

Valparaiso-Vina del Mar: Urbanization on the Incline

BASIC INFORMATION ¹		World Rank ²	Similar to
Urban Area Population: 2002	800,000	432	Merida, Nashville, Toulouse, Hohhot
Urban Land Area: Square Miles: 2002	62	392	Taiyuan, La Paz, Gdansk, Palermo
Urban Land Area: Square Kilometers: 2002	160		
Population per Square Mile	12,900	394	Monterey, Osaka-Kobe-Kyoto, Barcelona, Santa Cruz
Population per Square Kilometer	5,000		

19 November 2007

Setting

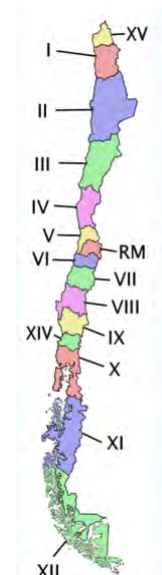
Valparaiso-Vina del Mar is located on the Pacific Coast of Chile. The urban area is principally composed of three large municipalities, including Valparaiso, Vina del Mar and Quilpue. Much of the Valparaiso-Vina del Mar area is located on a narrow plain in front of steep hills. The city of Valparaiso is in the southern part of the urban area, mostly on a narrow plain along the Pacific Ocean, with the remainder on a steep rise of hills to the east. The city of Valparaiso is the historic, principal ocean port of Chile.

Vina del Mar is to the north along the coast. Vina del Mar is principally on flat land along the coast and a valley that extends to the east. Quilpue is located further inland, in a valley east of Vina del Mar.

The city of Valparaiso is the capital of Chile's Valparaiso region (Slide: Regions of Chile). The city also shares national capital duties with Santiago, as the home of the National Congress.

Population, Land Area and Density

Valparaiso-Vina del Mar is Chile's second largest urban area, following Santiago. The population of the Valparaiso Vina del Mar urban area is 800,000. The urban land area is approximately 62 square miles (160 square kilometers). The cities of Valparaiso and Vina del Mar are of similar size, however, Valparaiso is the more historic (Slide: Valparaiso Urban Area).



Regions of Chile
V: Valparaiso Region

¹ For definitions of urban terms see <http://www.demographia.com/db-define.pdf>.

² Among urban 707 areas with more than 500,000 population (<http://www.demographia.com/db-worldua.com>)



Valparaíso

Valparaíso is the historic core of the urban area. Its development tends to be relatively old compared to the newer areas of the agglomeration, especially Vina del Mar.

The city of Valparaíso is one of the most fascinating urban destinations in the world (Slides 4-130). The main business and government center is located on the narrow coastal plain (Slide Core of Santiago), which is approximately 0.7 miles (1.1 kilometers) wide at the entrance to the Santiago freeway. From that point, the plain narrows, eventually becoming only 0.1 miles wide (less than 0.2 kilometers). Nearly all of the residences are on the narrow, winding streets on the hills behind the coastal plain.

The urbanized hills are the most interesting feature of Valparaíso. The hills behind the old commercial core, where the plain is the narrowest, are the oldest. Many of these residences appear to have been built before the 20th century. Further to the east, the hills contain somewhat newer housing. Many of the houses on the hills appear to be single family, though often not detached. The hills contain churches and neighborhood shopping districts. Generally, the housing and neighborhoods appear to be middle income and well kept. The low-income housing typical of many Santiago communes (cities) is not evident here.



In some respects, Valparaiso and its hills can be thought of as San Francisco “on steroids.” The colors of the built environment are more spectacular in Valparaiso. The hills are every bit as steep. But, they do not have San Francisco’s straight streets. This can be a serious problem for the rental car driver. It is easy to get lost in the hills of Valparaiso. It is simple enough to find a route into the hills, but once there, it can be difficult returning to the coastal plain, because many of the roads are one-way. The best bet is to eventually find a minibuss or taxicab to follow down the hill.

