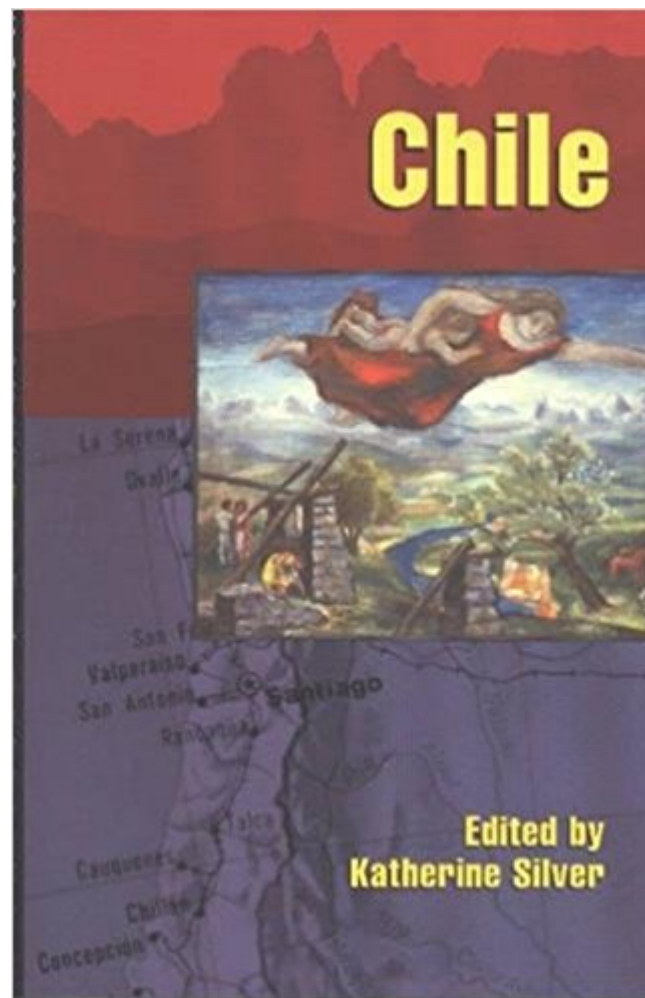




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# Chile: A Traveler's Literary Companion (Traveler's Literary Companions)



## Synopsis

The twenty stories in *Chile: A Traveler's Literary Companion* – most of which are available here for the first time in English – reveal that the nation that gave birth to two poets who won Nobel prizes in literature is also the home of many world-class prose writers. This collection evokes the diversity of the country's landscape and the complexity of its recent history. Contributors include Luis Alberto Acuñá, Marjorie Agosñn, Roberto Ampuero, Marta Brunet, Francisco Coloane, Adolfo Couve, Josñ Donoso, Ariel Dorfman, Jorge Edwards, Beatriz Garcñ-a-Huidobro, Pedro Lemebel, Patricio Manns, Tito Matamala, Pablo Neruda, Darñ-o Oses, Hernñn Rivera Letelier, Patricio Riveros Olavarrñ-a, Osvaldo Rodrñ-guez Musso, Enrique Valdñs, and Josñ Miguel Varas.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"All the short stories and excerpts included are tales of the human condition and demonstrate a love and respect for the country and its people." -- British Bulletin of Publications on Latin America, April 2003.

I read it before my trip to Chile; my husband read it after we got back. We both enjoyed it and felt that it added a lot of background to our trip.

This was a great book to read prior to our recent trip to Chile; I definitely recommend it to anyone

interested in Chile, or contemplating a trip there. Opened up literary doors I never knew existed...

