



Italian Gardens to Plaza Lord Cochrane

Summary: This section is short. Take time to see the museums and other attractions. Highlights include the Sacred Hearts School, the Plaza Victoria, the Natural History Museum, city hall, the Severin Library, the old Spanish Club, and the German Club.

Estimated Walking Time: Approximately 90 minutes.

How to Get Here: By car, enter Valparaíso on Pedro Montt Street and park near the Hoyts Multicinema Complex. The is the Italian Gardens. By bus, take any of the buses in front of the bus station and get off after about 10 blocks, in front of the Cineplex.

Degree of Difficulty: Easy

Tourist Infrastructure: Plenty of eating opportunities at the low and medium range along Pedro Montt Street. For health food fanatics there is a great juice bar on Victory Square (Bogarín) and a decent vegetarian restaurant on Condell Street (Bambu). At the end of the route, the traditional German eatery, Hamburgo, is a

must.

One of the best ways to start this route could be with a steam bath at the Turkish bath house. If you don't have time, there is plenty to see around the Italian Park.

The corner building on Freire and Independence Streets is called the Severín Palace, not to be confused with the Severín Library, which comes up later. The building was a restaurant for many years and today serves as a technical institute. The marble stairway gives way to a very elegant parlor with ornate woodwork, especially in the ceilings. The interior was used to film scenes from the movie *Amalia Lopes O'Neil*, by Valeria Sarmiento. This is a splendid example of 19th century architecture in this section of the Alemendral neighborhood.

El Abuelo Antique Shop

One of several fine antique shops, (another is Lagazio several blocks farther on the same street), "El Abuelo" belonged to Don Pablo Eltesch and his wife, María Mihoevich, two surnames at home in Valparaíso, but unrecognizable in other parts of Chile. Today, Don Pablo's son runs the store, whose clients have included Pablo Neruda, the novelist José Donoso, and writer Enrique Lafourcade. Many items are actually not for sale, demonstrating that the survival of the store is, in many ways, more a factor of family pride than a zeal for generating business.

Sacred Hearts School

Another one of Valparaíso's best kept architectural secrets, the Sacred Hearts School, is Chile's oldest private high school--the first religious school founded by non-Spanish clerics in all of Latin America! The school's hollowed halls have educated many prominent people, including a few past presidents. Enter on Independence Street, steps away from the Italian Square. Inside, you will find numerous European style plazas, cloisters, and even a funky underground tunnel connecting the campus to the nunnery on the far side of Colon Street below ground.

The first nuns arrived from France in 1827 and within a few years they were imparting classes in Valparaíso. The



trademark steeple was dedicated in 1840 and the school has functioned at its present location ever since. In 1868, work began on the main church. The clock tower, bells, mosaic, pavement, altar, pulpit, and confession booths were all brought from France. The stained glass is an imitation of the Church of Santa Gúdula in Belgium. The magnificent organ was donated by Enrique Meigs, and fabricated especially for the church by Aristide Cavaille—Coll, considered the finest French organ maker of his day. The church was dedicated in 1874, the first house of worship for the French order of the Sacred Hearts in the Americas. 127 people are actually buried beneath the central nave!

Victory Square

Our walk continues along Independence Avenue, with traditional stores, such as Lagazio, one of Valparaiso's premiere antique shops. Finally, we arrive at Victory Square. This is Valparaiso's principal social gathering space. Centuries ago, this was a primitive bull fighting ring named Plaza de Orrego, after the cleric Vicente Orrego. The name was changed to celebrate Chile's victory in the War of the Pacific. The spectacular fountain is actually war bounty. The children's play area is the spot where the famous Victoria Theater was edified in 1886. This was the center of Valparaiso's cultural scene, frequented by European opera companies and international stars, such as Sara Bernhardt. Tragically, the Victoria Theater was leveled by the 1906 earthquake. Across the street, the old Union Building is considered a treasure. Home to one of Valparaiso's original newspapers, an old competitor of *El Mercurio*, the building now houses the archdiocese of Valparaiso. An Arte Nouveau tower collapsed during the 1906 earthquake. On Condell Street, just off the plaza, you can visit the attractive Lyon Palace, a national monument which houses the city's Natural History Museum upstairs and an attractive art gallery downstairs. One block down the same street, you will find Valparaiso's neoclassical City Hall, with a well-tended tourist office. Sneak a peek at the "Salon de Honor" with its many wonderful paintings.

Severín Public Library

Chile's first public library offers many architectural, artistic, and literary treasures. The building was donated by Santiago Severín, and designed by the architects Barrison and Schiavon, the same Italian experts who built the famous "hanging house" outside