Vina del Mar

Vina del Mar is the newer of the two large cities in the Valparaiso urban area (Slides 131-180). It is hard to imagine anything more unlike Valparaiso than Vina del Mar. Vina del Mar has more of the atmosphere of Miami Beach or Australia’s Gold Coast. High rise hotels and condominiums abound, within walking distance of beaches.

Vina del Mar serves the functions that would be expected of a Gold Coast or Miami Beach. Condominiums are owned by permanent residents or may be second homes for households living elsewhere, especially in the Santiago area.

In Vina del Mar, the coastal plain widens considerably, into the valley that leads to Quilpue. The development in the valley is more modest than along the coast, however, large condominium buildings sit atop the hills that border the valley. The Vina del Mar central business district is in this valley.

Exurban Development

There is considerable development across the hills in the Valparaiso Vina del Mar area. A number of commercial establishments are along the freeway to Santiago. New housing developments are also evident (Slide 182).

Highways and Roads

Valparaiso Vina del Mar is served by a toll freeway from Santiago (speed limit 120 kilometers per hour or 75 miles per hour). The freeway extends well into Valparaiso, entering the city through a narrow valley. There is also a high capacity boulevard of 4 to 6 lanes between Valparaiso and Vina del Mar, along the Pacific Coast.

The hills make an extensive grid of streets impossible, though street grids exist on the plains. As would be expected, the hills are served by narrow, curving streets, many one-way.

Public Transport

Valparaiso Vina del Mar is served by an unusual combination of public transport, including elevators, minibuses, motor buses, trolley buses (electric buses) and a Metro. There are a number of elevators that provide service up the steep hills. There used to be many more elevators, however automobiles, taxis and minibuses provide more comprehensive and direct service, which has reduced the demand for elevator service. The streets in the hills of the city of Valparaiso are narrow and curving, largely making service by full-sized buses impossible.

The Metro operates a 25 mile (43 kilometer) single line with 20 stations along the coast in the city of Valparaiso, and along the coastal boulevard to Vina del Mar. The route continues through the main valley of Vina del Mar to Quilpue and then to the exurban city of Limache. The Metro provides direct service to

approximately 4 square miles, or 7 percent of the urban area (10 square kilometers).³ Trips without origins and destinations in this direct service area require transfers with buses and minibuses.

Related *Rental Car Tours*

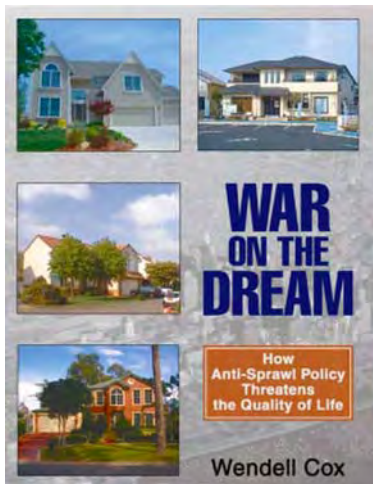
Rental Car Tour of Santiago (<http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-santiago.pdf>)

Rental Car Tour: Trans Andes Highway (<http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-andes.pdf>).

Rental Car Tour of Mendoza (<http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-mendoza.pdf>).

*Masthead superimposed on a map of
Centro in Belo Horizonte, Brazil*

³ Based upon the international public transport standard of a 400 meter maximum walking distance to stations.



War on the Dream

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By Wendell Cox

To order:

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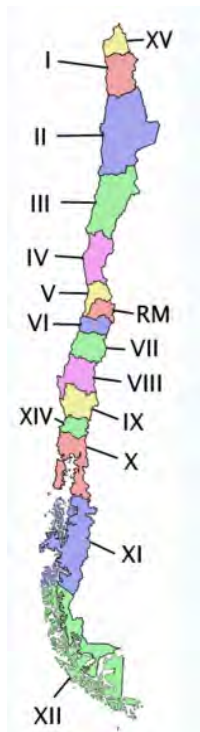
Urban Tours by Rental Car: About the Series

