



Santiago: Favored Quarter, Favored Urban Area

BASIC INFORMATION ¹	World Rank ²		Similar to
Urban Area Population: 2002	5,390,000	46	Bangalore, San Francisco-San Jose, Toronto-Hamilton, Madrid
Urban Land Area: Square Miles: 2002	305	105	Lagos, Barcelona, Raleigh, Naples, Brussels
Urban Land Area: Square Kilometers: 2002	790		
Population per Square Mile	17,700	346	Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Veracruz, Shizuoka
Population per Square Kilometer	6,800		

17 November 2007

What is Santiago?

What is the largest city in Chile? Few will get the answer right. Not even the respected international demographic website “citypopulation.de.” It shows the largest city in the country to be Santiago, with 4.7 million residents. Like many, “citypopulation.de” confuses the *province* of Santiago with the *city* of Santiago.³

So what is Santiago? This is something of a mystery to many people. For the most part, Santiago refers to the urban agglomeration or metropolitan area that is the largest in Chile, with more than 5,000,000 residents.

One of the 32 municipalities in Santiago province is Santiago, which now has fewer than 200,000 residents. This is the *city* of Santiago and the home of Centro, the traditional and declining business center. The population of the Santiago municipality is also declining.

Santiago can be any of the following (Table: The Dimensions of Santiago):

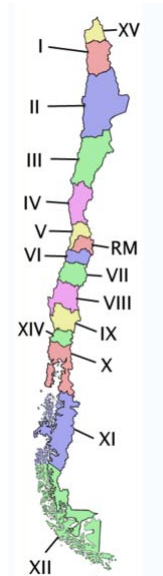
- The Region Metropolitana, which is one of the 15 regions of Chile, and includes 6 provinces, including the province of Santiago (which includes the city of Santiago). This is an administrative jurisdiction (Slide: Regions of Chile).

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>)

³ These matters are not always as simple as it seems. It would probably be upsetting to some to understand that there is no city of Tokyo. But it is true. It was abolished during World War II. Today, the former city of Tokyo is 23 wards that have no central government, except for the provincial government (the prefecture of Tokyo). The provincial government includes a number of municipalities in addition to the 23 wards of the former city of Tokyo.

- The metropolitan area, or Greater Santiago, which is the labor market or commuter belt. This is not an administrative jurisdiction. Greater Santiago is fully contained in the Region Metropolitana (Slide: Municipalities of Greater Santiago).
- The urban area, which is the urban footprint. The urban area is not an administrative jurisdiction. The urban area is fully contained within the Region Metropolitana, extends outside the province of Santiago, but does not include the entire province.
- The province of Santiago (population 4.7 million, which includes 32 municipalities, including the municipality of Santiago). This is a political jurisdiction. However, it is not a city, municipality or commune, it is a province. To call the province of Santiago a city is like referring to the Ile-de-France as the city of Paris, the province of Guangdong as the city of Guangzhou or the province of Ontario as the city of Toronto.
- The municipality (commune or city) of Santiago, with its population below 200,000, representing less than 5 percent of the Santiago agglomeration population. Like most core areas of major urban areas, Santiago's population is declining. This is a political jurisdiction. Santiago is not the largest municipality in Chile. It is not even the largest municipality in Santiago province. That honor belongs to the municipality of Maipu. In 2002, Santiago was the 7th largest municipality in Greater Santiago (Slide 3).



Regions of Chile
RM: Region Metropolitana

So what is the largest city in Chile? Even after dismissing the erroneous perception of Santiago, there is some dispute. The 2002 census showed Maipu, in Santiago province, to be the largest. More recent estimates indicate that Puente Alto is now larger. Puente Alto is on the south side of Greater Santiago, within both the urban area and the Region Metropolitana, yet in Cordillera province (outside Santiago province).

From this point on in the article, Santiago will mean the urban agglomeration, unless otherwise identified.

Santiago: A Genuine Primary Metropolitan Area

Santiago, as Chile's largest metropolitan area, dominates the nation to an unusual extent. The metropolitan area has 40 percent of the nation's population. By comparison, Auckland has approximately 30 percent of New Zealand's population and Tokyo is somewhat less than 30 percent of Japan. Other large urban areas are much smaller relative to their national population. London is a quarter of the United Kingdom, Paris 20 percent of France, Toronto 20 percent of Canada, Jakarta 10 percent of Indonesia, New York 7 percent of the United States and Shanghai little more than one percent of China. The Santiago metropolitan area is nearly 9 times that of Chile's second largest metropolitan area, Valparaiso-Vina del Mar.

The Dimensions of Santiago				
Geography	Type of Geography	Population	Corresponding Jurisdiction Level in France	Explanation
Region Metropolitana	Region	6,100,000	Region	One of the 15 regions of Chile. Includes 6 provinces.
Metropolitan Area (Greater Santiago)	Labor Market (Commuter Belt)	5,500,000	Aire Urbaine (Not an administrative jurisdiction)	Province of Santiago plus 5 municipalities in other provinces (Puente Alto, San Bernardo, Pirque, San Jose de Maipo * Padre Hurtado).
Urban Area	Urban Footprint	5,390,000	Unit Urbaine (Not an administrative jurisdiction)	Urban Footprint
Province of Santiago	Province	4,700,000	Department	One of the 6 provinces of the Region Metropolitana
City of Santiago	Municipality (Commune)	<200,000	Commune	One of 32 municipalities in the Province of Santiago

Setting

The city of Santiago is the capital of Chile, though the legislature meets in Valparaiso, an hour to the west, on the Pacific Coast (see Valparaiso Rental Car Tour).⁴

The Santiago urban agglomeration is located in Chile's central valley, technically in the middle of the Andes. The central valley is formed by the coast range, which is the Cordillera Occidental and the range generally considered to be the Andes, the Cordillera Oriental. The urban area straddles the Mopochico River, which flows from the Andes toward the west. The river is of modest width and is crossed by many bridges. Most of the urbanization is south of the river. Santiago is at an elevation of nearly 2,000 feet above sea level (600 meters). The Andes rise abruptly from the urbanization approximately 8 miles east of Centro (13 kilometers). Within 30 miles (50 kilometers) of Centro, the mountains exceed 16,000 feet (5,000 meters). Within 50 miles (80 kilometers), the mountains exceed 18,000 feet (5,600 meters), while the highest point outside Asia is Cerro Aconcagua, at 22,841 feet (6,962 meters), 65 miles (105 kilometers) from Santiago, just over the Argentine border. The Andes in this part of South America are a rocky, non-volcanic range similar to the Alps in Europe, the Himalayas



The Municipalities (Cities) of Greater Santiago

⁴ <http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-valparaiso.pdf>.

in India, Nepal and China, the Southern Alps on New Zealand's South Island and the Rocky Mountains in the United States and Canada.

