South America 24

Description

South America 24



[Go to Day 22 of my trip]

[Go to Day 29 of my trip]

[Go to South America 24 : Day 37]

Day 1: Valparaiso

Getting here

I arrived in Valparaiso a couple of days ago after a 35 hour trip from SIngapore. Very, very exhausting! I rented a flat through airbnb and itâ??s quite new and spacious enough for one person with beautiful views of the surroundings and Valparaiso bay.

After 14 hours flying from Singapore to San Fransisco there is (of course) a line for immigration. After 30 minutes Iâ??m waved forward to see the officer. He looks at me condecendingly â?? how do you dare enter my country and Iâ??m not going to make it easy for you â?¦ Finally, he asks me when was the last time I was there and luckily I remembered and with that he let me through. After getting my bags and re-checking them I enter the queue for security. After a while Iâ??m at a small open area and Iâ??m asked to form a couple with the next person and walk through the area. My other person was an Asian woman and she possibly didnâ??t get what the officer was saying and, apparently, our march was not good enough and were sent back to the queue to do the march again! Bizarre! The 2nd time was good enough and I was let through to the security scanning. Oh well, quite an amusing experience, I had plenty of time so it didnâ??t bother meâ?¦

default watermark

The flight from San Fran to Houston was delayed because this was the first day the 737/9 Max was allowed to fly after being grounded after the Air Alaska door blow out incident and there was not enough people to get the planes from the storage area to the gates. Luckily, we had a good tail wind and landed in Houston in time for my flight to Santiago, but only half an hour before the plane was supposed to take off.

Valparaiso â?? the city

Valparaiso is located on a large bay of the Pacific ocean and is very hilly. My flat is 700 m from the flat area closest to the water and at 90m elevation! Hard work to walk from the stores to the flat. Itâ??s a pretty disorganized place with houses placed nilli-willi, here and there.




