



## **Santiago, Chile Trip Notes** **March 27-April 7, 2015**

I had a hole in my calendar -- so when I saw United Airlines opening direct and inexpensive flights to Santiago and found a bargain of a 5-star hotel, how could I resist? I hadn't been to Santiago since the 1990s when I went through for business and never stayed more than a couple days at a time. In those days I would go on south to Puerto Montt and Chiloe Island where my business encompassed salmon farming. This time I would stay a full ten days.

### ***Facts and Surprises***

- Santiago has a population of about 7 million people which is nearly half that of all of Chile.
- Chile is 2700 miles in length with the average width only 110 miles.
- The second highest point in the western hemisphere is 22,600 feet and it is in Chile.
- The Atacama Desert is the driest place in the world with only about 1/2 inch of rainfall a year. But while I was here it got many inches in a day causing a calamity with many villages totally wiped out.
- Heading towards the Andes and within only 40 miles but up and up and up to 11,000 and 12,000 feet away is a ski scene at Valle Nevado.
- Heading towards the shore and within an hour drive, through multiple wine valleys, is the shore.
- Huge and spread out like Switzerland isn't. Rough and as dramatic as the Canadian Rockies.
- Much of it is seemingly pretty undeveloped.

### ***Weather***

The weather was something next to perfect and especially since I left a rough winter in New Jersey. Snow was just starting to melt in NJ but temps were still near freezing; when I arrived in Santiago I found temperatures of 70s to low 80s and continual sunshine. In Santiago they wish for rain because it clears some of the pollution. Santiago sits in a valley with the Andes to one side and mountain ranges all around that almost look like more Andes.

As we drive into other valleys and especially toward the coast, you come down from a mountain into a solid mass of fog. By mid-day it is lifting quite quickly. It is generally cold at night touching 50 but might go up to mid-80s. I was glad to have missed their weird hot spell the week before when it was sweltering in the 90s.

They have some of every type of weather: Up north Chile in the land that used to be owned by Peru and bordering Bolivia is an area called Atacama Desert. During my first few days here it received rain which was historic and caused mudslides and the obliteration of many villages. It is known to be one of the driest places on earth with next to no rain at all, yet it got many inches in just a few days. This desert is where many movies have filmed moonscapes but that couldn't have worked this last week. It was a national emergency. 14 years of rain in one day triggered deadly flooding in driest place on Earth. See <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/capital-weather-gang/wp/2015/03/27/14-years-worth-of-rain-in-one-day-triggers-deadly-flooding-in-driest-place-on-earth/>

### **Many wars?**

I know it includes one of the world's largest salt flats and some of it is about 13,000 feet above sea level. There is an area called valley of death which is very rich in mineral deposits that is thought to be the driest and most inhospitable place on the planet with no life existing. I will research this area to see if it is somewhere I want to return to as I am bound to return to South America again and hopefully through Santiago on my way to the Chilean Patagonia next March.

Why this area always seems to be the focus of some war must be because of the rich mineral deposits. Both Bolivia and Peru want some of their land returned. The bordering countries keep their guard up. In Argentina I learned that the town of El Chaltan was formed and populated in order to keep Chile OUT.

### **Gays?**

I met and toured with so many gays that I thought it was a populous like we see in San Francisco. So I presumed that Chile was a comfortable and a safe location; it turns out that is far from the truth. One of my tour guides told the story of a close working friend with many years seniority being terminated when found out. So their team banded together and threatened to leave if the gay person was not reinstated.

### **Famous women of Chile**

I kept hearing stories. They are numerable. They range from women who acquired their wealth from family, to those who manage totally on their own and were called witches, to the fact that South America has a very large proportion of women presidents. Before I started visiting South America these last few years I thought they were all favorites but apparently a few are in jeopardy now. (Certainly Argentina's is gone as of October; the Chileans are not happy with their president, and Brazil's is under fire.)

Catalina de los Ríos y Lisperguer - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

[http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catalina\\_de\\_los\\_R%C3%ADos\\_y\\_Lisperguer](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catalina_de_los_R%C3%ADos_y_Lisperguer)

The story of La Quintrala | AllSantiago.com

<http://www.allsantiago.com/the-historic-quarter/around-iglesia-de-san-agustin/the-story-of-la-quintrala/>

Gabriela Mistral is one of their Nobel Prize winners and she is honored on a bank note and a coin.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gabriela\\_Mistral](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gabriela_Mistral)

Chileans honor the 'mother'

- Tombstones of note are of women: imagine my surprise to see all these huge church tombs of women, and cemeteries with the men's tombs alongside but tiny in size compared to mommas.
- Coins show women profiles: are we only now talking of a woman on our currency?
- Virgin Mary is chosen over that of Jesus. She tops San Cristobal Hill like Jesus tops the Rio de Janeiro hill.
- They claim everything comes from the mother, everyone is protected by the mother, and everything wraps around the mother who is the protector of all.