Urban Tours by Rental Car offers perspectives on urban development obtained by automobile tours through urban areas. Rental cars are not the favored method for visiting cities, especially those outside one's own country. Instead, tourists and urban planners favor packaged tours or local public transport systems. Both are splendid ways for seeing the city as it used to be --- the very reason for most tourist visits. The historical core areas contain monuments, prime government and religious edifices and quaint neighborhoods that are often centuries old. This is particularly important to tourists from the newer urban areas of the American, Canadian or Australian West, where history extends not far before World War II. It is further understandable that few tourists travel thousands of miles to see the newer suburban areas that look very much like home. But most tourists do not profess to be students of the urban area.

For the urban planner interested in understanding the whole urban area, it is not enough to study the core alone, regardless of its architectural attractiveness, romanticism, history or affirmation of an individually preferred life style. No one, regardless of the depth of their education can develop reliable conceptions from an unrepresentative sample, and urban cores are the very essence of unrepresentative samples. Both public transport and packaged tours miss the larger part --- the expanse of sprawling residential and business development that rings virtually all major urban areas. They may be of little interest to many urban planners, but they should be.

Stripping away regional architectural facades, one might as well be in the suburbs of Phoenix, Portland, Perth or Paris. Here, the automobile is king, because no public transport system has been developed that can effectively serve destinations outside the core (at least at a price any society can afford). While public transport market shares are higher in European suburban areas than in the New World, much of the difference is attributable to lower incomes and less automobile access. Indeed, public transport's principal weakness, lack of automobile competitiveness, is itself a contributing factor to the rising motorization occurring from the suburbs of Copenhagen and Nagoya to the suburbs of Lagos and Mumbai. To oversimplify this phenomenon as being a "love affair with the automobile" is the equivalent of saying that Singaporeans or Brazilians have a love affair with air conditioning. Human beings prefer comfort to discomfort and they prefer free time to time over which they have no control.

It is no wonder that tourists return to the United States thinking that all Paris looks like the second arrondissement (less than one percent does) and that urban planners think all of Milan looks like the architectural treasures that surround the Cathedral. In fact, the sprawling suburbs of Europe, Japan, Canada and Connecticut resemble one another in many ways. For any seeking to study the urban area in its entirety -- - not just the favored haunts of core-dwelling elites --- there is no alternative to "getting behind the wheel." Thus, *Urban Tours by Rental Car*.



Regions of Chile
V: Valparaíso
Region

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Approaching Valparaíso

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Approaching Valparaiso

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Approaching Valparaiso

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Valparaíso

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Valparaíso

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Valparaíso: Elevator in Background

