

Chile: Alpines of the Andes

A 13-day tour of the Andes with ViraNatura, 3-15 January 2026

Leader: Chris Gardner

\$6,600 USD per person based on double occupancy, \$7525 USD single occupancy

Description from the ViraNatura website:

<https://www.viranatura.com/tour/100043/chile-alpines-of-the-andes-a-tour-for-nargs>

The magnificent Andes rise steeply from capital Santiago, soon reaching slopes rich in alpines and spectacular summer bulbs. This richness continues farther south with more fine passes and superb mountains. The colour is concentrated in these cooler uplands at this season and this tour takes us up to be among some dazzling and vibrant wild gardens. An active trip it is designed for those that love to combine flowers, mountains and walking.

Itinerary

Day 1 Arrival in Santiago (3 January)

Upon arrival at Santiago International Airport (SCL) we will transfer to our hotel in Guayacan.

Day 2 Lagunillas (4 January)

The cool of dawn is greeted with birdsong in this peaceful valley and a short drive will see us up at the very modest ski centre of Lagunillas and walking towards stony slopes coloured with big sprawling mats of ochre to plum-purple *Argyria adscendens*, *Perezia carthamoides*, stands of *Schizanthus hookeri* and ever increasing numbers of rich pink *Rhodophiala rhodolirion* and variable *Alstroemeria pallida*. Ridgetop screes have reddish *Pachylaena atriplicifolia*, *Cistanthe picta* and pretty *Cruckshanksia hymenodon* (pink form). Overnight Guayacan.



Rhodophiala rhodolirion



Argyria adscendens



Alstroemeria pallida

Day 3 El Yeso (5 January)

In the morning (and if the road is open) we will drive up to the El Yeso barrage to where there will be plenty of *Alstroemeria umbellata* and *Tropaeolum polyphyllum*. Then after lunch we'll drive south to our next hotel, nestled in the forested foothills of Volcan Descabezado. Overnight Vilches.

Day 4 Laguna de Maule (6 January)

An excellent plant area inland from Vilches Alto, we'll drive up to the pass to the stunning blue lake that is surrounded by dramatic volcanic landscapes. The many streams are lined with dazzling displays of coppery-orange *Mimulus cupreus* and *Calceolaria filicaulis* in a fiery duet. Open slopes have more subtle pink *Oxalis adenophylla*, and tufts of scarlet *Loasa lateritia* one of the loveliest alpine to be seen at this season. Elsewhere are cascades of *Tropaeolum incisum*, sulphurous *Euphrasia andicola* and much more the bristly snaking stems of *Nassauvia*. And everything with the irresistible backdrop of the lake. Parts of the surrounding landscape are equally dramatic with contorted and eroded ash towers, impressive lava flows of densely packed hexagonal columns. Overnight Vilches Alto.



Mimulus cupreus



Tropaeolum incisum



Euphrasia andicola

Day 5 Altos de Lircay (7 January)

The chance to stretch our legs and take a hike into the woods of Altos de Lircay. The route passes through *Nothofagus* forest filled with countless pink *Alstroemeria presliana* and a good number of scarlet *Rhodophiala splendens*. Bushes of *Fuchsia magellanica* arc gracefully over streams laden with pendant flowers and the climbing stems of *Mutisia decurrens* hang with big tangerine flowers. After lunch we'll transfer further south to our next bases, set beneath the looming bulk of Volcan Antuco. Overnight Antucalhue.

Day 6 Laguna de Laja (8 January)

More sensational flower displays carpet parts of Volcan Antuco's austere black ash slopes. Greener slopes are illuminated with stands of golden *Alstroemeria aurea* and where humus has accumulated are natural gardens of pink *Mutisia oligodon* in tumbling masses mixed with orange-yellow *Quinchimalium chilense*. The landscapes are wild and spectacular from the blue Laguna de Laja to the rugged, multicoloured volcanic slopes and glacier clad peaks. A hidden waterfall has *Rhodophiala araucana* and is the perfect place for a picnic. Nearby shrubberies have plentiful *Alstroemeria presliana*, *A. aurea* and *Mutisia decurrens*. In the shade of lava flows the cliffs are peppered with beautiful mats of *Ourisia microphylla*. Overnight Antucalhue.



Alstroemeria presliana



Alstroemeria aurea

Day 7 Tolhuaca (9 January)

Beginning our return journey northwards, we visit Tolhuaca; Chile's first national park and a superb area of *Araucaria* and *Nothofagus* forests with a rich shrub and bamboo understorey including stately *Blechnum magellanicum*. We'll spend the afternoon exploring the trails here hopefully finding the white-flowered orchid *Chloraea longipetala*, *Mutisia araucana*, scarlet necklaces of *Tropaeolum speciosum* and plentiful *Mitraria coccinea*. Another easy flat trail leads to a spectacular waterfall lookout. Overnight Curacautin.

Day 8 Malalcahuelo & Las Nalcas (10 January)

A dramatic and stark volcanic landscape that is home to one of the holy grails of Andean alpinists; *Chaetanthera villosa*. But, before we reach here we will wander among some magnificent *Araucaria araucana* forests, including a venerable thousand-year-old specimen. With luck there will still be some *Chloraea magellanica* in flower too. The slopes of Volcan Lonquimay rise up beyond it is in these seemingly lifeless tracts that we will find pretty *Loasa nana*, *Oxalis adenophylla* and of course the incomparable *Chaetanthera villosa*. After lunch on a lava flow we'll drive through other impressive areas of huge monkey puzzles. Overnight Curacautin.



