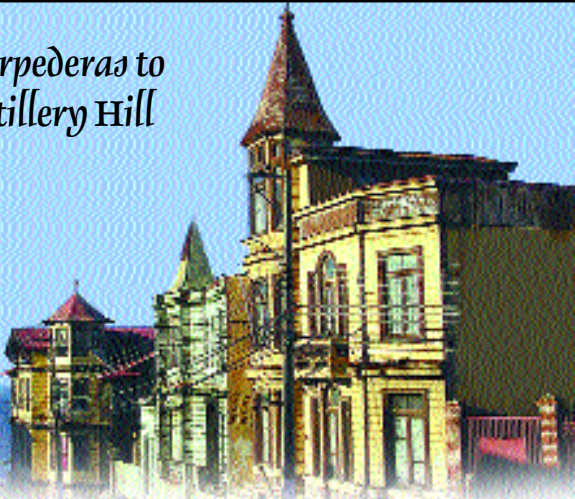


Torpederas to Artillery Hill



Summary: This attractive walk winds through historic Playa Ancha, home to several important universities, the Chilean navy, and some of the city's most interesting architecture from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Estimated Walking Time: 90 minutes

Degree of Difficulty: Easy. There is a single uphill incline at the beginning of the route, climbing about two blocks from sea level at Torpederas Beach to the campus of Playa Ancha University. The rest of the walk is flat and relaxing.

Tourist Infrastructure: At the end of the section, in the general area of the 21st of May Promenade, you'll find a bustle of tourist vendors, street musicians, organ grinders, and artists selling water colors and craftwork. There are several cafes and restaurants, as well as public bathrooms. At the beginning, specifically around the two universities, you may find several soda fountains catering mostly to college kids. They lack amenities for modern tourists, but young backpackers may enjoy stopping in for a visit. If necessary, you may be able to use the bathrooms at the University of Valparaíso or at the Playa Ancha University.

Torpederas Beach

Our route begins at Torpederas Beach, on the Western extreme of Valparaíso, situated at the end of Altamirano Avenue. The road is named after Valparaíso's regional governor in 1884. You can get here from the center of Valparaíso by taking any bus along Errazurriz Avenue (the closest street to the ocean) which says Torpederas or Cementerio Playa Ancha.

This area was Valparaíso's principal beach resort, fancied particularly by English elites, until the 1930's. Over the years, Torpederas degenerated with wealthier



patrons abandoning the area for Viña del Mar, Reñaca, and Con Con. In the old days there was a spectacular cast iron trestle pier that resembled those of elite European resorts, but all of that is gone now.

The word *torpederas* means “torpedo launcher.” The name evokes the presence of 6 old navy vessels—the *Guale*, the *Quidora*, the *Janequeo*, the *Fresia*, the *Rucumilla*, and the *Sargent Aldea*—all of which fought in the War of the Pacific, only to rest in berths along this side of the bay.

The area was originally a fishing wharf. Later the fashionable folks arrived in the early 1900’s, attracted by the spectacle of cliff divers practicing their craft while wealthy patrons sipped tea to a piano player sounding waltzes such as “The sleeping beauty of Antofogasta” and “The Terrace.”

Playa Ancha Avenue

As you begin the hike up Playa Ancha Avenue, the first complex of buildings introduces you to the central theme of this area: the college town. Playa Ancha University and the University of Valparaíso are the principal protagonists. The Alejo Barrios Park, in front of Valparaíso Municipal Stadium (home to the mythical Wanderers soccer team), is used for numerous parades and celebrations, including the bacchanal associated with Chile’s 3—day independence celebration in September.

Here you’ll find a beautiful building designed by the French architect A. Dublé in 1918 on the corner of General Holley Street. The house is painted violet with attractive bargeboard, balconies, and balustrades. Another house across the street signals the same intentions and begins to suggest the architectural prototypes that we will later find in the heart of Playa Ancha.

The Vacation Houses of Playa Ancha

In other times, this sector of Playa Ancha was a place of celebration and relaxation. Vestiges of the past

remain today. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the area featured horse racing, cricket fields, and amateur soccer fields where people could celebrate the victories of their beloved “Wanderers.”