Because the urban area is in a deep valley, Santiago's air pollution is trapped by the mountains and is often bad. The Andes are hidden by the air pollution, just as the San Gabriel Mountains used to be hidden in Los Angeles except for a few days each year.

Population, Land Area and Density

The Santiago urban agglomeration is somewhat smaller than the region metropolitana. This urban foot print covers approximately 305 square miles (790 square kilometers) and has a population of 5,390,000. The population density is 17,700 per square mile (6,800 per square kilometer). This places Santiago at approximately the same density as Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, above Buenos Aires and Belo Horizonte and below Mexico City. The western hemisphere's most dense urban area, Bogota, is nearly three times as dense. The highest densities are in the lowest income areas, such as Lo Espejo, San Ramon, and Lo Prado, at more than 40,000 per square mile (10,000 per square kilometer). Providencia, the only "favored quarter" municipality that is fully developed has a population density of 20,000 per square mile (8,000 per square kilometer). The municipality of Santiago has a similar population density, though the net residential density would be higher because much of the land area is occupied by commercial enterprises.

Housing

A casual, high-income world visitor to Santiago is likely to conclude that it is a very prosperous place. The tourist areas are very well kept and give the impression of affluence. Perhaps for that reason, Santiago seems to be everyone's favorite urban area in Latin America.

Santiago's housing presents the contrasts that are typical of a Latin American urban area. The "favored quarter" has average incomes rivaling those of Western Europe or Japan. On the other hand, much of the rest of the agglomeration is middle-income by world standards, at about one-quarter the income of the favored quarter. There are also large areas of low-income, with average incomes as low as 1/10th that of the favored quarter.

There is probably no more extensive favored quarter south of the United States. Santiago's northeast is a delightful environment. This includes the municipalities of Providencia, Vitacura, La Reina, Las Condes, Lo Barnechea and Nunoa, all to the east of the municipality of Santiago. There are large and middle-sized detached houses, well kept, that could as easily be in Canada, Australia or the United States. There are large condominium buildings, most between 10 and 20 floors. Most of these buildings appear to have been built in the last 10 or 15 years. Many of the taller buildings are tapered at the top in an unusual fashion (Slides 194 & 226). Public subsidies are provided to encourage people to purchase the high-rise condominiums, the purpose of which is to stop the geographical expansion of the agglomeration. It is, however, clear, that the geographical expansion is continuing.

Somewhat uncharacteristically for an urban area in a westerly wind zone, the favored quarter is located on the east side of the urban area. The east side is probably made more attractive by its gentle rise toward the Andes, which jut out of the ground not far beyond where the urbanization ends. Indeed, there are now a number of new single-family housing developments under construction beyond the urban fringe, where the rise toward the Andes (Cordillera Oriental) becomes much more steep.

Much of the rest of the urban area is considerably more modest. Much of the area to the west of Centro, in the municipality of Santiago, is run-down, though experiencing something of an urban renaissance. This area is called Brasil and the renaissance is more in the marketing than the reality.

Further to the west, for example, in Maipu, there are attractive and less attractive single family housing districts, which appear significantly less affluent than the eastern suburbs. The poorer sections are on the south side of the urban agglomeration, for examples in the municipalities of Lo Espejo (Slides 77-106) and El Bosque. Here, however, like most of the rest of Santiago, development is low-rise and most residences are single family, with only one floor. Yet, these low-rise areas have population densities that are generally double those of the favored quarter, with its high-rise buildings. Further, as in the favored quarter municipalities, there are large numbers of cars in these low income municipalities.

There are a few areas that appear to have informal dwellings, though there do not appear to be large shantytowns anywhere. Informal dwellings can be seen along the freeway between the airport and Centro, along the Mophoto River.

There are a number of exurban developments around Santiago, with new single family detached and attached housing. One notable exurban development is the Maipu satellite city (Slides 106-121). There is also a large exurban development just south of the Valparaiso freeway, a few miles beyond the Americo Vespucci ring road (Slides 236, 242-244). There is also considerable very low density, non-agricultural development both to the north and the south of the urban agglomeration.

Chilean residents, especially in lower and middle income municipalities, fly the national flag to an extent similar to such displays of the national colors in middle-income neighborhoods of the United States.

Central Business District (Centro and Its Successors)

Santiago's traditional business district is Centro. This is where the major government buildings are located as well as the cathedral. Commercial development is dense and there are pedestrian-only shopping streets.

From Centro to Providencia, Las Condes & Vitacura: There is still considerable activity in Centro and considerable pedestrian traffic. It is clear, however, that the commercial center of Santiago is moving east. Providencia has a number of modern, high-rise office buildings and appears to be where business has moved over the past 30 years. Another move seems underway,

even further east to Las Condes and Vitacura, where the post-modern buildings of the past decade have been built, and a number more are under construction. There are large new Hyatt and Marriott hotels to the east, in Las Condes, as well as a large enclosed shopping center.