Chaetanthera villosa



Alstroemeria exerens



Chloraea magellanica

Day 9 To Curico (11 January)

Chile's geography is always a challenge and today we need to make a lengthy journey to our final plant-rich areas. To break up our journey we'll visit a vineyard on the way, before overnighing in Curico.

Day 10 Paso Vergara (12 January)

Much of the lowland flora will have finished flowering by now and there will be little to delay our drive up into another impressive alpine realm where abundant *Zephyranthes rhodolirion* mingles with *Alstroemeria exerens* the remarkable inflated pods of *Astragalus pehuelches*, gaudy *Schizanthus grahami* and the purple balls of *Calceolaria arachnoidea*. Big mats of *Azorella monantha* are common in places and the dense buttons of *Viola skottsbergiana* can sometimes be found growing through them. Wonderful scenery all around. Overnight Curico.

Day 11 To Farellones (13 January)

A morning transfer takes us to the mountains above the capital. *Alstroemeria revoluta* will be flowering on the lower slopes as we climb to our hotel at 2500 metres, where we'll arrive in time to explore some of the ski slopes around Valle Nevado for *Alstroemeria umbellata*. Our hotel is beautifully positioned above the hills. Overnight near Santiago.

Day 12 La Parva (14 January)

We will spend the day walking into the slopes where various ski roads take us fairly easily uphill to where there are lots of *Rhodophiala rhodolirion* (white form), *Loasa sigmoidea*, *Viola philippii*, *Perezia carthamoides*, trailing stems of golden *Tropaeolum polyphyllum* and spectacular displays of *Cajophora coronata* each massive plants sporting many inflated white flowers. Another of the classic and outrageous summer alpine plants. We might ultimately reach nearly 3600 metres where we'll find some fascinating high altitude species such as *Nototriche compacta*, *Loasa caespitosa*, *Viola atropurpurea*, *Nastanthus agglomeratus*, *Tropaeolum nubigena* and the remarkable *Nassauvia pinigera*. Overnight near Santiago.



Tropaeolum nubigena



Nototriche compacta



Nassauvia pinigera

Day 13 To Santiago for flights (15 January)

The airport is only an hour or so away for our return flights.

TOUR DATES: 3-15 January 2026 (in Chile)

TOUR COST: \$6600 USD double, \$7525 USD single. Reservation deposit \$1000 USD

Included in the tour: Accommodation, all meals, ground transport and guide services

Not included: Visas (if needed), travel/medical insurance, tips, alcoholic and soft drinks and expenses of a personal nature

GROUP SIZE: Minimum number of participants 5, maximum 15.

Information Related Registration, Payments, and Cancellation

You must be a NARGS member to register. If you need to renew your membership or to join the Society, please do so via the NARGS website (www.nargs.org). Registration will be on a first come, first serve basis. Your space is not guaranteed until a deposit is paid. The deposit is \$1000 USD. Before submitting your deposit, use the Contact Us form on the website to confirm space availability. You will receive an email confirming space availability and a link to the Google Registration Form. Guests traveling together must EACH fill in a Google Registration Form.

Deposit Payment

To pay the deposit for the tour, use the PayPal link on the NARGS website (www.nargs.org). After logging onto the website, click on the "Donate" button at the top of the homepage. Then type "Chile Tour" in the "Purpose of Donation" box, select Educational trips from the "Program" picklist, select

Other for the “Amount” list, then fill in the \$1000 USD deposit amount, and then click the “Add to Cart” button. On the next page, check that the amount is correct and then click the “Checkout” button. On the next page, select “Secure checkout” with Credit Card or with PayPal account as the “Payment method” and confirm your address. You will then be routed to the PayPal website where you can pay via either a PayPal account (if you have one) or select Pay with Debit or Credit Card.

Final Payment

Final payment is **due October 1, 2026**. NARGS will email a reminder regarding final payment information. The preferred method for final payment is by check from a U.S. bank denominated in USD. The check should be payable to NARGS, note Chile Tour on the memo line of the check, and be mailed to NARGS, POB 18604, Raleigh, NC 27619-8604. Payment can be made via credit card, PayPal, postal or bank money order, or a check from a non-U.S. bank but must be denominated in USD and must include a 5% surcharge to cover banking fees. Failure to make final payment will result in reservation cancellation and full loss of the deposit.

Cancellation

This tour is organized by ViraNatura Tours so cancellations and insurance needs must follow their requirements. Please follow the link for information from their site. Please note you must still book this tour through NARGS.

<https://www.viranatura.com/terms--conditions>

Information Related to Insurance

The tour price does not include insurance to cover costs associated with medical treatment, repatriation, flight cancellations, baggage loss, travel interruptions, cancellation fees, or other expenses.

Each registrant is urged to assess their personal situation and to obtain private insurance to cover these costs if needed.

Waiver of Liability

By submitting a tour deposit, you are acknowledging that you are aware of the risks associated with travel and that you will not hold NARGS or others associated with the tour responsible for any delays; changes in itinerary, staffing, or accommodations; injuries, illnesses, or deaths; or any circumstances beyond the control of NARGS.

Public Health Requirements

All participants must comply with public health requirements for international travel in their country of residence and in the tour host country. During the tour, participants may be in close contact with other participants and the general public. To the extent possible, participants should comply with U.S. and local public health guidelines, and must comply with all local public health requirements. If you do not feel well during the tour, let the tour guide know. The guide will assist in locating medical services, but these services may be distant and less extensive than those available at home. Each participant will be individually responsible for paying the cost for these services and associated transportation.

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