Their current president is a woman but she wasn't well thought of now as she has apparently made promises that the wise Chilean knows she shouldn't have and shouldn't or can't keep. Her offer of free medical care and education to all has been compared to that in Argentina where it's thought to have bankrupted the country. (Chileans pay 7% of their salary, with no cap, for health benefits, and then pay a percentage for every visit. The thinking is that totally free education won't well educate anybody.)

## **Coffee with Legs**

Yet honoring the mother, they honor the women in still another maybe more ancient way. There are many “Coffee with Legs” shops. What is that? Think about what a Las Vegas bar maid might look like, and that’s what is serving coffee. They are allegedly on the up and up but both my guides told me that it was possible to share phone numbers . . . .

Not all of them are ritzy. I saw young striking gals with long legs and big boobs and yet I also saw the legs of a bunch of old women. I asked if they were all women and was told that the “boy legs” just never took off.

## **Reclaiming the Age-Old Art of Getting Lost**

This was much of what visiting Santiago was. Wandering. Or, as so famously said by a dear friend, and I totally subscribe to: Some of my best adventures occurred when I got lost. This is why my travels typically encompass many miles of wandering. Here’s a lovely article on the ‘art’.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/19/travel/19EssayLostEurope.html?emc=edit\\_tl\\_20150418&nl=travel&nid=22982744](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/19/travel/19EssayLostEurope.html?emc=edit_tl_20150418&nl=travel&nid=22982744)

## **Farming, markets, foods and of course drinks**

Markets are a sight to behold. There are not only a lot of fruits and vegetables unique to us but those that we do know are practically unidentifiable due to the huge size. The land is fertile and the farmers knowledgeable. Plus there are some of all types of terrain available in Chile. The government has invested in scientific research and funded projects to bring in new and appropriate farming. I presume they aren’t like California farming rice in the dessert.

I tried to taste many of the foods and drinks. I had a walking tour of the markets with two different guides. I had a tour of drinks including their many types of pisco and I’m proud to say that I also tried their Earthquake two times and lived to tell the tale.

One food tour in itself surely added a few pounds. I went on two and returned for more!

- Empanadas look like those from Argentina but they are filled with different spicy ingredients including the poor man's common foods of onion, olive, and boiled eggs.
- There is a potato casserole, atypical dish of seafood, pork and vegetables that is simmered for hours in an earthen pot, and avocados just everywhere - some time stuffed and sometimes as an add-on with balls of avocado.
- There is a thin soup or stew that includes a leg or a chunk of chicken and a piece of corn on the cob, a big chunk of one of their many potatoes, plus rice.
- Twice I had their traditional earthenware bowl of ground meat topped with acorn purée, plus onions, boiled egg, plus the usual olive, then baked. A sprinkling of sugar over the top of corn makes it brown in the oven.
- Pumpkin was the big thing right now and often served in a thick stew of beans.
- Over about everything is a favorite and hot condiment which looks like just tomatoes but has some very spicy chili peppers in it. I try, I gasp, I cough, and I even add more.
- The biggest surprise is the Chilean hot dog. There are stands and even streets full of restaurants where you pick your type of hot dog and then add toppings, giving as many as 20 different choices. One street and also the central market has a whole block of these shops on one side and the other side are the soups, stews and casseroles. All are only 2 to 4 dollars each. Eating is particularly cheap here and maybe because the farming is particularly good. Everyone looked well fed but fortunately not the fatties of America.



- Ice cream or gelato. I went to a charming little shop not far from downtown and on the edge of the park that had a long line because it has won awards for being the best in the world. Yes - the world. So I had two types of flavors that are unknown elsewhere. Do I believe that one gelato can be so different from anywhere else in the world? Or do I think it has to do with the atmosphere and the anticipation? Guess. (Only Coca-Cola has been able to keep the recipe a secret and that is a headline.)
- Drinking is sometimes just as close to my heart. When asking for a glass of wine, one might get a huge water glass for only a couple dollars. The Chileans are rightfully proud of their wineries.
- We went to the Republic of Pisco - yes that is correct - where there was a Pisco tasting going on. I have had Pisco Sours (daily in Peru and upper Argentina) but never knew there were dozens of different qualities and prices of Pisco.
- The other national drink is called the Earthquake. And followed on is a drink called the Aftershock. After a few sips of this multi liquored drink with pineapple ice cream on the top, one doesn't care what is in it. I drank my first one at a famous old time shop near to the central market called The Flea. There was not only a band playing but a row of old men at the bar who wanted to kiss us. I presume they had a few.

### **Wines**

Wine of course is the most famously known drink of Chile. I traveled to three different wine regions and visited the vineyards to include tastings. I traveled through two additional wine regions and saw the outside of their vineyard and villas. Yes, one is a re-creation of an Italian Villa. Another one called Vina las Niños is one of the smallest but run by three generations of women from a single French family.

Though the Casablanca area is likely the best known it was down into the Colchagua Valley that I saw the most unique places. We went as far as Santa Cruz stopping in Vina Montes. I would like to have spent some time in the little town of Santa Cruz but instead we went to their noted new winery which included a museum and funicular up to the top of a hill and an observatory as well as an outdoor museum of different types of native homes. And a family of llamas or Alpaca.