Sanhattan: The new collection of towers in these municipalities is referred to as “Sanhattan” by the locals. “Sanhattan” will be more appropriate when projects under construction are complete. The most important is Costanera Center, in Providencia (at the border with Las Condes). Costanera Center will contain the tallest building in Latin America. Gran Torre Costanera will have 60 floors and reach a height of 984 feet (300 meters).⁵ This building is under construction and will be completed by 2010. Gran Torre Costanera will be at least 160 feet (100 meters) taller than what will be Santiago’s second tallest building (Torre Titanium La Portada in Las Condes), just a few blocks away. The center will contain two additional 41 story towers (560 feet or 170 meters) and a 25 story tower. There will also be a 3,000,000 square foot (280,000 square meters) shopping mall. By comparison, this would be larger than any mall in North America outside of the West Edmonton Mall (Edmonton, Alberta) and the Mall of America (Minneapolis-St. Paul). Costanera Center will cover 14 acres (6 hectares).

New Central Business Districts: These new centers are different from the “edge cities” that are found in the United States, Canada or Australia. The new centers are larger and appear to be seriously displacing Centro. They are thus more like central business districts than edge cities. The business center trend in Santiago is similar to Sao Paulo, where Paulista became the principal center after Centro, and now Berrini is emerging. Similarly, in Mexico City, Zocalo was largely replaced by Reforma and now Santa Fe is the emerging center.

Highways and Roads

Santiago has a high-quality roadway system, consisting of wide boulevards and freeways. The freeways are operated as an automatic toll system. There is a ring road, Via Americo Vespucci, which is completed except for a section in the northeastern quadrant (the favored quarter). There are plans to complete this section and a citizen’s movement is underway to force the road to be built in a tunnel rather than on the surface (Slide 37). The main east-west freeway operates in a tunnel under the Mapocho River for 2.3 miles (3.7 kilometers), the result of a compromise with neighborhoods that were also interested in avoiding a surface alignment (Slide 8 shows the eastern exit from under the river). The urban area has a number of surface street grids, set at various angles. Nonetheless, as is typical for higher density urban areas, Santiago has extreme traffic congestion. There are major tree-lined boulevards on both sides of the river as it flows to the north of Providencia, which provide interesting views of the urbanization.

Public Transport

Santiago has a 5 line Metro system, which appears to have rolling stock that is a duplicate of the Paris Line 1 (La Defense to Vincennes, through central Paris). The system operates on rubber tires and has a ticketing system that is also similar to Paris.

⁵ <http://www.emporis.com/en/wm/cx/?id=costaneracenter-santiago>.

Santiago has historically had a large number of buses and the majority of public transport ridership has been by bus. Recent attempts to rationalize service have been less successful than hoped, with cross-town articulated bus service and feeder service. This new “Transantiago” bus system has received serious criticism and there are claims that Metro ridership has increased substantially as a result of dissatisfaction with the bus service.⁶

The double articulated Transantiago buses are manufactured in Brazil (the nation, not the neighborhood) and driven across the Andes to Santiago, Our trip on the Trans-Andean highway involved a number of sightings of west bound Transantiago buses, including a number at the border entering Chile, just west of Cristo Redentor Tunnel (Slide 238).

Santiago still has a very high public transport market share, which has been said to be more than 50 percent. By comparison, public transport’s market share in Paris is under 30 percent and in New York is under 10 percent.

Airport

Santiago has a modern international airport that is located just outside Americo Vespucci on the west side of the agglomeration. It is just to the north of the freeway to Valparaiso and Vina del Mar.

Debunking Myths

There is a sometimes quoted myth that the “STOP” sign is universal. The red, octagonal sign indicating to the necessity of stopping at an intersection is indeed virtually universal, but not the stop sign. It is true that virtually all of Western Europe uses the “STOP” sign, rather than a local translation of “STOP.” However, In Chile, there are “PARE” signs, as is also the case in Brazil. There are “ARRET” signs in French-speaking Quebec.

Related *Rental Car Tours*

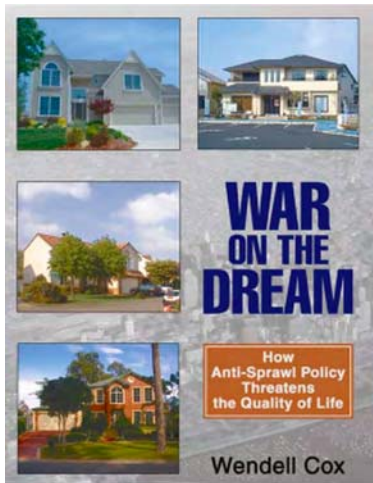
Rental Car Tour of Valparaiso (<http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-valparaiso.pdf>).

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

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

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

⁶ See <http://www.startribune.com/722/story/1556676.html>.



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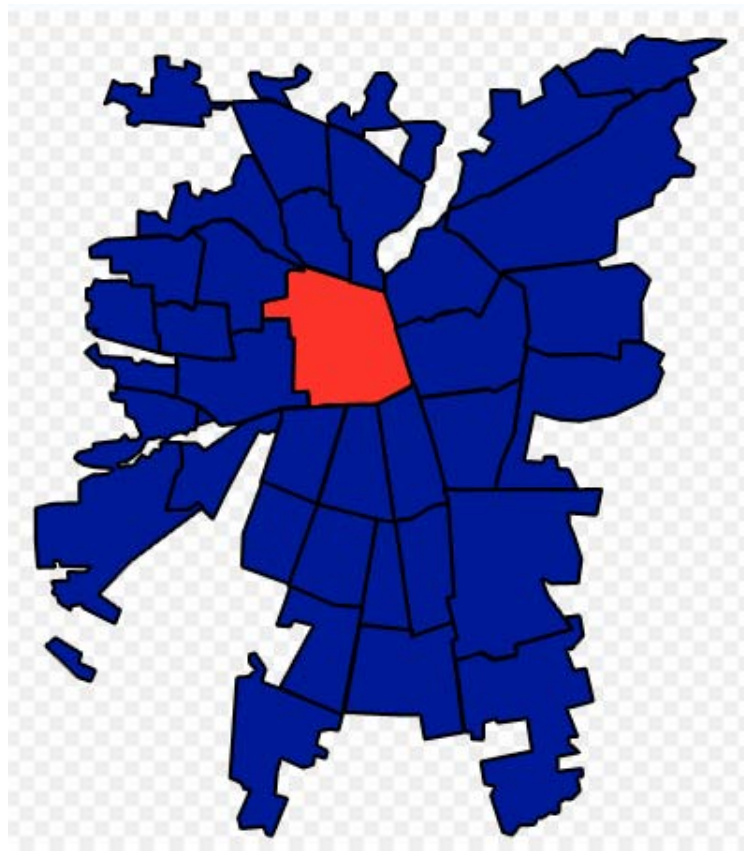
Urban Tours by Rental Car: About the Series

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*.