DONDE LA TÍA


TMS
CLUB

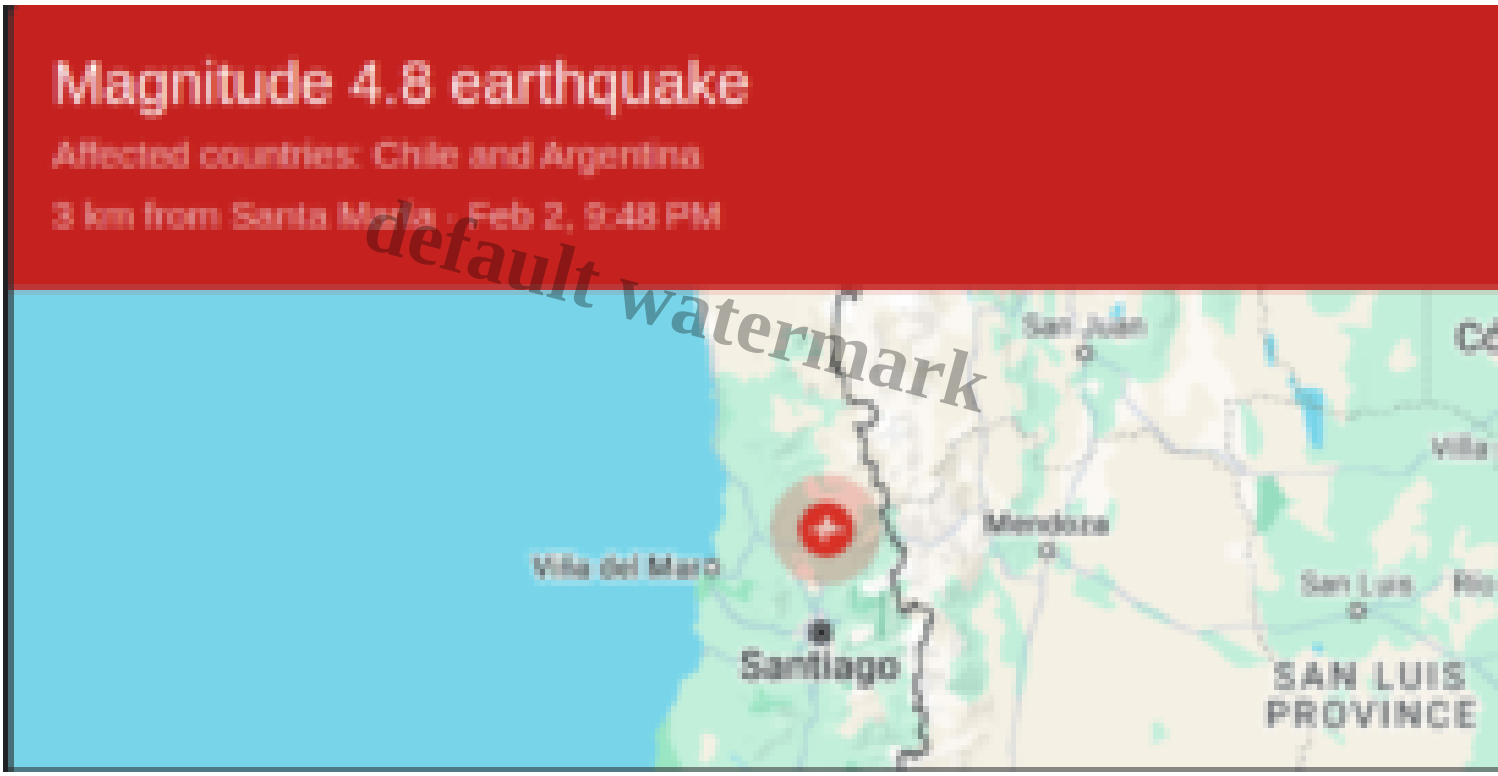

default watermark



The town is known as a bohemian and arty place and there is a lot of nice street art everywhere. The variety of styles used is just one of the reasons Valparaiso has become famous for its **street art**, with artists creating original pieces and styles, but also utilizing common techniques such as wild-style, graffiti, character, piece, mural, and stencil.

After the long flights and the jetlag I was not surprised that I caught a cold which quickly got worse, but with antibiotics and prednisolone it seems Iâ??ve been able to stop it from being a long term illness and Iâ??m on my way to recovery. Phew!

Yesterday afternoon the electricity and both the flat WiFi and 4G signals went off for several hours which meant I could not communicate or get any updates on what was going on. On top of that the water in the flat stopped, quite an interesting situation. Around 10pm there was an earth quake about 100km from here. The building was shaking so much that doors rattled in their frames and the movement was very noticeable. It was an interesting situation but not really scary and today I canâ??t see any destruction in nearby ram-shackle buildings.



In the picture on the left Iâ??m close to Vina del Mar.

The motorcycle is still not here and I will have to wait for another week before I can set off on my travels. Itâ??s been delayed several times and is now 3 weeks past the original date I was given. My agent here says this is very unusual, typically ships could be 3-4 days late but rarely 3 weeks! Oh well â?? my luck! In the mean time Iâ??ve been thinking of what name to give my Honda Africa Twin, when I look at videos of motorcycle adventurers they always have a name for their steed, â??Bumble-beeâ?•, â??Alaskaâ?•, â??Roninâ?• and even â??Gretaâ?•. After a lot of discussions and committee meetings the name is going to be â??Sleipnerâ?•! Sleipner is the 8 legged horse that â??Odenâ?•, the most important of the nordic gods was riding, according to Snorre Sturlassons stories.