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Valparaíso: Elevator

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Valparaíso

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Valparaíso

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Valparaíso: Trolley Buses

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Valparaíso

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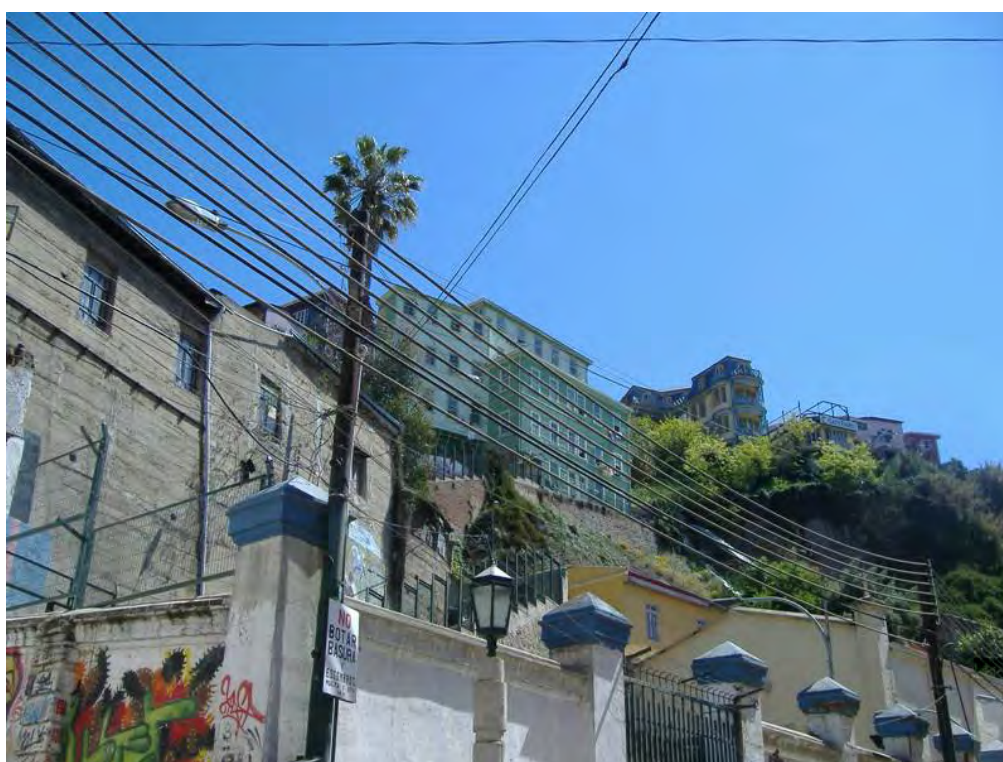
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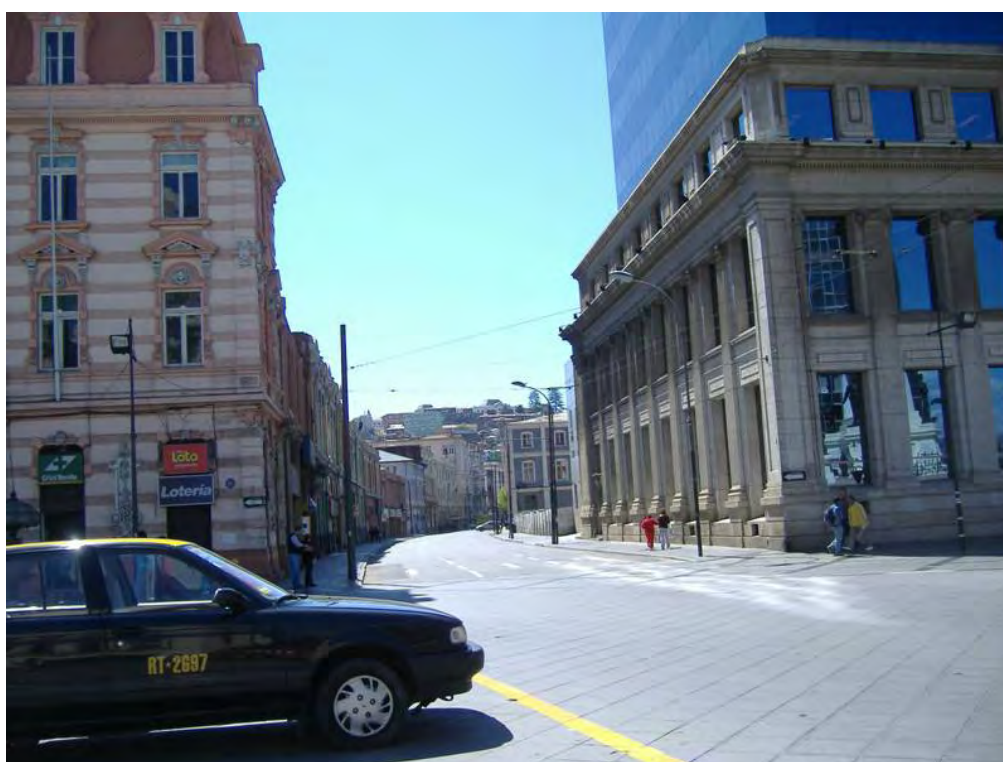
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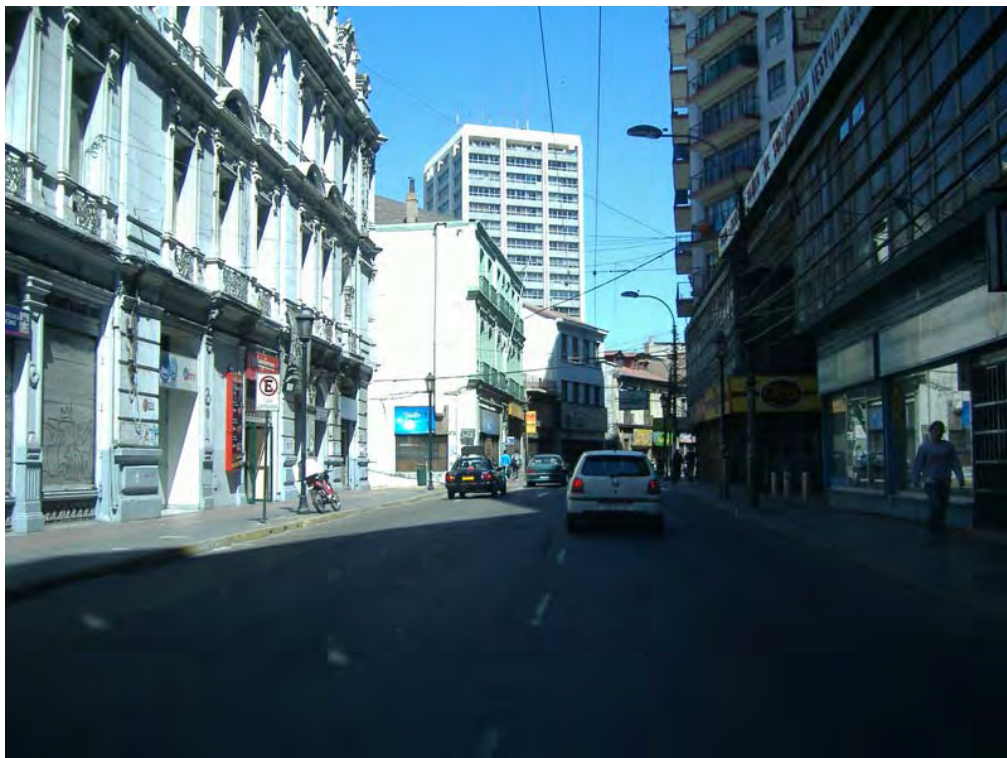
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Valparaíso: Highway to Vina del Mar