City of Santiago in Greater Santiago

Slide 3



Arriving in Region Metropolitana from the North

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Providencia

Slide 5



Recoleta

Slide 6



Providencia

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Providencia

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Providencia

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Providencia

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Providencia

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Providencia

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Providencia

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Providencia

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Recoleta

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Recoleta

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Recoleta

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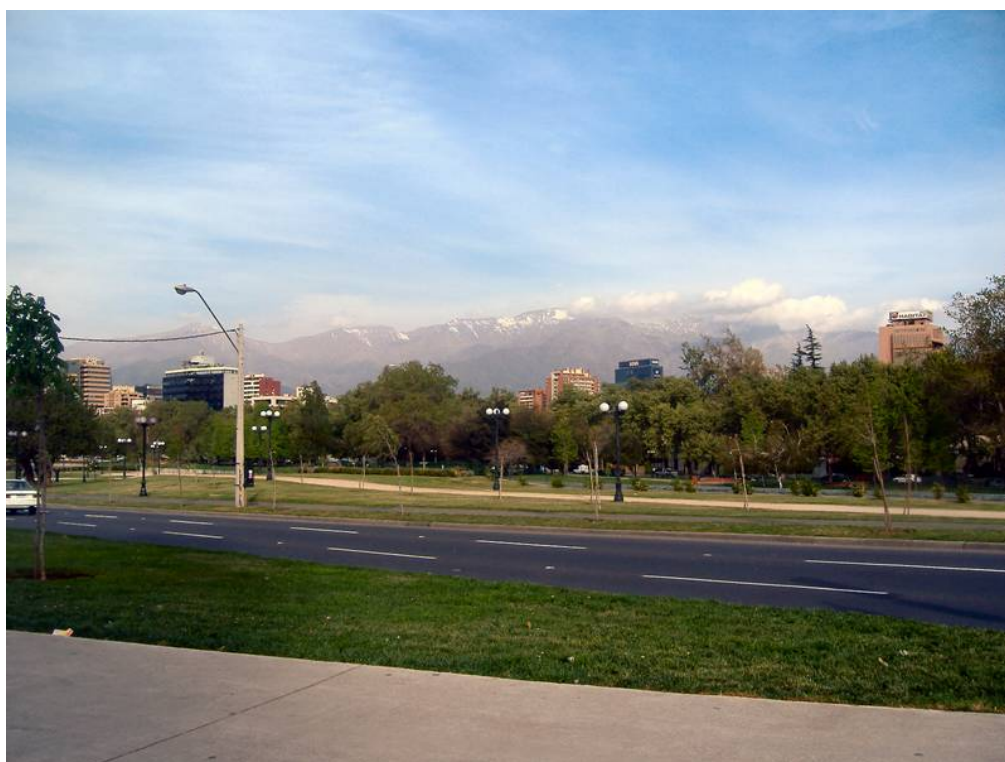
Las Condes

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Las Condes

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Providencia

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Providencia

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Providencia

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Vitacura

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Vitacura

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Providencia

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Torre Santa Maria & Sheraton Hotel : Recoleta

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Providencia

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Vitacura

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Andes from Vitacura

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Vitacura

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View Toward Centro from Cerro la Buitrera

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View Toward Centro from Cerro la Buitrera

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View to North from Cerro la Buitrera

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Las Condes

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Penalolan

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La Reina

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Centro (Municipality of Santiago)

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Lo Espejo

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Maipú Satellite City (Exurban Southwest)

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Maipu Satellite City (Exurban Southwest)

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Maipu Satellite City (Exurban Southwest)

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Maipu Satellite City (Exurban Southwest)

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Maipu Satellite City (Exurban Southwest)

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Maipu Satellite City (Exurban Southwest): Rental Car in Foreground

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Maipu Satellite City (Exurban Southwest)

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Maipu Satellite City (Exurban Southwest)

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Maipu (Municipality)

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Maipu (Municipality): Rental Car

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Central Railway Station: Estación Central (Municipality)

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Former National Congress Building: Centro (Municipality of Santiago)

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Centro: Cathedral (Municipality of Santiago)

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Centro (Municipality of Santiago)

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Centro (Municipality of Santiago)

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Centro (Municipality of Santiago)

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Providencia

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Providencia (Municipality)

