

The Santiago Times

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CHILE CELEBRATES FIESTAS PATRIAS (INDEPENDENCE) HOLIDAYS

The Whole Country Concentrates On Partying, As Chile Turns 197 Years Old

(Sept. 18, 2007) Last Saturday kicked off a record five days of "Fiestas Patrias" celebrations, as the entire nation celebrates its Declaration of Independence from Spain, declared nearly two centuries ago. Most work came to a grinding halt Friday at mid-day, as thousands prepared for a quick exit to coastal or mountain retreats, or a fun-filled weekend of dance and music at the hundreds of 'fondas' that will dot city and rural landscapes during the five day celebration.

This year's celebrations are longer than normal, as Chileans relish an extra day to celebrate their country's birthday. This - after Chile's Parliament declared today, Monday, September 17, a special public holiday. September 17 is what is normally described in Chile as a "sandwich" day, as it falls between the weekend of September 15-16 and the "Fiestas Patrias" national holidays on September 18-19. The resulting five-day break is the longest public holiday of any country in Latin America (Aug. 31).

With this extra time off, Chileans will be able to enjoy the typical "Fiestas Patrias" food even more than ever. A traditional menu consisting of an empanada, a kebab, and a glass of chicha liquor will cost between US\$4 and US\$8.50 at most celebration venues. Other "Fiestas Patrias" staples include beer, soft drinks, beans, and potatoes. Still, health experts at the Universidad Andres Bello warned that, after five days of consuming such fatty foods, Chileans could easily put on an extra four or five pounds.

For some Chileans, the extra day off will also translate into more travel time. According to Sernatur, four million Chileans are planning to take a holiday over the break. Transit authorities expect over 200,000 vehicles to exit the greater Santiago Metropolitan area Friday and Saturday. Santiaguinos will be leaving the city in quest of a more rural kind of experience, in the mountains or at the ocean side, seeking quality time with family and friends.

Popular domestic destinations include such Region IV and Region V towns as La Serena and Valparaiso. Sernatur, the government's tourism promotion agency, reported last Thursday that Region IV appears to be an especially popular this year, as hotels in La Serena, Coquimbo, and the Elqui

Valley will be at capacity this weekend. Meanwhile, travel agencies have also reported that jet-setting Chileans plan to take off to such international destinations as Mendoza and Buenos Aires, Argentina and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Meteorologists warned that most regions throughout Chile will experience less-than-desirable weather during the national holiday celebration. They predict frequent showers, along with temperatures in the 50s in southern Chile towns such as Valdivia and Pucon. Meanwhile, cloudiness will pervade in the Central Valley and Norte Chico. Temperatures should be slightly warmer in those areas.

Jeannette Calderón, a meteorologist at Chile's Meteorological Association, elaborated on Santiago's forecast.

"In Santiago, the week will be mostly cloudy with occasional sunshine. The high temperatures will not go above 17 or 18 degrees Celsius (64 degrees Fahrenheit). Meanwhile, because it will be so cloudy, the low temperatures will be quite chilly —somewhere around 4 or 5 degrees Celsius (41 degrees Fahrenheit)." (ST, Sept. 12)

The Santiago Times staff will be partaking in the celebrations, too, which means we are sharing with you early this week a variety of essays about Chile - rather than our normal hard news coverage. The newspaper will be back in the groove with full news reporting on Thursday, September 20.

SOURCES: LA NACIÓN, LA TERCERA, EL MERCURIO
By Matt Malinowski and Beatrice Karol Burks
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DOWNTIME AT THE SANTIAGO TIMES

**We're Taking A Three Day Break
- But Stay Tuned, We're Back On Thursday!**

(September 18, 2007) The Santiago Times staff is vigorously partaking in Chile's Independence Day celebrations (*Fiestas Patrias*) this week - soaking up (?) the local culture, as they say. This means there will be new hard news reported Tuesday or Wednesday of this week, although we resume normal news coverage on Thursday.

In the meantime, we are sharing with our readers a few random essays each day - some about Chile, others about things that just caught our fancy. We hope you enjoy today's read, and that you continue reading us in the future.

By Steve Anderson (editor@santiagotimes.cl)

A MODEST SKATE BOARDING GUIDE FOR SANTIAGO, CHILE

Where To Skate, Where To Get Equipment

(Sept. 19, 2007) If skateboarding is your passion, Santiago, Chile might not be first on your list of places to visit with your board. This Latin American city has its downside - an abundance of cobblestone sidewalks and reckless drivers - and doesn't compare well to skating Meccas in California and Barcelona.