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Valparaíso: Highway to Vina del Mar

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Valparaíso: Highway to Vina del Mar

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Valparaíso: Highway to Vina del Mar

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Valparaiso: from Vina del Mar

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Valparaiso: Highway to Vina del Mar

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Valparaíso: Highway to Vina del Mar

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Valparaíso: Highway to Vina del Mar

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Valparaíso: Highway to Vina del Mar

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Valparaíso: Highway to Vina del Mar

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Valparaíso: Highway to Vina del Mar

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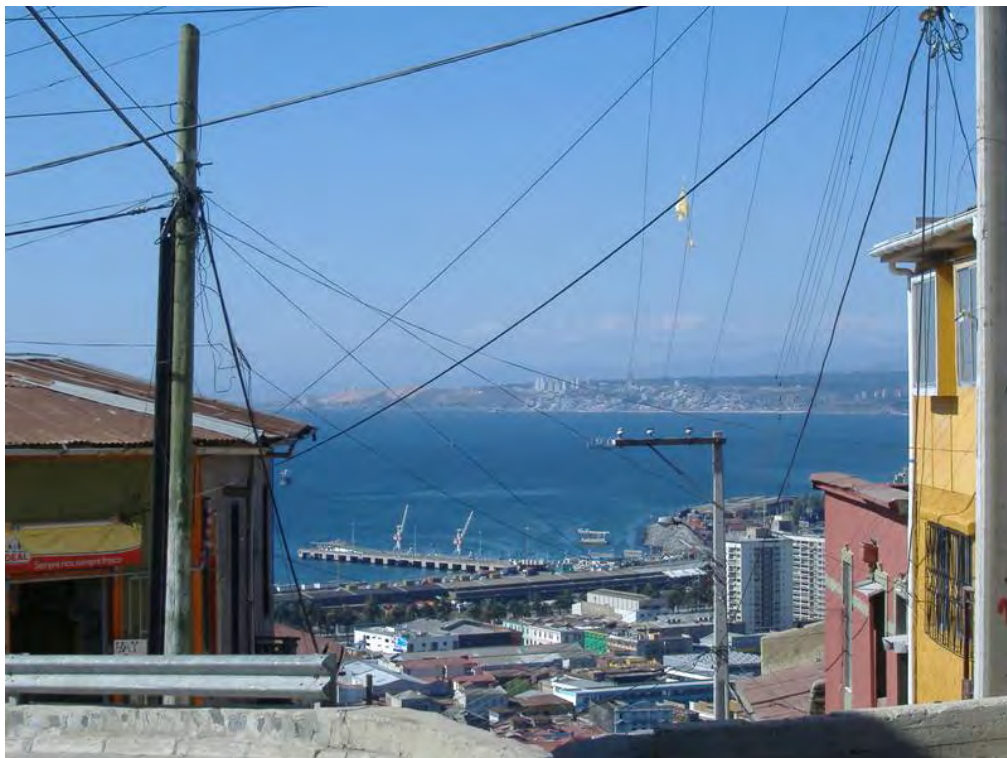
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Valparaíso (Vina del Mar in the Distance)

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Valparaíso (Vina del Mar in the Distance)

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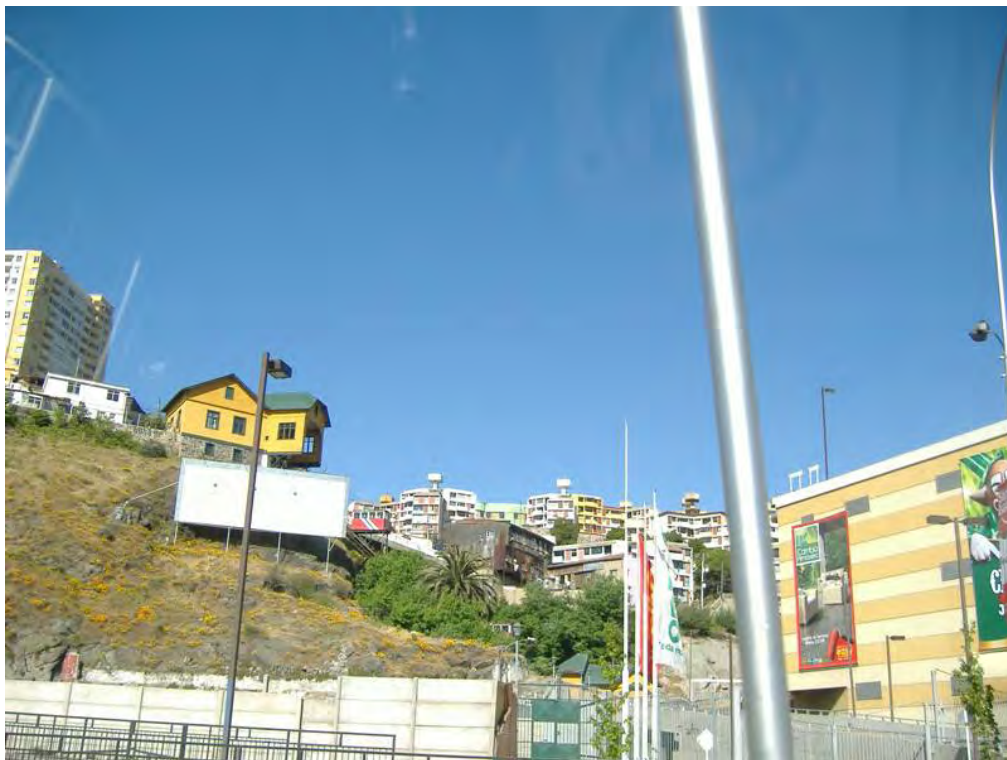
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Vina del Mar