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Providencia

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Las Condes

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Las Condes

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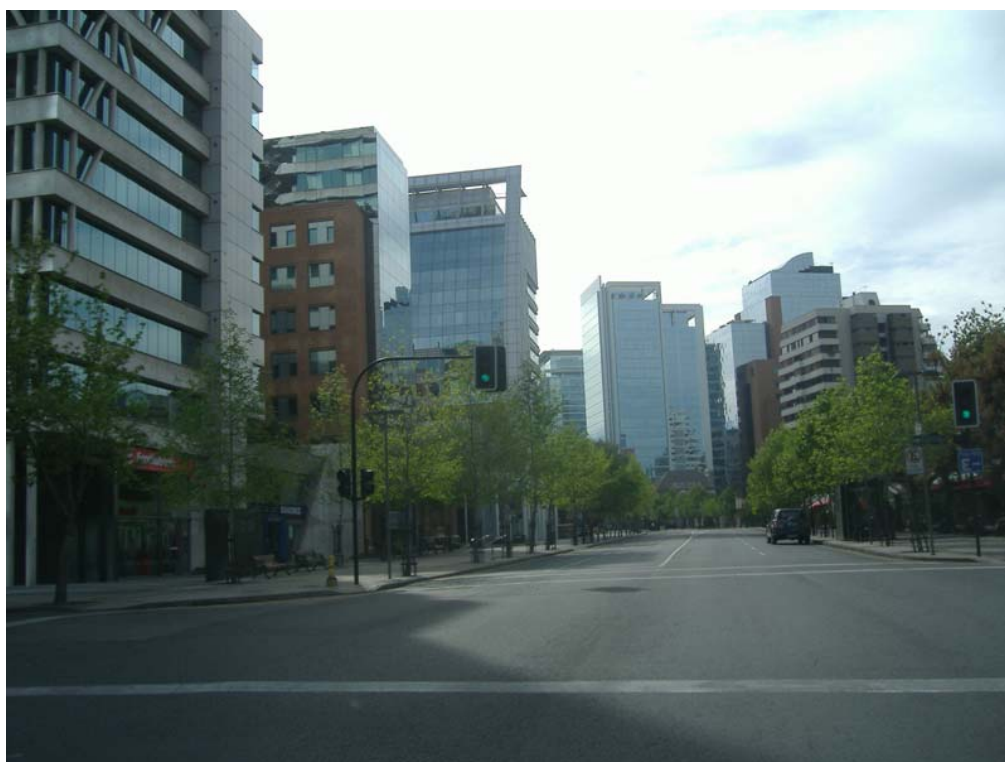
Las Condes

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Las Condes

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Las Condes

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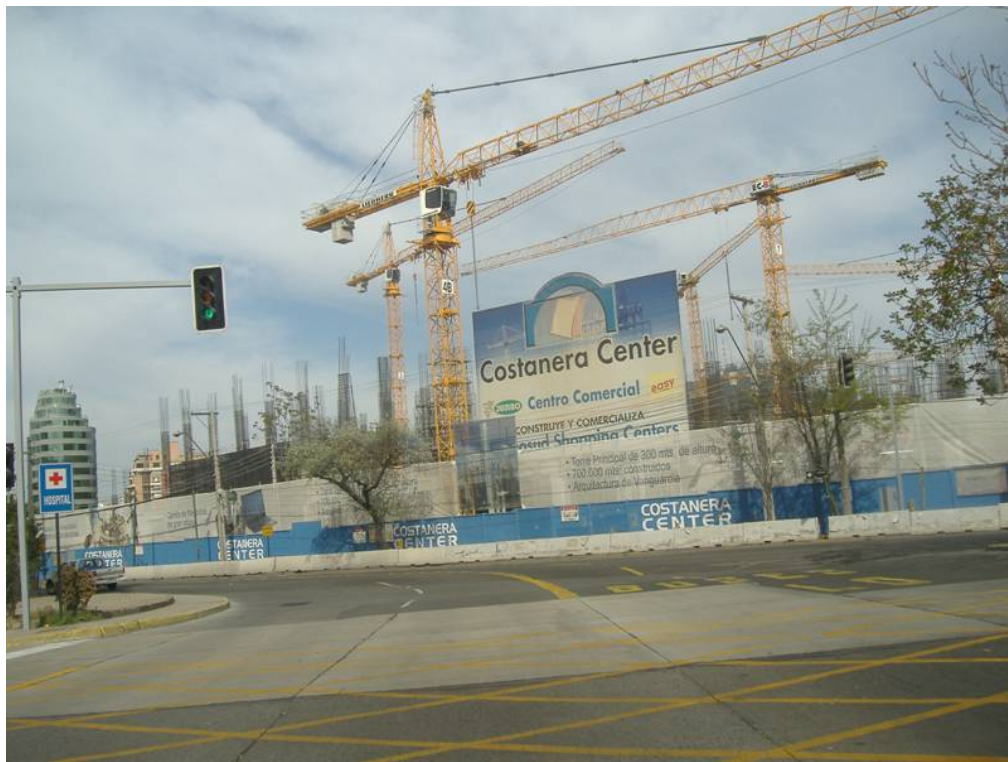
Providencia

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Costanera Center: Providencia

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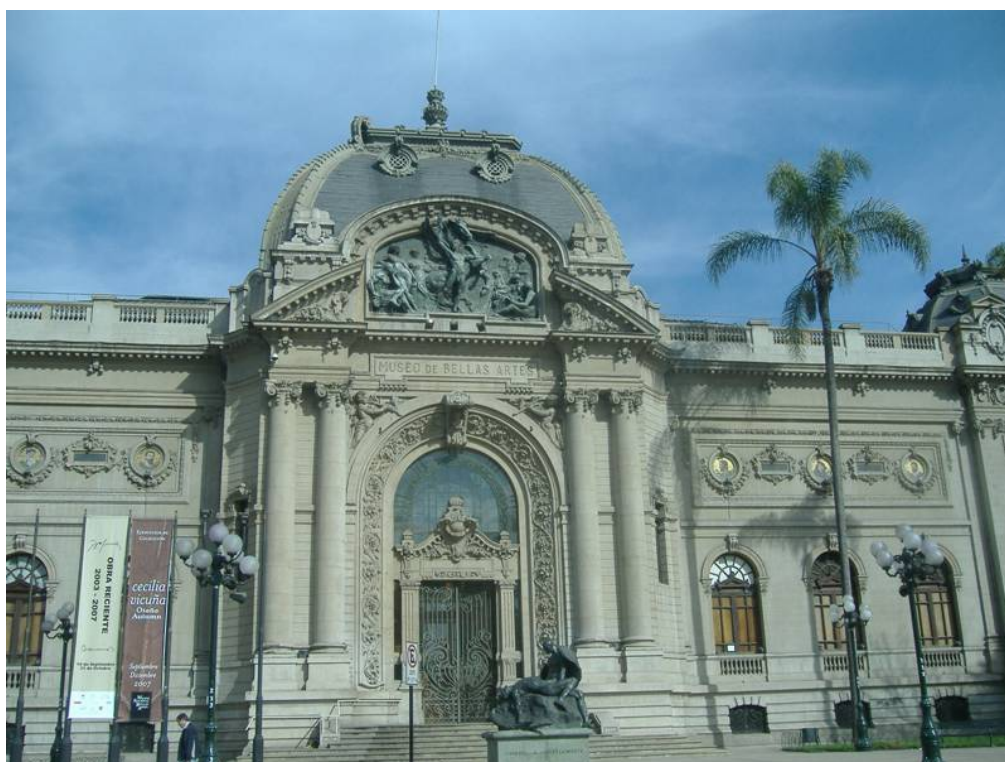
Costanera Center: Providencia