Several traditional vacation houses remain, including one entitled “New Mermaid” on Playa Ancha Street and General Holley. It is worthwhile dropping in if only to admire the old oak tables and shelves from 1918,



displaying an impressive array of antique candy flasks and old wine bottles. The specialty of the house is the pork loin sandwich and the chorrillana, a feast of chopped beef, eggs, fried onions, and potatoes that forms the typical repast for college students and the nighttime bohemia of Valparaíso. The New Mermaid also features an attractive old Wurlitzer. The place tends to be packed during soccer games.

Harrington Passage

At the entrance to historic Gran Bretaña Street, you’ll find the Harrington Passageway, featuring a series of English—style constructions that help define the neighborhood. The passage is named after the architect Esteban Orlando Harrington, born in Valparaíso in 1873. He was the son of an American, William Harrington and his Chilean wife Protasia Arellando. Harrington was the architect of several notable buildings in Valparaíso, including the old Hotel Royal, the Palace, the Luis Cousiño Building, and others. Most of these homes were built in the first years after the 1906 earthquake, specifically between 1908-10.

Harrington’s trademark is handsome woodwork and ornate use of bargeboard which inspires the spectacular houses upcoming on Gran Bretaña Street. Tragically, Esteban Harrington was run over by a trolley in Valparaíso in 1936, at the age of 63. Almost 100 years later, these houses continue to surprise us with their elegance and charm. The last home on the left belonged to the architect himself, and may be the most attractive of the lot. It features a marble stairway, a full American style basement (unusual in Valparaíso), and delicate woodwork. The houses also have small gardens where you can glimpse lemon trees, laurel, jasmine, and Chilean papaya.

The Houses of Gran Bretaña Street

Gran Bretaña Street is one of the most famous in all of Valparaiso. We first glimpse the Maipo Regiment, belonging to the Chilean Navy. In the same area you will find the Naval Geography Institute, where most of the country's maps are made. Next, on Amunátegui Street, you'll find one of the most interesting houses in the area. Painted cinnamon and ochre, this three-story house features more of the decorative bargeboard so characteristic of the finer houses in the area.



House number 761 was constructed by the architect Carlos Federico Claussen in 1904 by the petition of Don Einar Resenqvist, the consul of Norway during this period in Valparaiso. Since Einar had 5 children and 3 servants, he built a place big enough to house guests of the embassy. The house has 4 floors and 15-foot-high ceilings. Other notable works by Carlos Claussen in Valparaiso include the Banco de Chile in the Almendral and the Valparaiso Stock Exchange.

In front of the Resenqvist house, you'll find a series of neo-gothic homes that reflect the best of Playa Ancha. Almost all were edified after the 1906 earthquake with Douglass Fir that came down in ships from the US west coast. Number 766 originally belonged to the Peruvian Santiago Sologuren and was built by Esteban Harrington himself.

The houses alongside were decorated with a Chilean wood called "lingue." These row houses have come to symbolize the architecture of Playa Ancha with their characteristic towers known locally as "witch's hats." One of these homes, with delicate tones of gray and cerulean blue, originally belonged to Alfred Harrison, a British sailor. Today the house belongs to a Dutch couple who has faithfully restored the home to its original style.

Errazuriz Street

This street has some very singular wooden homes, easily distinguished by their guillotine windows. Earthquakes have shifted the street, causing the homes to settle and adapt.

Waddington Plaza

Crossing Errazuriz Street you'll find some imposing, but deteriorated homes. Then you arrive at Waddington Plaza. Joshua Waddington, born in York, was one of the wealthiest patrons of Valparaiso before his passing in 1873. He made a fortune in mining and shipping, possessing large swaths of land not only in Playa Ancha but also Concepción Hill and the area now known as Avenida Argentina. Many of the family's holdings were later donated to the city and converted into parks and plazas. This plaza was once home to a handsome theater, the Iris.

The route continues along a curve in Gran Bretaña, highlighted by a spectacular walnut tree, from which we can appreciate an interesting angle of the bay. This is one of the better places to glimpse the spectacular and unusual topography of Valparaiso. Many of the cobblestones in this area were brought from Norway in the 19th century in the same boats that brought Douglass Fir and the zinc coverings for the typical houses of Valparaiso. When referring to this area, a porteño living in Paris once wrote: "I love that Valparaiso, which I have walked a thousand times and which every time a different city emerges. At times it seems a cubist vision, a collage of hills, houses, and sea. This is our city, contradictory, variable, strange, and elusive, but always beautiful."

In front of this curve, we find a stairway named Capitan Whiteside. Who was Capitan Whiteside? We don't know. We only know that Valparaiso has some stairways that seem to go round and round without taking you anywhere in particular.