At Vina Montes we learned that it was designed with feng shui principles. Also that their production follows a vertical design going underground as much as 120 feet so that this new technology uses the flow of gravity instead of pumps to make the wine.

There were a few of us for the English speaking tour so we got the carriage ride up the hill. This carriage was drawn by a farmer in native dress driving his two horses. Silly but special.

Do I think the Chilean wines are good? I think any wine with alcohol is good. My palate is totally in corrigible. Tom has tried to train me and I have gone through many famous French vineyards with an effort to learn from tastings, but I continue to be totally happy with a daily wine. Thus, at home we keep two totally different bottles open. Yet the Chilean wines have had many awards and are holding their own in the world for him. They have one great variety that came from France and had been thought to be long lost. I think it tastes like the merlots but it is called Carmenera.

***First and one of the only missives sent home*** – though I talk to Tom at least once a day.

I'm in Santiago! -- It is such a long trip but I was made comfortable on a lie flat seat so how can I complain. I sort of hit the ground running by getting on an overview tour the first day after I arrived around noon.

I'm in an absolutely lovely five-star hotel thanks to a generous family member. Everywhere you look there are either the Andes on one side or mountains on the other side that make you wonder if they



are the Andes. But this is a huge city with the majority of Chile's population living in Santiago. There appears to be a huge high-rise area of ritzy places (called Sanhattan for Santiago/Manhattan) and not too far away some pretty rough looking places. This is to say there are extremes.

My second day, or my first full day, I booked a very long day out to the wine country. At 6am rolling out of bed I knew it was a mistake but it probably was worth it. I saw three valleys and two noted wineries up close enough to do tasting. [Sent a video about one of them.] And yes we did get in that little teeny carriage that you will see.

My next and third day I got on a bus tour again and took a panoramic trip up into the Andes. I don't think these little narrow roads that were one switch back on top of another was very safe but we went up 7500 feet in a little more than an hour and a half of a very hairy drive and a unit had a ski area called Valle Nevado and going by still another one. There was time for two small hikes and then another white knuckle drive home. I'm told the resort is at 11,500 feet so no wonder I huffed and puffed while hiking. I hiked hugely farther up than anyone else on the bus tour but that wasn't saying much.

Tomorrow, being Tuesday, all of the tours I wanted were booked full so without much reluctance and somewhat glad that my hand was forced, I hired a private guide with car and driver to spend a full day with me in downtown Santiago to include some walking in the old quarter.

And now I am off for a little bit of dinner and hopefully an early to bed and catch up on some very short sleep nights. As Tom would say, life is good.

Here I am happily tasting Chilean foods and wines in hippie-village of Bella Vista.



### ***Val de Mar and Valparaiso***

Yes, I know this video zips around. It wasn't worth much more. One should not stop in a town for less than a few days. If the town is worth anything it's worth a lot more than two hours.

I am not sure that being in Val de Mar is worth much more than a few hours through. But here she is if you are interested [sent video]. She represents those folks from Valparaiso who wanted a little bit of flatland and more beach so the town was born and built-up with palaces, and estates, so there are a lot of tourist looking sites.

We went on to visit Valparaiso which I think probably does deserve a few days. I did not give it that and I'm sorry to admit so. I am never impressed with 'fly by' touring.

I tried to visit the Nobel laureate's home but found it to be filled full of a lot of junk if not trash. I am still trying to figure out why people think this collection of garage sale items was worthy of a visit. One of the more interesting things was a big porcelain French designed sink in his study that was not hooked up to anything. Or the wooden carousel horse in his living room. It did have a great view which maybe was worth the effort to go to his home for the view. Or maybe even to get it out of my memory bank to think it was something that I would learn about.

The tour was a very long and very late day. So Saturday gave me time to wander on my own with much success and an absolutely wonderful and educational day. More on my wandering and walking tour later.

### ***My Route of Wine tour***

Nicely there were only either of us on a mini tour bus. I was the only English speaker but the guide was proficient, older and thoughtful. Like a British professor and certainly not Chilean. Five nice looking gay boys and one muscled one in shorts and muscle shirt from Paris who treated me like his mother (or I'm sorry to say, his grandmother) which was very sweet.

We traveled via the Pan American highway south thru three valleys, heavy in vineyards and surrounded by huge but gray mountains. Was it only one month ago that I was at the very southern tip of the Pan-American Highway? Now here I am tasting wines in Chile.

Can you imagine, but the rest stops along the highways had free and good Wi-Fi. Plus they have very reasonable costs which makes sense when you learn that the average Chilean makes between \$16,000 and \$20,000 a year. It is possible to have a meal for \$1-2.00 US.

When I landed I battled the lack of sleep overnight and immediately got myself onto the hop on hop off bus. There is a need to get an overview and it's also very helpful but I don't like those type of bus tours. They really are 'fly by' tourist stuff.