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Providencia

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Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes (Providencia)

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Providencia

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Centro (Municipality of Santiago)

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Centro: Bus Transfer Station (Municipality of Santiago)

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Centro (Municipality of Santiago)

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Providencia

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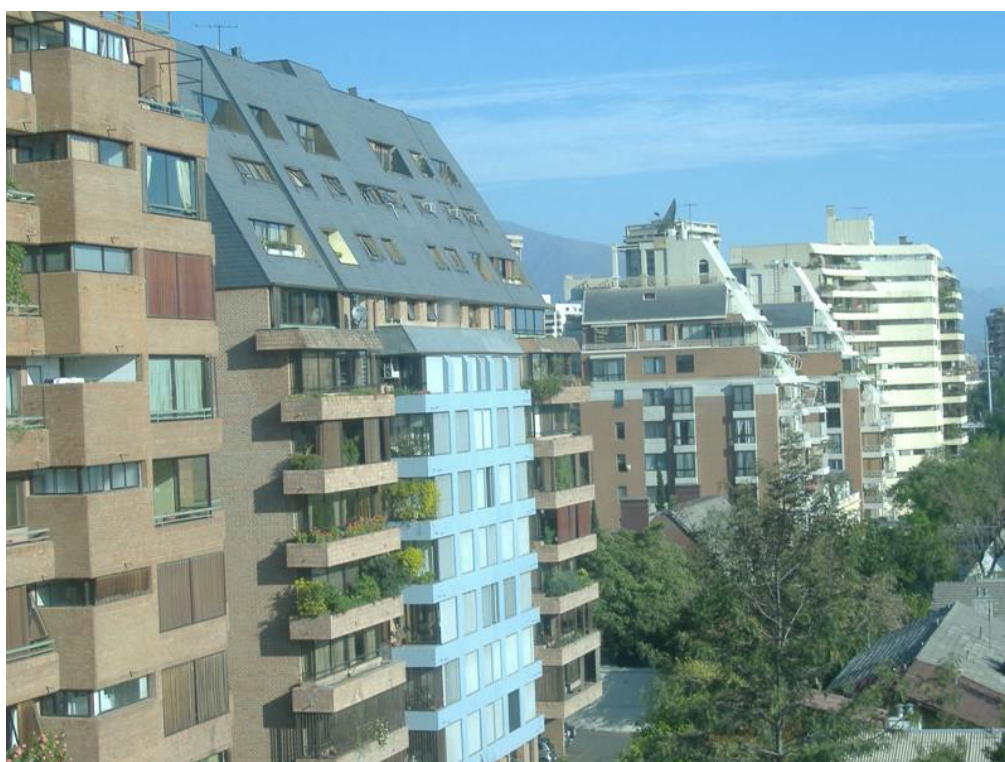
Providencia

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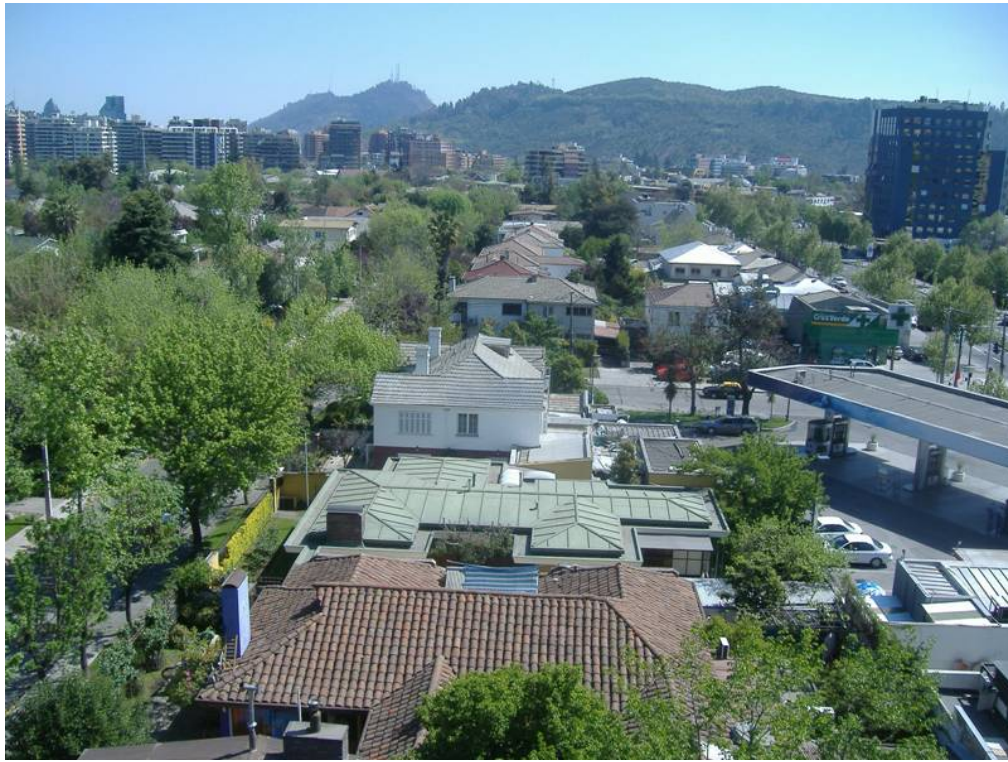
Sheraton Hotel Across River From Providencia