Still, skateboarders will be pleased to know that Santiago nurtures a budding skateboard culture and an ever-growing number of skate parks and street spots that would satisfy even the pickiest of skaters.

While still in a very early stage of growth, Santiago's skateboarding culture has come a long way from its humble beginnings of makeshift skateboards and flatground skate parks. Local skateboard, shoe, and clothing companies are now popping up all over the city. The recently inaugurated Parque de Los Reyes - Santiago's first really legitimate skatepark - has made a common sight of young Chileans, skateboard in hand, wearing the latest Vans or Chilean-owned Support Footwear riding on the Metro.

Action sport stores like Adrenalin Board shop have made skateboarding and skateboard fashion easily accessible to the general public, bringing this alternative subculture to mainstream Santiago youth.

Since skateboarding in Santiago is still new and considered to be a positive activity by the public at large, skateboarders here do not have to worry about the police (Carabineros) chasing after them, handing out tickets, or confiscating their boards. The Carabineros generally have more important issues to deal with, like regulating protests over the education system, low wages, or the Transantiago mass transit system.

Considering the city's hassle-free and easily accessible skate environment, and the receptivity of the youth culture to skateboarding resource and fashion trends, Santiago really has a lot to offer the world of skateboarding and will surely continue to grow.

So for visiting gringo skaters in need of some help finding the best spots, here is a small guide of places my board and I found during my long month stay in Santiago in August, 2007:

Parque Bustamante

Located right next to the Parque Bustamante Metro stop, Bustamante is one of the first skate "zones" that the city of Santiago made for skateboarding over a decade ago. Though the park does not offer much besides flatground, banks, and the occasional construction barrier, Parque Bustamante is generally a good place to meet the local skaters. The relaxed atmosphere offers skaters a nice place to warm up or learn new tricks through games of SKATE with the locals. Bustamante is also a good place to get the lowdown on some of the city's good cheap eateries and other local spots.

Baquedano

Looking to catch a little street? One metro stop away from Bustamante, Baquedano hosts a number of bikers and skaters almost every afternoon. It is a centrally-located, favorite hangout for skaters. Despite the heavy pedestrian traffic, which can sometimes make it hard to skate here during peak hours, this spot offers a long manual pad and ledge with lots of potential. Right next to the ledge is a popular stair set that often graces the pages of Chilean skate magazines, such as La Tabla and Chilean skate videos such as Semilla's Germanido. So if you are ready and willing to literally throw your body down this set, this spot certainly has major "wow" potential.

Parque de los Reyes

This park is located a little further down the Linea 5 metro line towards Quinta Normal. Exit at Cumming station and head north on Avenida Ricardo Cumming toward Rio Mapocho, and Parque de los Reyes is just at the end of the Avenida.

This park a real gem for the skateboarding community of Santiago and a dream to skate, provided there aren't too many little kids running around. Boasting fun pool runs and a legitimate street course, Parque de Los Reyes has everything one needs to improve on all levels of skating. It is a well maintained park, free admission, and pad rules are up to you. Since Parque de Los Reyes is currently considered the top skate park in Santiago, you will often find yourself skating with local shop riders and Chilean pros, as well as kids just getting off from school. This park tends to fill up on weekends (particularly Sundays) and holidays, so early mornings are best if you want a couple hours to yourself. Due to the success of the park, the mayor of Las Condes has promoted construction of a similar park in Las Condes, which should be finished by mid-2008.

There are two skateshops located within 100 meters of this park. Rapside Boardshop is on Avenida Presidente Balmaceda, and King's Boardshop is recently opened on Avenida Ricardo Cummings. So if you happen to snap a board while skating, or if you need some new kicks, stop by and support the local Chilean skate businesses.

Mall Florida- Adrenalin indoor bowl.

A mall is not the first place one would think to skate, but there is a special Adrenalin boardshop on the third floor of Mall Florida, next to metro station Mirador. Inside you will find an array of U.S. and Chilean skate shoes, clothing, and boards, but towards the back of this store and behind a zoo-like viewing window is an indoor wooden bowl. It is fun to skate, but its small size - and the 2,000 pesos (US\$4) entry/membership fee - may be a turn off for most skaters. A purchase from the shop, perhaps, or simply talking up the Chilean employees might get you a free session. This spot is nice solution to a rainy day.

