

Day 34 – Arrival in Santiago, Chile [Thursday 24-Feb-2011]

We arrived in NYC, after over 14 hours of flying from Dubai. We had to go through Immigrations, Customs and then pick up our luggage first. All came through fine. It took us a while to pick up everything. We hunted down the outgoing gate and realized that it would not open until 4PM. We talked with a girl from Chile who was returning from 7-8 months on the road, the last three of which were spent in India. She gave us a tip to check out Sushi in town, since there was plenty of fresh fish available.



Sunrise over Chile as we approach Santiago

It took us 56 ½ hours, door to door, to travel from Phuket to Santiago. This included five flights and about 30 hours in the air as well as two nights on planes.

Once we arrived in Santiago, we took our things and headed for Immigration. We waited in line for 20 minutes only to be told that we did not have the “tax” stamp in our passports. The Chileans apparently charge a “reciprocity tax” to a small number of countries, including the US. The fee is \$140 US per person. I can only assume that this is a tit-for-tat in response to costs for Chileans to apply for a US visa.

Once through immigration, we headed for Customs. Our bags arrived fine. We used the opportunity to buy a bottle of tax-free rum. I did, of course, have to re-do a number of forms in customs because they were not filled in right. Once through, I took out some money and we then headed outside. We had pre-arranged a taxi van from the airport to the hostel through the hostel. There are many taxi drivers that operate out of the Santiago airport and we had been advised that it is easy to get charged a lot.

When I got about 10 meters from the taxi, a man in taxi uniform comes up and grabs my luggage cart and then pushes it up the final bit. He tried to help me load our three bags even though he was not the actual driver. He spoke English. One word: Tip. He kept repeating himself about that a number of times. I did not give him any. He had not helped me in a way that I asked for.



Mountain tops are sticking up through the clouds as we get closer to Santiago



Interesting clothes worn by the stewardesses at the Emirates Airlines

The ride to the hostel took about 1 hour, partly because the driver had to let off other passengers. I talked with a girl from California who had come down here to teach English. She had apparently done that in Italy and Poland before. She had a degree in Art History and did not seem to know what she wanted to do in life, so this trip down was a way to buy time.



La Chimba Hostela in Santiago, Chile. Our room is the top window on the right

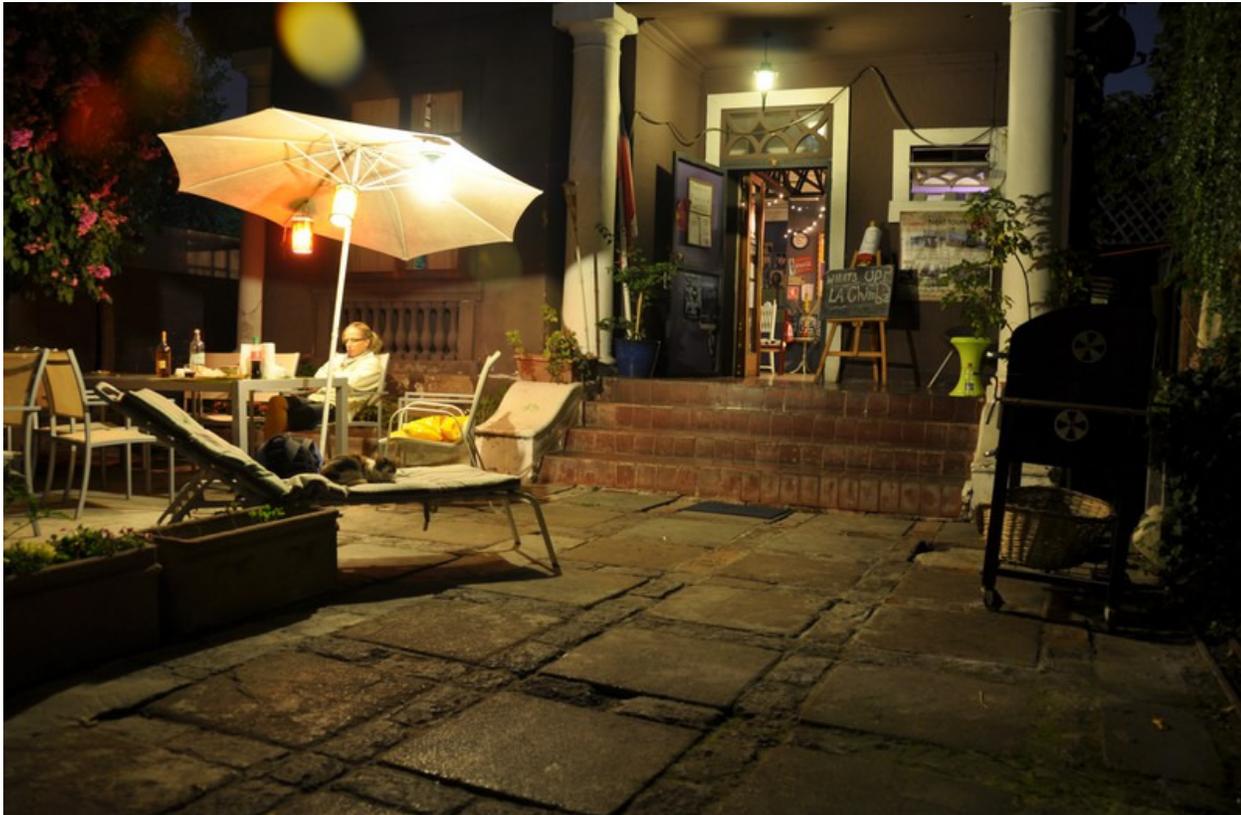
The hostel itself is set in a neighborhood with mainly two story houses. It appears to be a former residence that was converted in to a hostel. It seemed nice. Once we got to the hostel I realized that I had forgotten my Kindle on the plane. I asked for help in the hostel to call the airline. That was a royal waste of time. Nobody at the airline wanted to take responsibility for anything so we kept being given the run around. I think I can forget that Kindle. It is history.



Lunch at a local Chilean restaurant in Santiago

After we had showered (hot water is not working most of the time) we walked around the corner to eat lunch at a Chilean restaurant. They did not speak English and I do not read Spanish well enough to know what I am ordering, so it was a bit of a crap shoot. But it tasted fine. When we got back, we decided we need to take a nap. I was running on fumes at that point when it came to sleep.

In the evening we sat and talked with some other customers of the hostel. Two of them were from France and they were 6 weeks into an 8 month trip. Right now they were exploring South America. Two girls were from Arizona and they had been teaching English along with a gay son of a southern Baptist minister, who was also at the table. His dad was not exactly thrilled by his son being a homosexual and we can relate to that sentiment from the Bible belt.



Lilli is sitting in the yard of La Chimba Hostela in Santiago, Chile

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