My ride from the airport first exposed a lot of little shanty towns which I'd hoped were just huts next to farm plots. That turned out to not be the case as they continued. Apparently there is an extreme of wealth as I also visited Sanhattan - a bunch of new high rises like Manhattan here in Santiago. They were all built since my visits in the 90s when I attached a day or two at a time to business trips in Puerto Montt and Chiloe Island.

### ***Panorama Andes tour***

I shouldn't have booked a tour on top of another. I was in as late as 9pm and then needed to get up at 6am again! We passed red foxes. We climbed up and up and up by way of Via Casino de Montana and through another town called Fargellone and into Valle Nevado. I was fairly sure that I'd find some dramatic pictures of this route since it was some of the tightest and most switchbacks I'd encountered, but I've come up short. Switchbacks on top of each other and going on for about an hour. But at the top, all by themselves, about four buildings, a few open ski lifts that were closed due to the cold and wind, and yet gave me two hikes of about 2 hours.

### ***Walking tour***

Twice with a guide and once on my own I traipsed around the Cathedral & Plaza de Armas in downtown Santiago. I could walk there but with my stops and picture taking it took me about an hour one way. Busy busy busy! Crowded and a bit crazed. I'm not so sure that Tom would have liked it but I did and also the cathedral, four museums and lots of street entertainment. It probably helped that I could return home to my hotel, via a collection of connecting parks along the river, across the river, to nice quiet San Cristobal Towers which is connected to the Sheraton and their luxury collection. <http://www.allsantiago.com/the-historic-quarter/around-the-cathedral-plaza-de-armas/>

Notes home - After about three hours of walking I ran into a free walking tour. Think about the PhD American in Rome, or some of the best of BigOnion.com, and that's where I spent the day. The walking tour was to be three hours but we had considerably more time and we ended up AGAIN at the famous historic place near to the central market called "The Flea" for an "earthquake" drink, lots of music and laughs. It was only one of many absolutely wonderful and perfect days and memorable in all ways.



## Pictures

This is tough. I took far too many and just couldn't stop. Of maybe 800, I'll obviously need to narrow them down.



Despite being in transit for nearly 24 hours, I landed and immediately took an overview tour. That and a long walk made sleeping the first full night easy. The next day was a very long 13 hour day with a drive through the vineyards, tastings, and even a carriage ride up into the hills. Most vineyards not only gave us tastings of wine, but encouraged us to sample the different types of grapes too.



So many wines, so little time, but we did our best. The restaurant used to be a vineyard and now encompasses a number of different types of restaurant. I had wild boar and all day thoroughly enjoyed what felt like spring time but in fact was their autumn. You know why roses are at the ends of grape rows? The bugs take to the roses first so the rose is the canary in the mine.

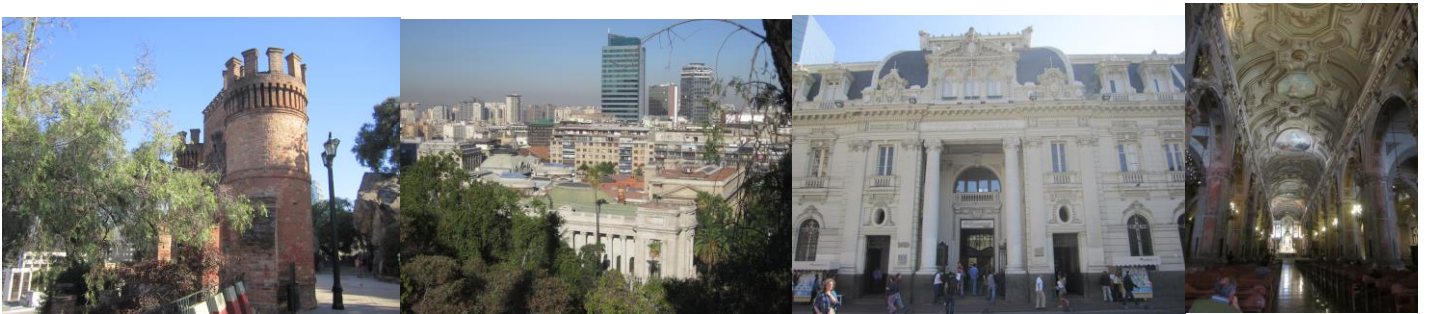


Some vineyards were recreations of Italian villas. This one had a cable car lift up to an observatory to include an outdoor museum of various types of aborigine homes. Why llamas and alpacas on most vineyards? They might have 300 hectares of grapes but only 300 animals to share around their poo. Now if I could just remember why the chicken coups that they move around too . . . Finally, nighttime and the view out my hotel window over Santiago and into the Andes.





The drive up to Valle Nevado Ski area was hairy to say the least and included the close spotting of various red foxes. The road kept coming back on itself with one switchback after another and me eating ginger and holding a plastic bag. It was worth it. One hour up to 11,000 feet and out in the middle of nowhere appears this hilltop with lodges and lifts. The weather was tough so lifts weren't working necessitating (enjoying?) hiking up as far as I could anyway.