There are Adrenalin Board shops at almost every Santiago mall, offering skaters, surfers and snowboards, the newest products on the market. Adrenalin has been supporting action sports in Santiago for more than a decade. For a list of all Adrenalin locations, products, and news visit, www.adrenalin.cl

Diamond Skateshop - Providencia 2198 local 12 Portal Lyon. Phone: 6584356

Located off the Los Leones metro stop and inside the Portal

Lyon mall, amidst the video game, piercing and tattoo shops, Diamond Skateshop is small in size but big in heart. This Skater-owned shop oozes with skateboarding passion through the art on its walls and a television solely dedicated to skate videos. Inside you will find a wall of shoes ranging from U.S. brands such as DVS, Vox, and Lakai's. Directly opposite is a wall of boards of mostly of Chilean origin like Semilla, Stranger, Love, and even the stores own brand, Diamond skateboards. In the middle of this shop is a moderate selection of skating essentials, and clothing. Diamond skate shop is the perfect place for a good conversation or skate video. This shop is worth supporting. For contact info about Diamond Skateshop email: info@diamondskate.cl

Though this guide only skims the surface of what Santiago has to offer, it is a starting point to help skate-minded travelers get acquainted with the city streets, hopefully evoking a curiosity to explore and discover the rest.

For more information about Skateboarding in Chile, visit:
WWW.Latabla.cl
www.247.cl
www.adrenalin.cl

By Ji-San Lee (editor@santiagotimes.cl)

BLOGGING TOWARDS POLITICAL POWER

A Talk With Chile's Star Blogger - Leo Prieto

(Sept. 19, 2007) (Ed. Note: *Blogging on the Internet is an increasing powerful tool in the political landscape of many counties. And nobody knows that better than 27-year-old Leo Prieto - a self-taught professional blogger, website creator and Internet communications developer. He receives a regular pay check from LAN and other Chilean companies, and is the founder of the successful technology blog FayerWayer, a technology webpage created over a weekend - a response to other media's lack of real interest in new technology.*

Leo's thoughts on technology, government and internet communications earns his site one million readers a month, making him Chile's most influential Internet blogger and spokesperson.

"The Internet is knowledge and it is the most amazing communication platform ever," Prieto tells the Santiago Times one sunny afternoon. "It is such an amazing medium, you can do everything with it."

SANTIAGO TIMES: Why was it important for you to start the FayerWayer blog?

LEO PRIETO: When traditional media talk about technology, they generally just use a press release, rewrite it and publish it. There is no one telling you whether this computer is good or bad, if it is not the best on the market or if the price right. With the blog, we can use a different language. We use swear words and write more directly to our readers. This way we build a community, writing about technology. And we have a very

strong message. We know that we're the lucky ones, having the Internet. But we want more people to have access to the Internet. Chile's government is really proud to have a 30 percent of the country online, but this percentage is actually really low, even if it is the highest in the Latin American region. We promote free software and free access on my blog. Not as in "free beer," but as in freedom to use the technology.

ST: How is internet blogging affecting politics in Chile?

LT: Having blogs is having one more voice talking about a subject. In the old days you had a bunch of newspapers and television shows with their own agendas, left-wing or right-wing. This means that they would treat certain subjects in a specific way, and some readers or viewers would not know about this. With blogging, everyone can have their own media. When they speak, they say honestly who they support, or if they have a certain political, religious or economic view on some matter. And most people only represent themselves. The blogs are much closer to the public and they can actually affect the political agenda.

ST: How can this happen?

LT: A months ago it became known that Chile's government had signed an agreement with Microsoft, for the company to run everything in the government systems. All the *municipales*, the schools, the hospitals and social security would work from Microsoft platforms. This means that all citizens are forced to buy Microsoft products, while the government is saying: "We don't need a software industry in Chile - we'll just use Microsoft."

So I wrote an article on my blog about this. I was really pissed off. While writing this, my partner sat next to me and suggested that we needed to build digital freedom movement! We were just joking on the website, but comments started showing up on the screen almost immediately saying "I can help, I'm a lawyer, I have some free time, I'm a journalist," and so on. By the next very next morning, my partner has created a whole new website. We had a domain, a blog and a petition created in 24 hours. Still, this was not our project, but a community project. And our message was "get organized!" And after just 10 days, representatives of this group were speaking in front of Congress. Thanks to a blog.

ST: What was Congress' reaction to this new movement?

LT: The most important thing that happened is that the Minister of Economy commented in the blog, saying that he was reading it and participating in the discussions. Also, the very same night that the movement was created from the blog, I got a call from the top advisor to the Minister of Economy asking me what our demands were. Senators and deputies have invited people from the movement to talk about the blog. There are always different people going to the meetings, showing the diversity of the movement: young, old, poor, rich, student and workers. This is true democracy with no one leader. This is a new powerful thing that could only happen thanks to the Internet, the community and technology.

