

## **Phil and Carol in Santiago**

Later along our way, we decided to get a bird's eye view of the city by going to the observation deck called Sky Costanera. It's part of the Costanera Center, which is Chile's largest shopping mall and South America's tallest building. From here you can contemplate the city from above with some great views. All in all, we had a great day. My Fit Bit battery went dead somewhere over 20,000 steps, but we figured it was somewhere between 25 – 30,000 steps that felt like 40,000.



Today we slept in a bit to catch up on our sleep and then picked up



tickets to the Hop-on Hop-off sightseeing bus. We used this as our mode of transportation around the city today, but traffic proved to be a challenge for a couple of reasons. First, the Chinese President was in town, so they were diverting traffic. Second, there was a downtown protest for higher wages going on, so they were diverting traffic for this also. Third, there was one red light out on our route with no policeman directing traffic here since, presumably, they were all busy diverting traffic from the previously mentioned items and routing them through this one broken light. It took us over an hour to get past this point!

One of the highlights was taking the funicular up San Cristobal Hill in Metropolitan Park. There are some great views of the city from this point almost 3000 feet above sea level. At the top is also the large statue of the Madonna with outstretched arms – a replica of the one in the Spanish square in Rome, only larger.



Today we are heading out-of-town to see some of the surrounding areas. Santiago sits at the foot of the Andes Mountains, so we hired a car and driver/guide, Juan, to show us nearby mountains. Juan is a grandfather who speaks very good English although he has never taken any courses to learn it. All the English he has learned is from leading tourists over the last 40 years. We spent a great day with Juan, a man full of information and obviously proud of his homeland

of Chile. We learned much history, identified various plants and learned about the animals of the area, and talked about his family, his deceased wife of four years and his new girlfriend. We gradually drove higher and higher into the mountains. Just when we thought we should be about at the top Juan turned unto a side road, lowered the windows and turned off the air conditioning, explaining that at this point he needed the added power to the engine to climb the steep



hills! And here came the switch-backs. One hairpin turn after another. In fact, while most places mark their roads with mile markers for identification, here they have curve numbers. In the steepest section, there were over 50 of these hairpin curve markers. After coming down from the mountains, Juan took us to a local Chilean place for a four-in-the-afternoon lunch. I had a local corn souffle, Carol had beef stew with beef, potatoes, corn, pumpkin, carrots and rice. It was all delicious. We encountered a fox beside the road and got out to take pictures. After a while, Juan got an apple from the trunk of the car and rolled it over to the fox at which point the fox picked up his treat and trotted away. All and all this was a great trip. Now it's time to head home.