I would climb Santa Lucia in the middle of town at least four times but this time was the easiest in a car with my private guide and driver. I couldn't get what I wanted in tours so I hired it and it was the best spent money of the trip. Jeanette and driver were worth their weight in gold, so to speak. The view was amazing as was the description of what I was looking at, all of which propelled me up to the top again on my own and then later on a walking tour. The old Spanish buildings are rare as much because of their major earthquakes but also their various wars. Allende and Pinochet are often mentioned. This next to last picture is one of many special architectural gems on the Plaza de Armas, and that too would call me back any number of times for the museums, the ambiance, the meeting place for walking tours, the mimes entertainment, etc. Though I did enter the cathedral, it didn't call my name again.



I had two eating tours and found the first of many streets that were lined with cheap and good food where you could eat an entire meal for a couple dollars. Hot dogs were surprisingly filled, such as the Italian hot dog with avocado, tomatoes and cheese. Toppings might number 40 choices. Here is my lovely guide in the fish market, and then a not-so-lovely that I just couldn't resist. How dare she!





There were three main markets: fish, fruit and vegetables, and a Costco type with larger quantities. Speaking of quantity – I didn't recognize some foodstuff for the size. Double Kiwi. Vegetables larger than believable. They have very rich soil. Here are some fish with two eyes on one side of the head. I wonder why. Then little fragrant melons so small three fit in a palm. Strawberries stacked artistically in a huge fruit and vegetable hall with a smell you didn't want to leave. In the middle of the fish market were many touristy restaurants. We would eat with the locals at the edge of another market.



When I checked my tourist book about famous Chilean dishes, I found that Jeanette hadn't missed a one. She'd asked momma-san to fix us six small dishes – the dishes were no smaller than momma, and momma didn't mind coming out for a bow and a big hug. I did my best! It was here when I asked for a glass of wine that a large water glass full was served.



At the edge of Central Market is this huge political mural and a restaurant called The Flea. Famous for the drink called The Earthquake, I would return still again and of course imbibe still again too. Here is Jeanette keeping the old man's hands off me but he continued to want to kiss and hug. He is one of the colorful locals. We were on our way up to San Cristobal Mountain where the huge statue of Mother Mary can be seen from most of the town, and is the namesake of my hotel towers. We would drive instead of taking the historical tramway. I returned to the tramway on my feet another day.

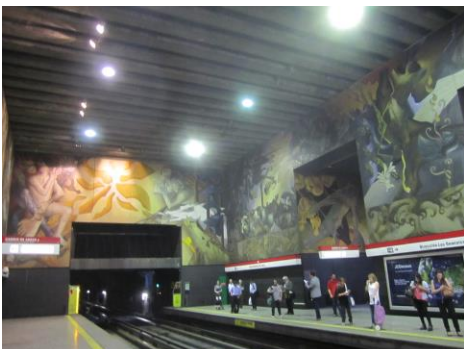




A walk on the top and around the statue is a necessity, though the later stop in this huge Metropolitan Park and its Japanese Garden maybe wasn't but a nice retreat and a good view of Santiago off towards my hotel. That tower? It's the highest in South America. It was such a super day that I arranged another couple days with Jeanette. I had more to see and why not see it with a knowledgeable, smart and personable tour guide.



On my first full day tour to the wine area, at the end of the day the bus driver dropped the French boy off in a very European looking area with cobblestone streets. I'd asked Jeanette about it and got taken to Paris and London Street. Many lovely old buildings and art shops in this historical area. See the book kiosk? There are lending libraries all about town. In subways, parks, shopping areas. Yet oddly books are known to be highly taxed.



On the way, before and after Paris/London Street area, we had a tour of a few subway stations. All underground, all new, and all filled with art work of Chilean nature and history. I'm not sure I would have understood it on my own . . . By the way, the subways are not only clean but cheap.





In still another area, above ground, the art was street level and everywhere. And good. As were the dogs: everywhere and good. They feed them and take care of them and one even sees dog houses in parks. No porta potties for people but plenty of dog houses, so why no dog poop? I saw a lot of park workers. Then if you're bored, driving or walking, there are street musicians that appear at the stop signals and play until the light turns green when they put out the donations can. One area is known as a street flea market everyday all day. It went on for blocks. My tour guide was a good walker too.



Some more Chilean food choices and this meal in the Bella Vista area near to my hotel where I'd return two more times. See the locks? It is a major problem in Paris where the bridges are over-weighted and the keys must be dredged from the river. Couples will lock their heart away and throw away the key, but here the river is so forceful coming down from the Andes that the keys are washed away. To where I don't know and surely someday they'll have an over-weighted number of bridges too. Next up was the old American Embassy in a lovely European building on the edge of the park. But after 9-11 the Americans got spooked and built a monstrosity of an iron fortress on the edge of town and now another country (who isn't so hated?) took over the building. Nearby is that's claimed to be The World's Best Gelato. I'm noted to not care for Gelato (I'd rather have a bagel or something where I chew and know I ate something) but with such an introduction, and with flavors of fruits I'd never encountered before, I tried quite a few.



At the entry of the lovely old building is an introduction to its unique and one of a kind art inside. It was good that I went there first as I only purchased one item. Had I found the Republica



Independiente del Pisco for the Pisco tasting first, I might have lost my sense of logic or budget. There really are dozens of Piscos and they offer tastings and education. Dangerous.