I didnâ??t realize how serious the wildfires are. Itâ??s been declared a state emergency and thousands of acres have been burnt and at least 10 people killed. Vina del Mar, the adjacent town has issued several evacuation orders for various parts of the town and the nearest one is only 10 kms away from me. Itâ??s getting closer to home and I might even be evacuated, although my landlady says I donâ??t need to worry.

default watermark



Wildfire smoke

Friday was a terrible day with very strong winds driving the fire towards Vina del Mar and thousands of homes were destroyed. So far, 64 people are dead but there are 100s of people missing and feared dead as well. Today, Sunday, there has been little wind and the sky looks slightly clearer. However, live TV reports show the fire still consuming and moving towards the center of Vina del Mar. Friday and yesterday I received many emergency messages on the phone of evacuations in some districts in Vina

del Mar but today Iâ??ve gotten none so maybe things are improving. There are some reports saying that the fires were started deliberatly but I donâ??t think this has been proved.

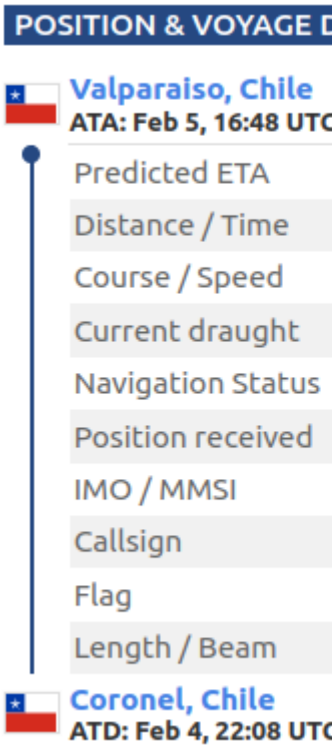
My agent, who will help me get the bike out of customs when it arrives, told me his mother in lawâ??s house was burned to the ground and she escaped with nothing but the clothes she was wearing. Terrible. The agent keeps wooden transport cases for motorcyclists who have shipped their bikes here and the boxes were all destroyed by fire. His house is safe though, but I saw on the news that his area has a curfew at night. The fires are considered the worst catastropy in the country since the earth quake of 2010. Today, Monday, there is a strong smell of smoke in the air so I guess the wind must have turned towards the town of Valparaiso. (Valparaiso is also the region in which the wild fires rage and where the town of Vina del Mar is located.)

I donâ??t see any more news with fires and I believe most fires were put out by Sunday. The latest figures are 112 dead but more than three hundred missing. Pictures of areas in Vina del Mar look acopalyctic with nothing left but concrete walls and steel beams, I saw one figure that 40000 homes have been destroyed or partially destroyed making them uninhabitable. What a terrible catastrophe!

default watermark

The boat with the container with my bike arrived at the docks at 5pm yesterday afternoon. The containers need to be unloaded and taken to a depot before their contents can be released and Iâ??m not sure how long that process willtake.







As the picture shows itâ??s a huge ship which can take 20,000 containers and it must be a logistical problem to find a particular container? But Iâ??m sure there are good systems that make the job easier. So fingers crossed that I will get the bike before the weekend!

