

Hontaneda to Polanco Elevator

Summary: This walk zigzags through the old Alemendral. On weekends there is an excellent antique fair in the Plaza O'Higgins. The Guillermo Valdivia mural on Independencia Avenue is a must.

Estimated Walking Time: Approximately 90 minutes.

How to Get Here: Take a trolley to the corner of Colon Street with Juana Ross.

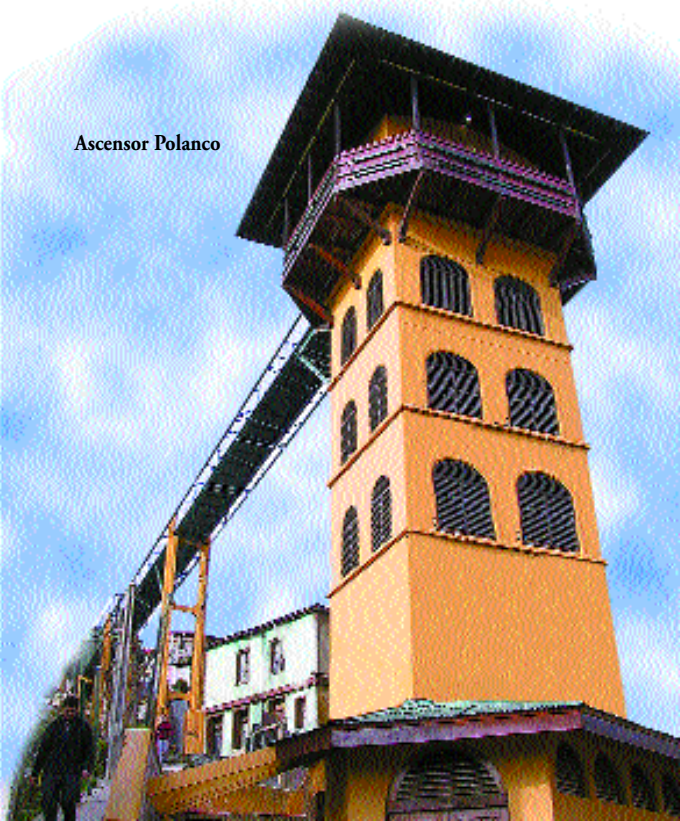
Degree of Difficulty: Not difficult.

Tourist Infrastructure: There are some decent restaurants and a nice hotel around the Plaza O'Higgins. The most famous is the O'Higgins, a meat lovers delight oozing with atmosphere.

Juana Ross Street

Named after Valparaiso's leading 19th century matriarch, this section begins in the "Old Almond Grove" section of Valparaiso with a series of stately, but dilapidated buildings. The last two blocks of this street

Ascensor Polanco





have been elegantly restored to compliment its imposing neighbor, the Chilean Congress Building. At number 236 you'll find the

studio of the sculptor Francisco Javier Torres, who specializes in classic marble figures. Number 124 is an excellent example of a recent restoration of some of the decadent arte nouveau architecture in Valparaíso. When we reach Independencia Street, we recommend you detour to see one of Valparaíso's great hidden treasures, Guillermo Valdivia's colossal mural, "Spring of Yesteryear," located at the Meneses and Diaz car dealership, Independencia 2720. This striking mural is one of several that Guillermo Valdivia has painted in Valparaíso, we also recommend his works at the Lider Supermarket on Bellavista Street, at the O'Higgins Restaurant, or at the Portofino Restaurant in Esperanza Hill. "Spring of Yesteryear," nonetheless, is the artist's masterpiece.

National Congress/ O'Higgins Square

Edified by the government of Augusto Pinochet in an attempt to decentralize the country, the abundant and unusual National Congress Building is—depending on your taste and political inclination—either an embarrassing white elephant or an important gesture of regionalization. Controversy began when doubts of ethical transparency plagued the architectural bidding contest from the beginning. Later, many complained that the building broke too dramatically from the traditional architecture of the city without offering anything in return. Regardless of your opinion, the building is an important cultural attraction, with a fine library, reading room, galleries, and convention space. Tours are available upon request. Senators often hang out the O'Higgins Restaurant around



the corner.