Street art here was very detailed and oddly Asian. My only good cat picture. We would walk through the huge new area nicknamed Sanhattan for Santiago's Manhattan. Skyscrapers and all modern and none of it would have been there in the 90s. It seems that the rich didn't like driving to town so they built here. Now its town.



Chicago had cows. Palm Beach had alligators. Louisville had horses. Sanhattan has blocks worth of park benches. That is NOT a person sleeping on the first park bench.



The "flock" of bronze and marble figures were in a Sanhattan plaza next to the oldest brewery. A ways away in a park were a real flock of maybe Monk parakeets. Parks are full of water features and run the full town length of the river.





Now I'm down in Plaza del Armas yet again. Street art like in Montmartre. I would get a tour of a few museums that I'd have trouble appreciating on my own, including the ancient Columbian art where I had lunch and also the Chilean and the Santiago cultural museums. Later I'd go into two of their huge cultural centers. They give free Wi-Fi! Probably I was more in tune with the street performers such as this mime who gathered quite the crowd every day I was there.



A walk along one of the many pedestrian streets would end my downtown visit for a couple days. Notice the portable shoe polishing stations? They are well frequented and apparently in Santiago people really look at your shoes. I must have looked like a street urchin in my many year old very comfortable and dirty ballet flats that I inherited used at that. Well, just as well because the next day I'd be off to the shore, via some wineries.

Now I remember why the chickens and portable rooster houses: they eat the bugs. While the llamas poop the dirt.



We arrived in dense fog and as we stood there for our tour, it lifted. We were encourage to pick and eat the grapes while listening to the mostly Spanish language tour. The types of grapes were marked (that's universal) and again I learned how the types are most easily identified by the shape of the leaves. See the baby? It had been born that day and was just up on those wobbly feet, and not the slightest concerned about the tourists taking close up pictures.





Another nice and modern winery set on lush and huge acreage. Another tasting. They were all young wines even to me. See that windmill looking affair? They were all over and run by propane and throw off heat across the vineyards when needed.



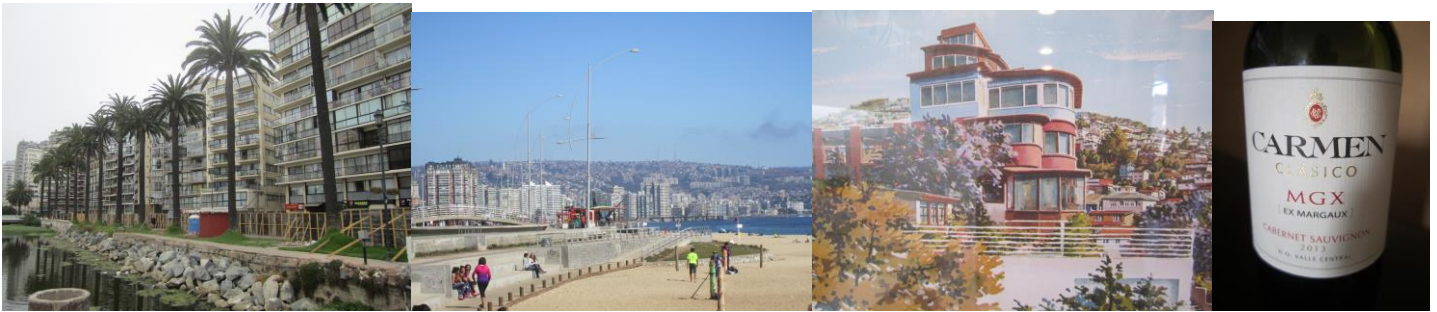
Onto Val de Mar and first stop was their floral clock where folks were more enchanted with taking selfies. (I climbed the hill.) These self-centered brats and their selfie-sticks had first made their presence known in an obnoxious way during our January Florence trip and since then I have continued to wonder about those who indulge. But the cute dog in costume getting her picture taken has been excused. I hope the momma with son was only aiming to a head shot because she won't want to see how she looks in those short shorts. But if her pictures are instantly loaded onto a social site, she will have deserved it. Or maybe she doesn't care? Narcissism is ruling the selfie-world.

I was encouraged to hear the British Royalty speaking out against selfies and then the Cannes Film Festival banned them saying they were "ridiculous and grotesque" and adding that one never looks as ugly as they do in a selfie. There is hope!



Lunch was high on a hill of Val de Mar at a castle looking place with a great view, called something like the Arab Club. While they ate and wasted far too much time, I walked the couple hours into town and along the seaside. Roses were especially appreciated as I'd left New Jersey covered with snow.





From Val de Mar one could look across the peninsula, over white sandy beaches, and see Valparaíso where we'd go next. I was pretty disgusted to have lost so much time while they ate lunch and took about an hour more than expected; thus we lost time in Valparaíso. That's a poster of the Nobel Peace Prize guy's home. It was pretty junky but it did have quite the view. In fact, I was enough revolted by the "fly over" to not take pictures and to indulge in a bottle of \$1.60 wine for the bus ride home.