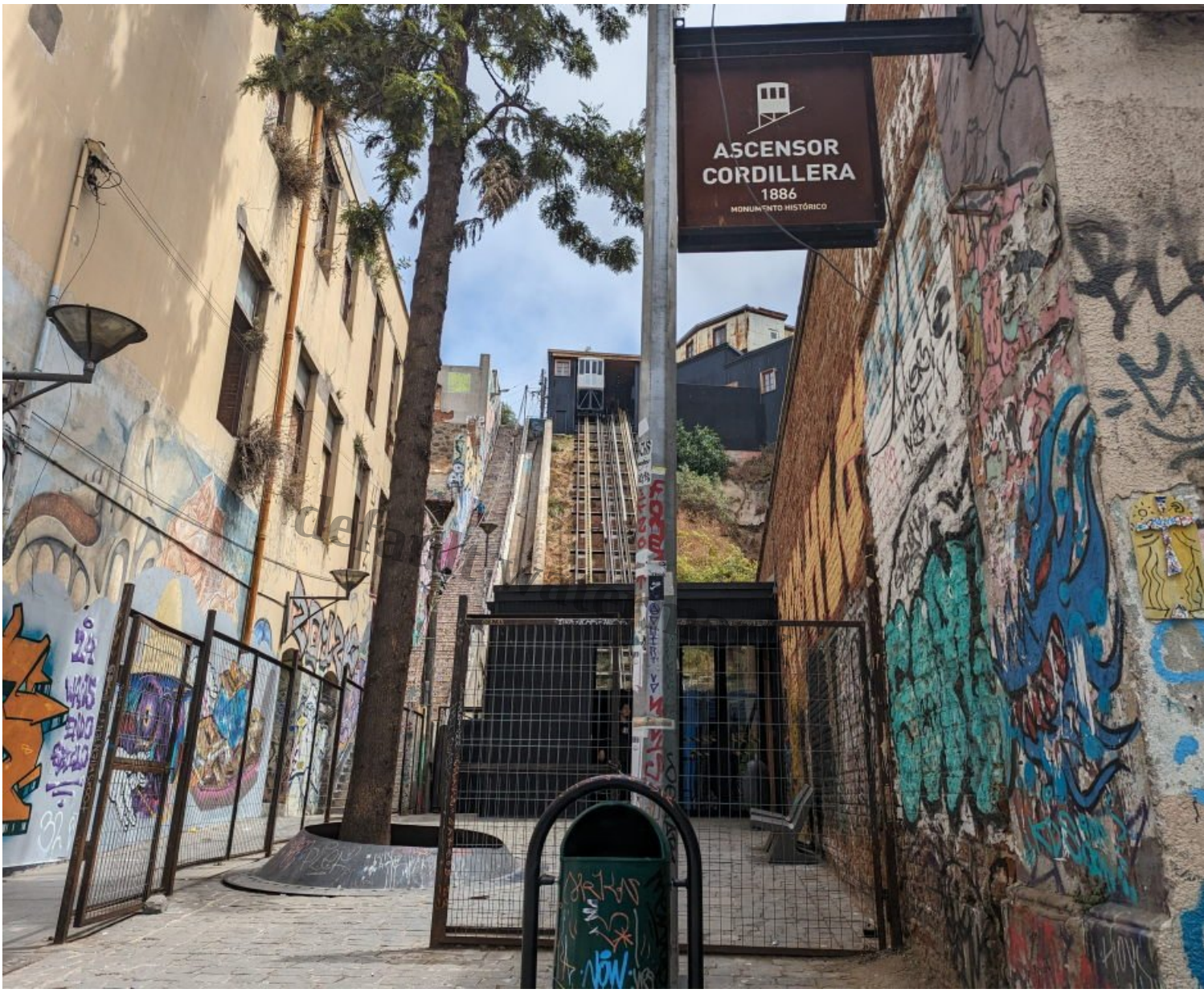
Iâ??ve not had enough energy to update the blog for a few days â?? my chest infection is worse than I first thought. The motorcycle is ready for collection but I donâ??t feel strong enough to even ride it from the port to my airbnb apartment. Oh dear!



Half of the flats of the apartment block Iâ??m staying in are airbnb units. Itâ??s easy to spot by the key-boxes outside the doors. When you arrive youâ??re given the code to open the box and get access to the keys and gain entrance to the flat. Airbnb has certainly come a long way from itâ??s beginnings of an air-mattress on the floor for rent! Now people are investing in apartments for rental via airbnb. Iâ??m not sure if the founders of the company saw this development from the start. The founders are billionaires by now â?? so it must haev been a good idea they came up with! So airbnb is good when it works and everyone involved in a transaction are honest. Iâ??ve heard stories where a flat is booked and paid for but it turns out there is no flat! I wonder how much homework airbnb does to ensure a property is legitimate before it is advertised and booked.

default watermark

Valparaiso grew rapidly in the 1800s because it was the first major stopover for ships sailing around South America.. It was an important city with the continents first stock exchange and spanish language newspaper. Immigrants from Europe came in droves to enjoy the stable and mild climate and favourable economic conditions. The 1900s did not turn out well for Valparaiso because with the opening of the Panama Canal there were not many ships stopping by the port and whence the cityâ??s port based economy shrunk. The cityâ??s fortunes have changed somewhat in the last few years with it becoming a tourist atraction with thousands of visitors every year.