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Vitacura

Slide 194



Vitacura

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Vitacura

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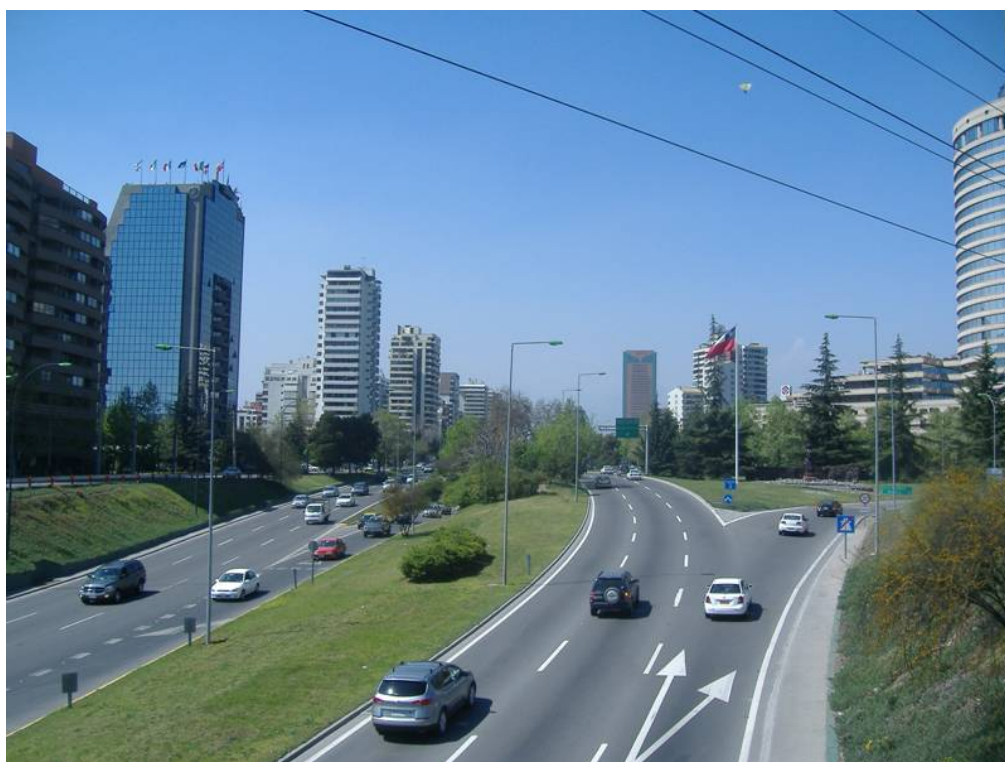
Vitacura

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Las Condes

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Las Condes

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Las Condes

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Las Condes

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Las Condes

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Las Condes

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Las Condes: Military School

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Las Condes

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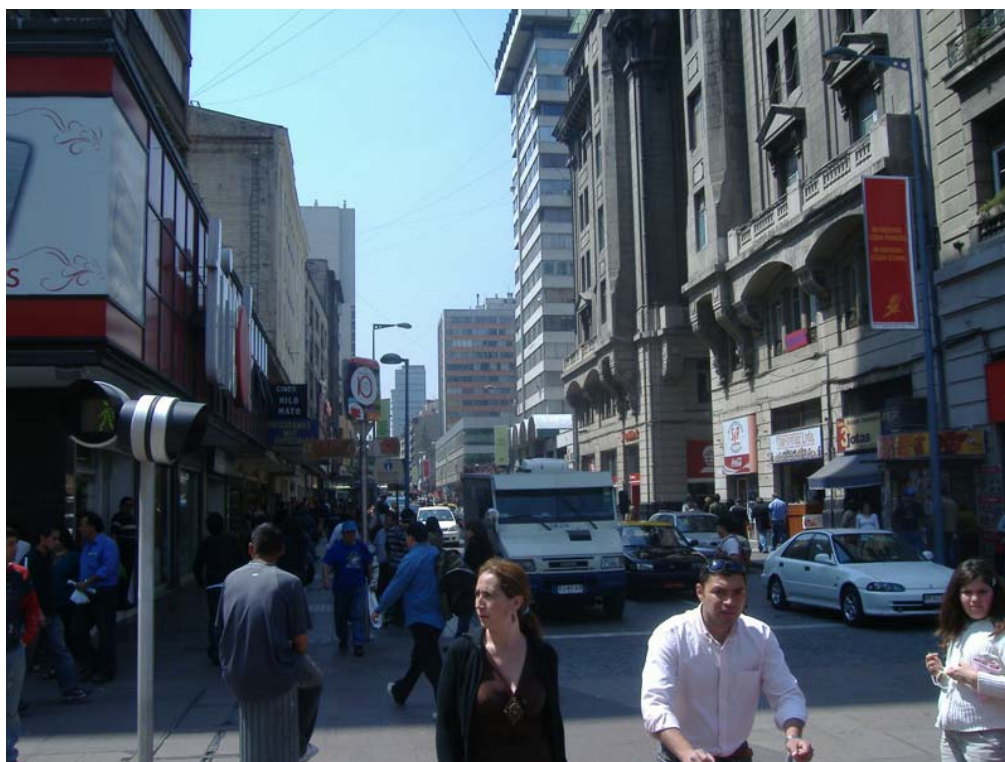
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Centro (Municipality of Santiago)

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Centro (Municipality of Santiago)

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Centro (Municipality of Santiago)

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Centro (Municipality of Santiago)