So what is Valparaíso? Just like my Argentine friends and also tour guides told me, its worth at least a couple days and not just two hours. Next time!

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valparaíso>

Valparaíso, Top: View of Valparaíso Port, from Artillería Hills, 2nd left: Chilean Navy Office in Sotomayor Square, 2nd right: Tipica Houser (Casa Tipica) and Artillería Hills, 3rd left: Atkinson Street (Calle Atkinson) in Concepción Hills, 3rd middle: Valparaíso Custom House (Aduana de Valparaíso), nearby Sotomayor Square, 3rd right: Baron Cable-car in Ascensor area, Bottom upper left: Monument at the Heroes of Iquique in Sotomayor Square, Bottom lower left: Valparaíso Trolley bus in Serrano Street (Calle del Cerrano), Bottom upper middle: Saint Paul Anglican Church (Iglesia anglicana de San Pablo) in Concepción Hill (built by [William Lloyd \(engineer\)](#)), Bottom lower middle: Templeman Street (Calle Templeman) in Alegre Hills, Bottom right: Turri Clock Tower in Prat Street



It was a very long day and from time I got up to time I was home was about 15 hours. But there was more to see so I was up early to get downtown and a walking tour. It would take me close to two hours to get downtown via the park system and the river paths. Along the way is a reminder of all the buildings covered in ivy or moss or some kinds of greens.

### The walking tour back in Santiago





My other tour guide was busy and it never hurts to see the city from another guide's point of view anyway so here I am with the Free Walking Tour that starts from the square every day at 3pm. I asked what he'd be happy with in terms of donation and his \$10 to \$20 made it irresistible and in fact he was worth much more and I'm sure was happy with my later donation. And sure enough, I found new things: from the center square is the Zero Marker – all roads are measured from here. Here's my tour guide standing on the bronze map of old time Santiago.



I'd been in the three markets before, and in fact two of them it was my third time, but this guy knew many of the stall owners and managed to point out some things I hadn't seen. Importantly this little famous wooden toy – lift up the Indian and something pops out . . . . He is his own boss now in part because his past tour guide job wouldn't let him show-and-tell such things. Walking from one to another of the markets took us by many small vendors: so small that these raw chickens were simply displayed in a rolling shopping cart. Vendors were very proud of their huge vegetables and this last picture was a vendor of multiple types of hot peppers that were the size of our bell peppers.



Roving vendors too. One vendor stopped us and quizzed us as to our nationality. I was with a young German couple, a Finn, an Argentine, and all were then quizzed with facts on their own country. There were colorful folks as this happy man in green sitting on a crate.



Called the Local Pulse Tour – it went well beyond the four hours promised and ended in The Flea with another Earthquake drink and lots of laughs. But not before we climbed Santa Lucia again. This too I saw from a different view. Both good yet different angles. We walked up another direction, we heard different parts of history, and we had the questions of other foreigners.





First the government complex, then a huge new cultural center (with free Wi-Fi) followed by The Flea and drinking! Something odd about this story.



Guests at The Flea are encouraged to autograph the wall. I got a lot of attention about The Jersey Shore and then the comment "it was not Snookie!" brought over other guests with laughter.

***Sunday they close the main streets to bicycles!***

The boulevards run all along the parks way which is along the river. Hordes of folks come out, young and old, with kiosks set up for bicycle repair and vendors too. Great fun and I was sure glad to see it and be a part. I was heading to the parks to see the entertainment on Sunday mornings.



There was a music school going on! Violin lessons. Right across from the dog houses and not far from the Palais of Arts. This glorious building (near to the gelato shop!) was built in the same design of the Paris Palais of Beaux Arts.





Across the street, in the park, was a lovely but modern café set in an old castle where I indulged in a glass of wine.

**Bella Vista** - Next up – This is the neighborhood nearest to my hotel where I'd been twice but didn't spend enough time in, so I would return to Bella Vista. The home of hippies. Where virtually everyone has painted up their walls with excellent art work. Where color knows no bounds. It is here that one takes the cable car up to the top of San Cristobal. It is within their huge if not largest park and that's saying a lot.



Jeanette and I ate in a restaurant that seemed ancient, and that after going into one with a maidenhead on the outside and like being in a ship once inside.





The llama was near to the zoo entrance, just before going into Pablo Neruda's house. I'd tried to go in before but I was without pesos and their credit card machine was temporarily. You'd think that I'd have learned my lesson in Valparaíso and finding his house full of a lot of antiques-of-tomorrow i.e., junk. Fortunately this house was more historical and had a lot about his first mistress and later wife. This painting was done by Diego Garcia. The pink house was once an estate and now a series of restaurants and craft shops, surrounded by small theatres. It's also one of the few without graffiti or art work. In the same area is a huge "Patio Bellavista" where huge courtyards are opened up to restaurants, shops, with homes up above, as in nice compact neighborhoods.



It was difficult to leave Bella Vista as the joy seemed to be everywhere. My next and last day took me the opposite direction along the river to a Sculpture Garden.