Valparaiso is located by a bay of the Pacific ocean and in very hilly terrain. The plain by the shore is a few hundred meters in width and then the steep landscape takes over. To ease traversing the city many â??ascensoresâ?• (elevators) were installed in the late 1800s and early 1900s and, today, sixteen of them are still in existence and are now declared historical monuments. Of the sixteen, seven are currently in operation including the â??Ascensor Cordilleraâ?• .

Day 16: Cartagena

My Airbnb was running out and I didnâ??t feel like extending so I found a small town on the coast, Cartagena. I had picked up the bike the day before, got it through customs and paid exorbitant amounts of money and rode it back to the flat through the twisty and undulating roads of valparaiso. Quite the experience!

First day of packing took a lot of time and I realize I brought too much stuff. Finally getting everything on the bike and cleaning the flat Iâ??m on my way! Great feeling.!

The roads leading to Cartagena are in beautiful condition with flawless asphalt and road markings. Some parts are flowing twisty turns, a pure joy on the bike not having ridden for many months.

After an hour and a bit I reach the town and find my accommodation. Not the Ritz, but itâ??ll do.



The beach is bustling with people as is the beach promenade. Must be holiday times in Chile.




default watermark



The climate is Mediterranean or better so no wonder people are flocking to the beach!

Iâ??m getting worried that my health isnâ??t improving much so I ask the server at the restaurant if there is a clinic nearby and she shows me how to get to the local one. After registering and waiting itâ??s my turn and I show the positive covid test from a week ago. The nurse quickly does a new test and it comes back negative! Phew, what a relief! The doctor listens to my chest and declares my lungs

limpio (clear). He says I have pharyngitis and prescribes some medication. The nurse gives me a shot in the bum and Iâ??m free to go. I ask where I should pay but am told no cost! Amazing. Same for the medicine.

Cartagena is a beach town thatâ??s seen better days. Many of the buildings along the strand promenade are delapidated with broken windows and doors and others are in sore need of a lick of paint.



Before lunch the place is completely dead, no people, no cars but most days drenched in fog. There are no restaurants open until 10am so impossible to find somewhere for breakfast. A lady told me that people donâ??t eat breakfastâ?¦ Not sure what to make of that.

Day 20: Talca

After recovering for 4 days in Cartagena I felt strong enough and ready to hop on the bike and go towards the south. I started easy, doing 300km and ended up in a place called Talca which is located in the central valley. The temperature here is 10 degrees warmer than along the coast, the summers are very dry, but there is good irrigation in the spring and with fertile soil the region is home to Chilean wine growing.

The route getting here took me through some villages and on several locations, at traffic stops, there were firemen collecting money from passing cars. Weird. Are the fire fighting squads underfunded so they have to beg for money?

I then got onto ruta 5, the Panamerican highway, that runs north-south through the country with a lot of traffic. I stopped at a petrol station and talked to another biker and she said that in the summer the vacation periods change on the 15th of the month with one lot going back to work and another one starting their two week vacation. So I just happened to hit the road at the changeover.

default watermark

Talca, founded in the 17th century, looks like a prosperous town. As I walk around the town I canâ??t but wonder why there are so many pharmacies? It was the same in Cartagena, are Chilean people not so healthy, or whatâ??s going on?


default watermark



Pharmacies and churches



Smiling lady served me coffee.

Go to day 22 of my trip.

South America 24: Day 29

Category

1. Argentina

2. Chile
3. Honda Africa Twin
4. Motorcycle travel
5. South America

Date Created
18/01/2024
Author
admin

default watermark