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Press Contact

Nathalie Pilovetzky / nathalie@latitude-intl.com
Walter DeMirco / walter@latitude-intl.com
Tel: 212-633-2047

TURISMO CHILE UPDATE ON CHILE'S TOURISM INDUSTRY FOLLOWING SATURDAY'S EARTHQUAKE

Monday March 1, 2010 - Chile suffered an 8.8 quake in the early morning hours of Saturday February 27, 2010. The cities closest to the epicenter, including Concepcion, Talcahuano and Temuco as well as a number of small towns along Chile's central coast were most affected by the quake.

The five different tourism regions promoted by Turismo Chile are reporting the following updates:

Desert – The north of Chile was not affected by the quake and has not reported any damage.

Easter Island – Easter Island, which lies 2,300 miles off the coast of mainland Chile, a 5.5 hour flight from Santiago, was not affected by the quake. Initial tsunami warnings have been lifted and all operations are normal.

Santiago and Central Region - Santiago's airport suffered structural damage to the passenger terminal, however no damage was reported to the runways and the airport is expected to reopen later this week. Electricity and phone lines have been restored in Santiago and the city's public transportation including its metro is fully operational. Valparaiso and Viña del Mar have also reported damage. The annual Viña del Mar International Music festival which was underway has been suspended.

Lakes and Volcanoes – The northern part of the Lakes and Volcanoes region, around the city of Concepcion and the Bio Bio River, was most affected by the quake. Authorities are still working on assessing the full damage. Basic essential services including water, electricity and telecommunications are gradually being restored. The southern part of the Lakes and Volcanoes region was not affected by the quake. Operations in popular tourist towns including Pucon, Puerto Varas and Puerto Montt are normal.

Patagonia – The far south of the country was not affected by the quake and has not reported any damage.

Chile is a country with a history of seismic activity. The country's preparedness, including its strict anti-seismic building codes, the rapid emergency response from the government as well as the help from a number of organizations can be credited for managing the situation and help minimize the damage. The country's tourism infrastructure has, overall, fared well, reporting little damage.

"Our thoughts and sentiments go out to the families who have lost loved ones," said Pablo Moll, executive director of Turismo Chile. "Chileans are a resilient people and we are hard at work to get the country back on its feet quickly. We look forward to continuing to welcome travelers and are making every effort to making them feel safe and secure."

US and Canadian tour operators and media requiring additional information or assistance can contact Turismo Chile at ofitur@embassyofchile.org