I would only have until 6pm until my car to the airport and this last walking venture pretty much summed up Santiago: artsy, new with the old, crafty, green, surrounded by Andes, with loads of

Manhattan type buildings in the background. The Chileans know how to live and seem generally happy with life. They should be.

I will go again.



## ***Itinerary***

### ***Fri Mar 27***

4:30pm Depart Newark EWR via UA #1554  
7:25pm Arrive Houston IAH for plane change

10:35pm Depart Houston IAH via UA#847

### ***Sat Mar 28***

10:10am Arrive Santiago Chile SCL

Hotel San Cristobal Tower Santiago – 9 nights  
Josefina Edwards De Ferrari 0100, Santiago Chile Tele 56 2 2707 1000

*Hotel is located in a residential area called Providencia and only 15 minutes from down town and very near of the main avenue of Santiago. The nearest commercial area is this main avenue located only two blocks from our hotel with banks, restaurants and shopping areas. Most important historical building, places and museums are located in down town area. Several tour options are available like Santiago City Tour (in private or hop-on / hop-off bus), winery tours, coastal tour and mountain tour. Per [roberto.guzman@starwoodhotels.com](mailto:roberto.guzman@starwoodhotels.com). Later: As a SPG Gold member you have access to our Twenty One Bar & Lounge.*

*From [www.starwoodhotels.com/luxury/property/overview/index.html?propertyID=206&language=en\\_US](http://www.starwoodhotels.com/luxury/property/overview/index.html?propertyID=206&language=en_US) - With a truly magnificent setting by the Andes, San Cristobal Tower is a reflection of the world's finest service. Situated minutes away from the Providencia business district, we are a short distance from South America's largest shopping mall and slightly more than an hour from world-class ski centers, beaches, and vineyards. Through design, fashion, and cuisine, this Santiago luxury hotel encourages guests to enjoy their destination from a new perspective in an intimate, fascinating setting. Our unique services invite you to explore our beautifully appointed guest rooms and suites, frequently selected by notable personalities in politics, arts, and entertainment. Marvelous modern amenities, beautifully-carved mahogany chairs, elegantly-draped curtains, and gold-rimmed mirrors greet you as you open the door of one of our guest rooms. Each of our 139 guest rooms features modern architecture harmoniously combined with classic, elegant décor. Peek behind the curtains and discover a unique view of the snowy tops of the Andes Mountains during the winter. Each morning you will awake to a complimentary local newspaper, coffee, and juice. Spend a day of recreational fun and relax at our health club, or enjoy the outside beauty of our gardens and magnificent city views. In the morning, the sunrise will greet you with magnanimity at TwentyOne Lounge, which serves a breakfast buffet with an extravagant panoramic view of Santiago and the Andes Mountains from the 21st floor. At night, enjoy the intimate setting of TwentyOne Bar, a modern enclave where you may select your favorite drink or choose from an exquisite anthology of Chile's awarded wines.*

### ***Mon Apr 6***

9:55pm Depart Santiago SCL via UA#846

### ***Tue Apr 7***

5:55am Arrive Houston IAH for plane change

7:21am Depart Houston IAH via UA#1528

11:59am Arrive Newark EWR

Day trips:

<http://www.viator.com/santiago-tours/d713-ttd?pref=02&aid=g2387&qclid=CKPAm8at4sMCFYkIqQodWEoA8Q>

See also food tours in above link.

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/chile/santiago/hotels/best-places-to-stay-in-santiago>

Recommended reading:

To understand and get a feel of Santiago and its recent development it is a good idea to read some fiction books based on Chile's last three decades. Exile had and still has strong influence into writer's life and work.

Jose Donoso's works indirectly refer to the social and political events of Chile in the 70's and 80's. *The Space without Limits* and *Coronacion* are two of his best known novels that refer to Chile's rural reality: Donoso offers vivid descriptions of little dramas with marginal characters that have no interest in integration but only to be happy for a while. *La Desesperanza*, Donoso's last novel, clearly describes the social ambiance of hopelessness over Pinochet's government.

One of Chile most acclaimed and popular writers is Isabel Allende. Mrs. Allende bases most of her fiction on Santiago with character centered stories written in an engaging and daring style many referring to the events previous and after Pinochet's era. *Paula*, *Eva Luna* and *The House of the Spirits* succeed in blending a political content with Latin American based literary style known as Magic Realism.

Roberto Bolanos' novels and short stories don't directly refer to Chile's political and social development, but his fragmentary style and life story reflect the mind of a wanderer/exile spirit. *El Gaucho Insufrible*, *Putas asesinas* and *The Savage Detectives* are some of his most acclaimed works.

Pablo Neruda won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971 for his poetry and one of his houses in Santiago is now a museum dedicated to his work. Some of his work reflects his life-long political activism, such as "Spain in Our Hearts" (his account of the Spanish Civil War) while his famous poems on love transcend politics.

Re Chile economic miracle - [http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miracle\\_of\\_Chile%23/search](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miracle_of_Chile%23/search)