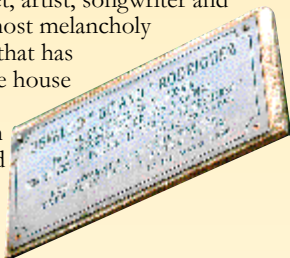


The Home of the First Mayor

At the foot of this mysterious stair we find an Automobile Museum. At the house numbered 313 we find a gorgeous house with a stair—step garden. It possesses an ancient palm, a gallant entryway, a rich façade, and interesting balconies. The house was built in 1907 by the French architect Arturo Sthandier for the González Canales family. Originally Luis Alberto Gonzalez worked for Tello and Gonzalez, an importer of European clothes and other French goods. In 1909, Mr. Gonzalez officially moves into the house with his family, about the time he was designated the first mayor of Valparaiso.

The House of “Gypsy” Rodríguez

On Mutilla 309, you’ll find the childhood home of Osvaldo Rodríguez Musso, poet, artist, songwriter and author of one of Valparaíso’s most melancholy anthems, “Valparaíso,” a waltz that has come to symbolize the city. The house was frequently visited by artists and intellectuals, amongst them the great Violeta Parra. Located on the corner of Gran Bretaña and Taquedero Street, the house leads to a stairway that opens into the gorgeous 21st of May Promenade, Valparaíso’s most famous public park. This is a back entrance into the park and an alternative for those who want to shortcut to the end of section 1.



In 1996, when “The Gypsy’s” ashes were repatriated from Italy, a federation of college students left an honorary plaque that reads:

Whoever enters your poems will find you from head
to toe
With your voice and your words and your native soil
unearthed.

The lines are from the famed Argentinean novelist Julio Cortázar.

Past Taquedero Street

The stroll along Gran Bretaña Street continues past the intersection with Taquedero Street, the ravine that separates Playa Ancha from Artillery Hill. The name Taquedero refers to weapons tests that used to be conducted from the Navy’s War Academy on the hill. At Gran Bretaña 255, we find another mansion worthy of noting. The home was constructed in 1908 by the surgeon Rafael Viancos Polanco. The house was designed by the doctor’s son—in-law, the French architect René Raveau. Tragically, his father—in-law died a few years later and the family was forced to sell in 1913.

René Raveau was another significant architect in Valparaíso. He built the the Union Building in Victory Square, a real gem, and the tower of the Sacred Hearts School, among others. Gran Bretaña Street ends at Artillery Street, which leads us to the spectacular 21st of May Promenade.

The houses along Artillery Street are a good example of the use of the undulating zinc facades that protect the

woodwork and brick masonry of Valparaíso. In the old days, these facades had a characteristic patina that rusted with age. Others have been painted bright colors that fade over the years.

The 21st of May Promenade

This is the most visited of Valparaíso's famous "paseos" or hilltop promenades. You'll find a bustle of tourist vendors, street musicians, organ grinders, and artists selling water colors and craftwork. The Victorian style vantage point offers one of the best views of Valparaíso, and the 300-meter-esplanade, accompanied by jacaranda trees and lovely gardens, offers a spectacular view of the bustling commercial port, including cruise ships and the full spectrum of the horseshoe shaped bay all the way to Viña del Mar. In the old days, this was the pick up point for a trolley bus that took passengers around Playa Ancha. This is also a vantage point for two of Valparaíso's 15 funicular elevators. From the far side of the esplanade, you can make out the Villaseca elevator, built in 1907, with its elevated rail structure rising over Antonio Varas Street. If you look carefully, you can see the elderly flagman waving cars through and around the blind curves. To the right of the esplanade, the Artillery Hill Funicular takes you down to Wheelwright Square and the Port of Valparaíso. Behind this splendid setting rises the old Naval School, today converted into a fine Naval Museum. The museum houses important relics of Chile's military and maritime heritage, including sections of the original Esmeralada rescued from the Battle of Iquique (The historic battle in the War of the Pacific to which this beautiful park owes its name.).

Just down the hill from the funicular, you'll find one of Valparaíso's most lovely Victorian homes. This was the home of the writer Victor Domingo Silva, winner of Chile's national literature prize in 1954. He shared the home for a brief time with another noted writer, the poet Carlos Pezoa Véliz, who died tragically soon after the earthquake of 1906. Take a break and buy yourself a drink. You just finished stage 1, only 14 to go!