ST: You talked about the blog representing different people, including young people. How do you see the young people of Chile participating in politics?

LT: Young people don't trust politicians. I don't either. You always have the sense they only care about you when they need your votes. This is the same all over the world. This

Sunday I was in Iquique, giving a lecture to 100 young students. And they said they don't trust their teachers or any authority figure because they don't think that they are honest. But they thought that I was very honest. I'm proud of that. I never really thought that honesty was really that important to them. Most young people don't want to get involved in politics, but they are getting involved without knowing it.

ST: Do you think the Internet can help get more young people involved in politics?

LT: Absolutely. It can help young people voice their opinion without their really knowing that they are involved in politics. They can join communities or vote on certain topics. But they think they are "just" joining communities of like-minded people, and not practicing politics.

ST: Is it important, then, to say that this is NOT a political activity to get young people to join in?

LT: I think you have to be very honest. If you are doing political things, you have to say it. The digital technology movement, for example. I don't think this is a political movement. But when I analyse the movement, it certainly is, since it is trying to change policies. But it is not a traditional kind of politics. No one wants to get a vote out of it. No one wants to occupy a powerful position. This is what happens in traditional politics, but this is a movement, not a political party.

ST: Can you see any democratic tendencies when people use the Internet?

LT: One of the things I love about the Internet is the way it was created, the way it has evolved. It is very anarchistic. No one rules the internet. There is a base and you are sort of creating democratic practises on top of an anarchistic system. The base, then, ends up being truly democratic. Building communities is the big Internet secret, as it is allowing people to interact. I like to call it the two way Internet. Traditionally, we have been consumers and just a few have contributed. But today many people are getting involved. Even just going on Wikipedia (a free on-line encyclopaedia) to fix one small spelling error, you are contributing and not just consuming, which is really democratic.

ST: But you just talked about the Microsoft monopoly. Doesn't that limit internet users?

LT: Yes, it does. The danger is that, when using the Internet, you need compatible technological equipment. Today, you can log on the Internet from your cell phone or from cars, even. But the personal computer is still monopolized by Microsoft. This is a closed system and having this monopoly is a danger because any one using the system has to work according to Microsoft, which makes the company increasingly powerful.

Many governments around the world are ignorant of this. I hear our own President Bachelet saying that one of her four pillars of government is getting people closer to the information society using the Internet. This has not happened yet, and she only has two more years left. The government keeps saying: "We are the most technology developed country in the region," but our region is, after Africa, the second least technologically developed part of the world. So being a leader here means nothing. It is like South Africa saying they are the leader of Africa. You don't have to compare yourself with the ones that doing worse. Brazil, Norway and Japan understands the danger of having an entire government system working

under one company, and especially when that company comes from a foreign country. You can't control it. Imagine if we went to war with the United States. Microsoft could cut off the entire system. And the majority of all countries are run on Microsoft computers.

ST: How are Chilean policy makers handling technological developments?

LT: They are all really worried about turning Chile into a more developed country. But all their policies are concerned about protecting mining, copper, forest, salmon and wine industries, basically all the natural resources. So if they are saying that we are the most technologically developed country, why is there is no Minister of Technology? We have a Minister of Mining! Why are they signing a deal with Microsoft, killing all potential software industries in Chile? It is so backwards! If the government spent half of the amount of money it is now spending on the Transantiago fiasco, every single kid in Chile could have a computer. It could revolutionize education.

ST: Can the internet and blogging can help change government?

LT: The people in power are increasingly reading and listening to blogs. And they are participating. The top boss of telecommunications in Chile comments on FayerWayer. We are getting heard – this is the most amazing thing. After I publish something important on the FayerWayer blog, it shows up in the newspapers or on TV a few days later. The next government will probably have a blog too.

ST: What would you like to see happening?

LT: There are four pillars that would help the next generation. First, we need to change education; people have to know what they can do with technology and learn about it in school. Second, we need equipment and we need to give people access to computers. Third, we need cheaper and higher speed for Internet in Chile. And, finally, we need free access to software and free information. It is of no value if the next Paulo Neruda wants to write the most amazing poems ever, but he can't write them on his computer but he has to pay US\$200 for Microsoft software.

ST: So, you think that the government lacks ambition when it comes to technology?

LT: First of all, I think the government is ignorant of technology. It has bad advisors who give in to pressure from lobbies and companies. The government does not know what it is doing. It is focusing on all the non-renewable natural resources, which can only last so long. One day copper WILL run out. I've heard this saying - that maturity is having the capability to being able to look ahead, to have a long-term vision. This is when you realize that this country is very immature.

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