Antique Market “La Merced”



On weekends in the O’Higgins Square, you’ll find an excellent antique market. The traditional O’Higgins Restaurant, specializing in huge portions of home cooked meals, makes an excellent compliment. The O’Higgins actually has two dining options. The older

restaurant is steeper in charm, with old fashioned private booths where you can dine behind darkly stained wooden doors. There is also a newer restaurant with less traditional charm but with a wider selection on the menu. There is also a clean and well attended hotel around the corner, owned by the same family.

Argentina Avenue, the Farmer’s Market

Still an important strategic artery, Argentina Avenue has experienced significant urban decay in recent years. At the intersection with Juan Ross Street, you’ll find the Church of the 12 Apostles, oft described in the chronicles of Joaquin Edwards Bello. The church is an oasis of calm on days when the farmers market is in full bloom on Argentina Avenue.

Organized on Wednesdays and Saturdays, Valparaiso’s farmers market is the oldest in Chile, dating to 1840, when farmers would come in on wagon wheels from the nearby Santos Ossa Canyon selling provisions. Today the market is the center of an intense controversy. Many complain the market clogs up Argentina Avenue with garbage, making the place less attractive for tourists. Others note how the ubiquitous fruit trucks make

frustrating obstacles on such an important artery. But many love this market, claiming it gives the neighborhood tradition and authenticity. In coming years, several urban development



initiatives should help spruce up this once important sector, hopefully reconciling such opposing views.

Santa Elena Street (optional)

Apparently appearing out of nowhere, Santa Elena Street offers some of Valparaiso's most surprising and elegant architecture. The best houses begin about 5 blocks to the interior of Argentina Avenue and then continue through this natural valley. This street is quite peaceful and marks a dramatic escape from the chaotic bustle of Argentina Avenue. Most of these elegant homes were built to house the managers and key staff of the Costa Chocolate factory during the 1930's.

Costa Chocolate Factory (optional)

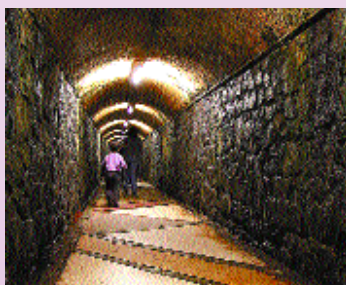


An excellent example of Valparaiso's industrial heritage, the superb Costa Chocolate Factory was built in the 1930's and is the principal reason explaining the seemingly out of place elegance of the homes and buildings on nearby Santa Elena Avenue. Originally belonging to the

prominent Italian immigrants, the Federico Costa family in Rapallo, Italy, the company now belongs to the Bofill Group, a prominent regional family who curiously own several other industries that began within the Italian community of Valparaiso, including Carozzi (pastas) and Ambrosoli (candy).

Polanco Elevator

Together with the Church of the Matriz and the Baburriza Palace, this unusual curiosity constitutes one of Valparaiso's most important architectural landmarks. The only non—funicular elevator in Valparaiso, the Polanco Elevator is one of only three urban elevators in the world that share similar characteristics. The elevator is accessed through a three—hundred meter underground tunnel at the end of Simpson



Interior túnel ascensor Polanco

Street. If you see only one thing in Valparaiso, you must see this! In the evening, the illuminated tower is the Valparaiso equivalent of the Torre de Pisa.

The elevator was built in 1915 by the prominent engineer Federico Page, who also built the Espiritu Santo and Queen Victoria Funiculars. This elevator is named after another Italian, Santiago Polanco.

Simpson Stairway

This is the other great way to see the Polanco Elevator. Most folks ride the elevator to the top and then walk down this outstanding stairway, admiring the silhouette of the tower on the way down. Polanco Hill was the home to many of the Ligurians (Italians from the province of Liguria around the port of Genoa) in Valparaiso. Their patriarch was Colombo Solari, who lived in the fabulous mansion that reveals itself near the bottom of the Simpson Stairway.

From Simpson Street to Valderrama

The area around the Polanco Elevator was Valparaiso's principal Italian neighborhood. Although the area is in great disrepair, there are many streets and passage ways that are worth a look. One such passage way is Roberto Chapi, named after a famed musician from Madrid.



Casona Solari