This book was published in 2003 and collected 20 works by as many Chilean writers. As far as could be judged, there were 9 short stories, 2 essays, and excerpts from 7 novels and 2 autobiographies. The oldest writers were Marta Brunet (1897-1967), described as co-founder of a regional school who wrote on landscape, rural life and the inner lives of characters, especially women. Pablo Neruda (1904-73), a major figure on the left, prominent in the poetry of his nation, Latin America, and the world. And Francisco Coloane (1910-2002), who wrote on men and the sea and has been compared to Jack London. The youngest were Beatriz García-Huidobro (1959-), Patricio Riveros Olavarría (1962-), and Tito Matamala (1963-). Others included José Donoso, Jorge Edwards, Adolfo Couve and Ariel Dorfman. Twelve of the works were translated by the collection's editor, Katherine Silver. Prominent prose writers omitted from the collection included María Luisa Bombal, a pioneer of surrealism in Latin America from the 1930s, Antonio Skermet, the popular Isabel Allende, and the exile Roberto Bolaño. The earliest pieces appeared to be from Brunet and Coloane, dating perhaps to the 1950s, and from Neruda, whose memoirs were published in 1974. Others from the 1970s were Donoso and Enrique Valdés. From the 1980s, a time of oppressive rule, there was nothing. The majority of works in the collection, two-thirds, came from the 1990s. A number of the collection's writers -- many of them on the left -- had gone into exile after 1973, when the democratically elected, Marxist Allende government was overthrown in a military coup; these included Donoso, José Miguel Varas, Patricio Manns, Dorfman, Osvaldo Rodríguez Musso, Marjorie Agosín, and Patricio Riveros Olavarría. Some of the stories referred to the Allende government, the dictatorship that followed, and the plebescite in 1992 that had voted it out of office and begun the return to democracy. For this reader, the most interesting works by far in the book concerned Valparaíso, as described by Neruda and several others with vivid sense impressions. The excerpt from Donoso, in which a writer attended the wake for Neruda's widow and noted the passing of time, adding some historical depth. Other stories suggested the atmosphere of the capital, Santiago. Neruda described a forest in the south ("Anyone who hasn't been in the Chilean forest doesn't know this planet. I have come out of that landscape, that mud, that silence, to roam, to singing through the world"). In Couve's story a lonely, rich widow wandered among the crowds in the seaside resort of Cartagena. And Luis Alberto Acuñá described a walk in the Atacama desert, with the sun pounding down. Most of these captured what the editor referred to in her introduction as the national characteristic of "lightness in the blood," an exuberance that shined through the deepest gloom. Aside from these,

many selections seemed less interesting to this reader, remaining too much in the head of the narrator and lacking narrative power, and shedding less light on their regions. The works on Cuba, Brazil and Mexico in this worthwhile series seemed more revealing, to me at any rate.

Sure, Silver could have had a larger selection of authors (including Isabel Allende, Bolaño...and more conservative writers to balance out the liberal ones), but her collection is pretty good. Most people will get the proverbial "good feel" for Chile in general. If readers new to Chilean writing like these stories enough, they will probably go out in search of other Chilean novelists, poets, essayists, historians, etc. If not, they can bone up on writers from Nepal, Ivory Coast, Moldova...or wherever. Here is the Table of Contents from the publisher's website: EL CENTRO<sup>1</sup>.

Santiago  
Darío Oses ...The Poet, Wine, and Sheep  
Pedro Lemebel ...The Queen of the Corner  
José Donoso ...Curfew  
Ariel Dorfman ...The Nanny and the Iceberg  
Jorge Edwards ...My Name Is Ingrid Larsen<sup>2</sup>.  
Along the Coast: Pablo Neruda ...Roaming in Valparaíso  
Osvaldo Rodríguez Musso ...Valparaíso, My Love  
Adolfo Couve ...Seaside Resort  
Marjorie Agosín ...Isla Negra<sup>3</sup>.  
Heartland: Beatriz García-Huidobro ...Until She Go No More  
EL NORTE<sup>1</sup>.  
Iquique: Patricio Riveros Olavarría ...The Ghost of the German Voyeur<sup>2</sup>.  
Antofagasta: Hernán Rivera Letelier ...The Season of the Nightgowns<sup>3</sup>.  
Atacama: Roberto Ampuero ...The Train  
Roberto Ampuero ...Afternoon in the Pampa  
Luis Alberto Acuña ...Walking through the Atacama  
EL SUR<sup>1</sup>.  
Concepción: Tito Matamala ...Deputies' Street<sup>2</sup>.  
Temuco & the Lake District: Pablo Neruda ...The Chilean Forest  
Marta Brunet ...Black Bird<sup>3</sup>.  
Aysén: Enrique Valdés ...Window on the South<sup>4</sup>.  
Patagonia: Francisco Coloane ...On the Horse of Dawn  
José Miguel Varas ...Pikinini<sup>5</sup>.  
Tierra del Fuego: Patricio Manns ...A Lone Horseman  
Nothing on Chile's Juan Fernández Islands, but you can re-read Robinson Crusoe.  
Nothing on Chile's Easter Island, but the inhabitants are Polynesian for the most part. Ergo, no Nobel Prize winners way out there.

Since it is short stories you can have it in the car or whatever and pick it up at odd moments. Enjoyed all the stories so far and the cultural differences are of interest while not massively jarring. But then people seem to always be people don't they? Buy and enjoy this if you like character study with interesting culture and geography.

Blessings on the heads of the Traveler's Literary Companions folks, who figured out a magical formula: travelers like to read, and reading infinitely enhances the experience of a trip. This small,

packable volume collects stories by Chilean writers and arranges them geographically from Antofagasta to Punta Arenas, in the process revealing much of Chile's mood, culture, and geography.

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