

Going north in Chile

Description

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Follow my trip further north in Chile

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After a week at Hostal Casa Matte I was getting over the jetlag and was starting to get some half decent sleep. Man, jetlag is really terrible and it gets worse as you get older, at least for me. Without proper sleep for many days both my body and mind are affected. Oh well, hopefully, Iâ??m on the mend.

The hostal caters for bike travelers and when I left there were people from many parts of the world, ok, perhaps, mainly Europeans and Americans. Itâ??s a great place to stay with many interesting conversations all through the day, and often as people work on their bikes. So it was a bit sad to leave. ð??

I decided to go north because last year I went south and I saw and experienced most of that part of Chile and Argentina.

Getting out of santiago is a challenge trying to avoid the automatic toll roads and, of course, I failed again. So, more fines ð??©. Iâ??m taking Ruta 5, the highway that goes from the north of Chile to the south, itâ??s also called the pan american high way. It was rather hot at more than 35c before getting to the coast where the temperature dropped to 25c. But also quite strong winds.

The bike is running really well, and Iâ??m very happy with it. It was a reluctant buy since I really wanted another brand, however, it was not available so I had to settle for the Royal Enfield Himalayan 450.

Los Vilos

I stopped for the day at a place called Los Vilos after 250 kms. I found a hotel with the fancy name of Lord Willow. Sounds very posh but itâ??s rather basic, but the shower is hot and the bed clean and comfortable.

As I go along the roads of the town and sitting looking out of the restaurant window I notice the love affair of chileans and trucks and suvâ??s. Itâ??s almost as if I was in Texas again! Whatâ??s the point of driving around in a 2 or 3 ton truck? I canâ??t figure it out, obviously marketing of these behemoths have been very effective.

Los Vilos is a typical small seaside town and itâ??s really nice to be away from big city santiago!




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By the beach at Los Vilos.

After a good nightâ??s sleep I have a lazy morning and decide to stay for another day. Walking along the beach I hear the thunder of the waves, the smell of the ocean and seaweed and I feel really happy and relaxed. ð??•I realize the trip has been quite stressful so far and itâ??s so nice to feel relaxed and calm again.



Exercise in the sand



Beginners surfing class

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Kilometer long beach

In Santiago it got very hot in the afternoon, 35c, but at night a lot cooler at 16c. So it was hot going to bed, of course no ac, but in the morning quite nice temperature. Here in Los Vilos the temperature at night comes down to 12c and I need blankets not to freeze! There are no heaters in the rooms so I assume the winter temperature doesnâ??t get a lot cooler.

In the end I stayed three nights at the place. I really enjoyed my time there. Apart from the last night when loud music was played until 5am! Earplugs did help a bit but the bass tones come through anyway so I didnâ??t get much sleep that night.

The next goal is La Serena, a much larger town 250 km north. The temperature was around 20c but with strong wind it felt much colder and I had to stop to put more clothes on. After stopping at a service area the sun burned through the clouds and it became a lot warmer.

I turned off Ruta 5 to visit Parques nacional bosque Fray Jorge, a detour of 30km each way. This park has unusual vegetation for the area because of a unique microclimate formed by a peculiar geometry of cliffs rising from the pacific ocean giving lush greenery.

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The man himself with the cloud covered green hills in the background



Unusual large trees for the dry surrounding area

La Serena

I arrived afternoon time at La Serena and set about finding a hotel. This time booking.com found me a nice hotel and showed an even lower price than what the receptionist asked for. Itâ??s located close to the center of town.

I walked around the very busy town today. The streets are narrow and thereâ??s cars queuing everywhere, itâ??s almost like a grid lock. Streets are layed out in rectangular fashion so itâ??s easy to navigate around the streets. There are nice looking old buildings along the streets everywhere and several really large squares. Itâ??s quite a beautiful town!






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After two nights in La Serena, I felt it was time to continue my trek north so after breakfast and packing I set off around 9am for a 400 km ride north to a town called Caldera. Some days I wonder why I set off on this trip and today was one of those days. The surroundings of the entire ride was like moon landscape.



I only passed by one town on the 400km stretch and that was also the only place with a petrol station. I went passed it without stopping and realized I could run out of petrol so I had to turn back and fill up.

Caldera

I reached Caldera mid afternoon and set about finding a place to stay. Caldera is a busy place and it took me a while to find a free hotel room.



Hotel Monte Carlo

Another posh name hotelâ?¦ There was only one room available and it was facing the street, I didnâ??t think much about the room location, but I should have!

After dinner with watching European football (all of south America is football crazy) I went for a walk in the beautiful golden hour light.

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UEFA
HAMPIO
LEAGUE
MAÑANA FINALIZA LA SÉPTIMA FECHA DE LA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
EL MAESTRO
mesa N° 22




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Later after going to bed I realized the street outside was not going to be quiet with loud cars and music! Earplugs helped so I did get some half decent sleep but next morning I pleaded with the hotel receptionist for another room away from the street and after more pleading I got another room at the other end of the hotel.

Thereâ??s a Paleontological park south of the town called Los Dedos and I rode there and took part in a guided tour. Kind of interesting showing fossils of various fish and animals.





The name Los dedos which means â??the fingersâ?• comes from 5 elongated sand ridges.

The climate in this desert town is not hot as you might expect, but pleasantly cool with a typical max of 23c, a minimum of 16c, and not much variation during the year. The cool waters of the pacific keep the temperature stable year around.



There is always street art in Chilean towns.



I enjoyed Caldera and stayed there for three nights before setting off for another beach town, Taltal, 250 km further north. Ruta 5 stayed close to the coast for half the distance before going more inland traversing the desert. Actually, there are signs along the road stating the apt name Ruta Desierto, The road is beautiful and with more elevation changes than the previous dayâ??s stretch is quite enjoyable to ride. I arrive at Taltal around 1 pm and found a hotel throough the Ioverlander app immediately, the hotel has locked secure parking which is important when traveling with a motorcycle and I have a large room with A/C!

Taltal



One of my readers, Mike, suggests that I go and visit an Astronomical Observatory not far from Taltal, the Paranal observatory, which is one of the best sites in the world to study the sky. It is set at an altitude of more than 2600 m, with the clear skies of the desert and none existent light pollution itâ??s set in a perfect place. Furthermore it was a setting for the James Bond movie â??A quantum of Solaceâ?•!

The observatory has two tours every saturday so would have been perfect for me, unfortunately, the first available slot was in two weeks time.

Taltal has a beautiful setting in between the ocean and high hills:



Fishing boats, the ocean and high hills. A serene setting.



Quite a tame seagull was happy to be part of the picture.

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Category

1. Uncategorized

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