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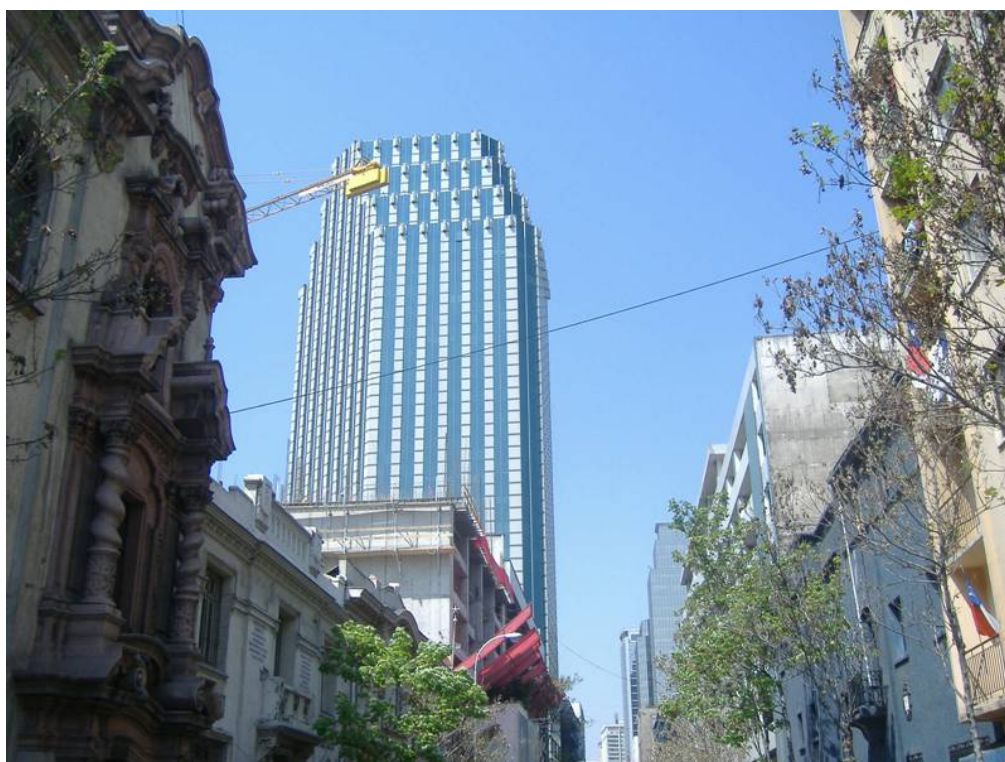
Centro (Municipality of Santiago): Cathedral

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Centro (Municipality of Santiago)

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Centro (Municipality of Santiago)

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Centro (Municipality of Santiago)

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Vitacura

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Las Condes

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Vitacura

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Vitacura

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Las Condes

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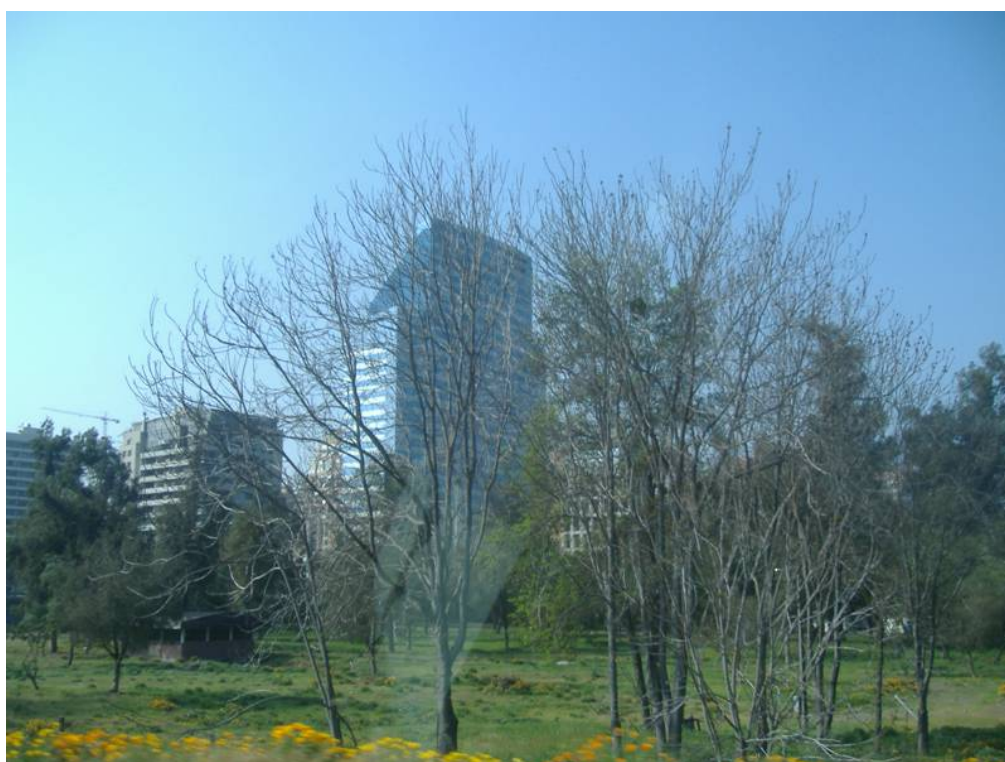
Las Condes

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Las Condes

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Providencia

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Providencia

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Between Airport & Centro

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Between Airport & Centro

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Americo Vespucci: Northwest

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Americo Vespucci: Northwest

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Americo Vespucci: Northwest

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Pare Sign (Stop Sign)

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Exurban Development to the Southwest

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Rental Car for Trans-Andes Trip

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Transantiago Buses at Chilean Border Station (Near Cristo Redentor Tunnel)

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Americo Vespucci: Northwest

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Americo Vespucci: Northwest

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Americo Vespucci: Northwest

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Exurban Development: Valparaiso Freeway

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Exurban Development: Valparaiso Freeway

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Exurban Development: Valparaiso Freeway

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