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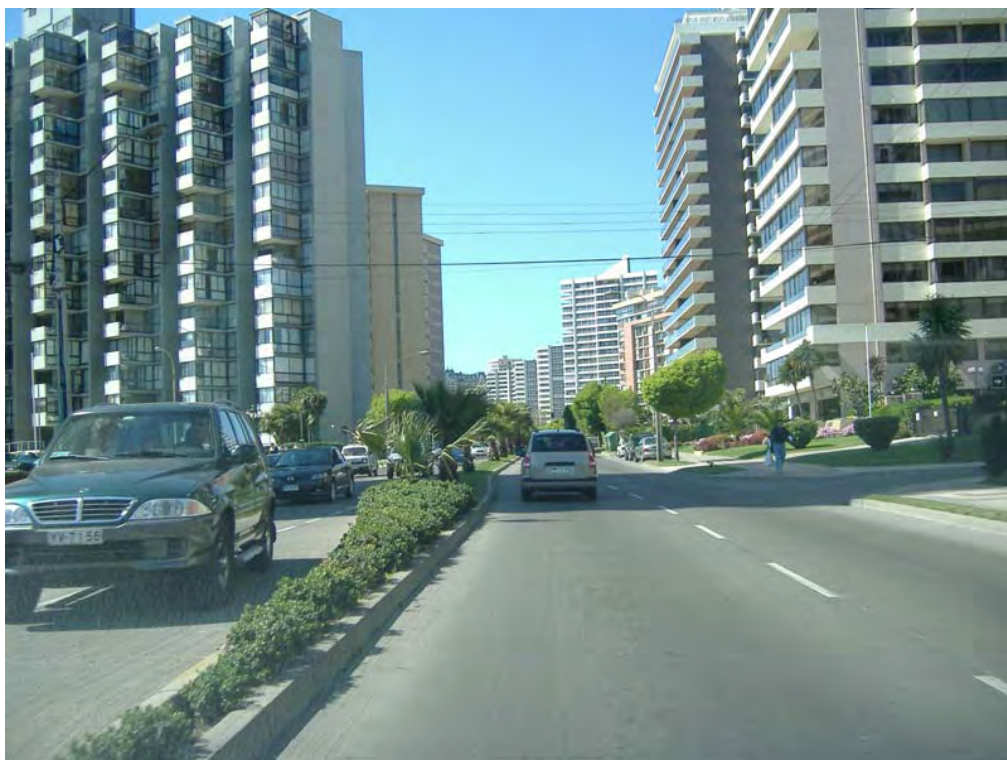
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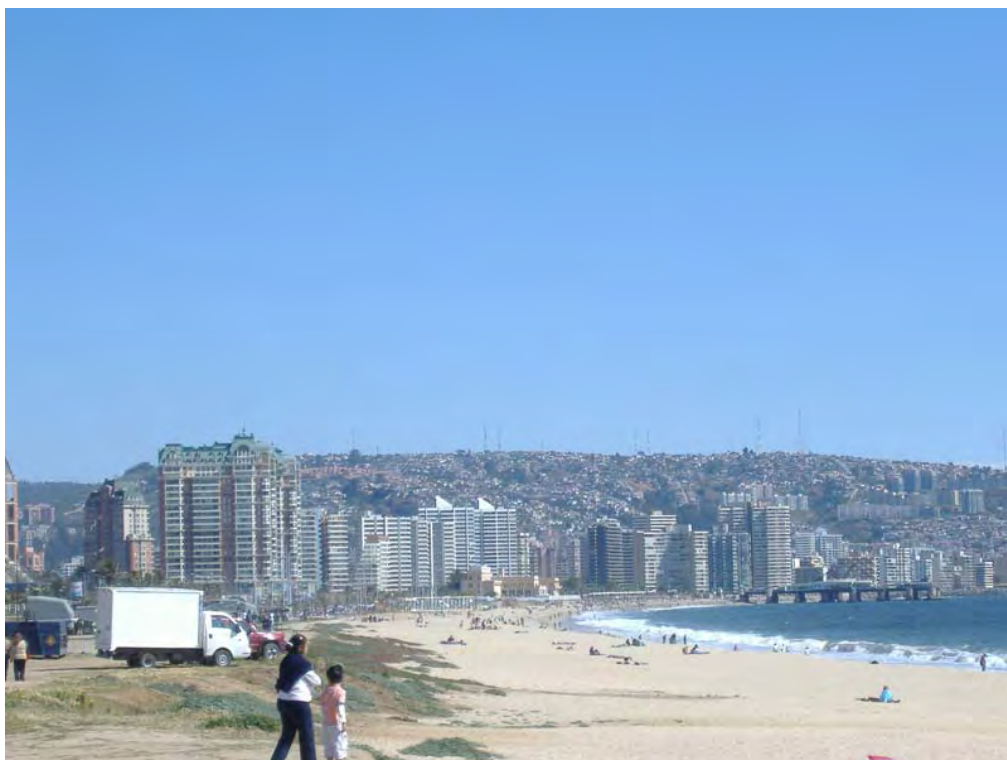
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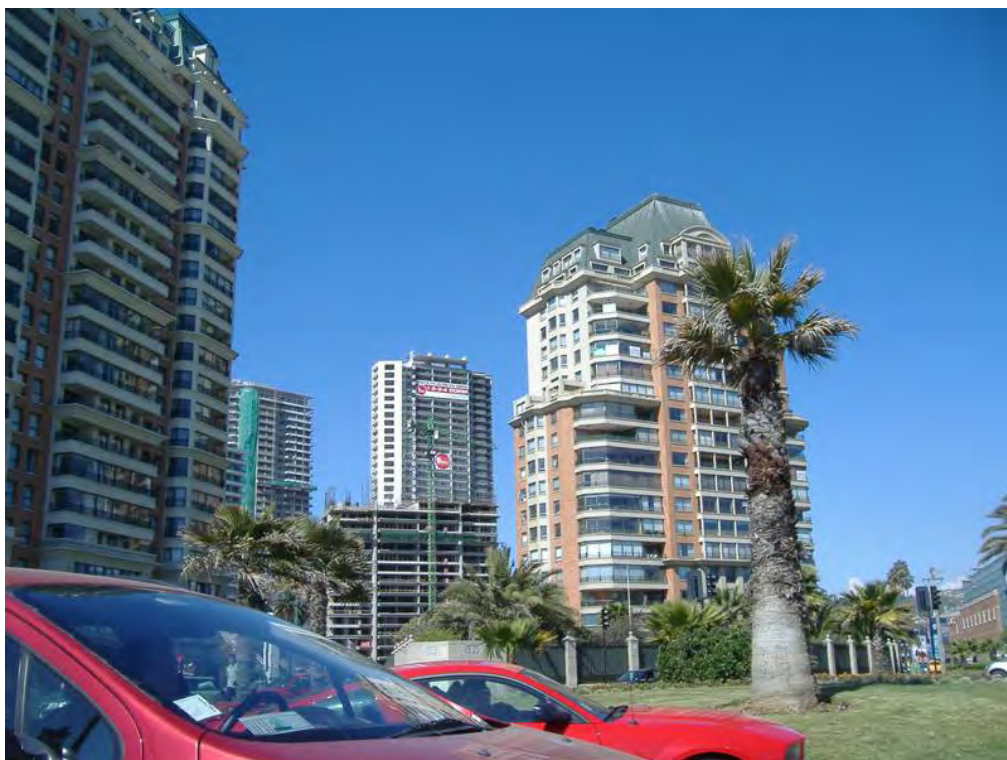
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Leaving Valparaiso

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Leaving Valparaiso: Exurban Development to the Right

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