

# Travel

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CHILE

## HEART OF THE HILLS

A port city known for poetry, savory food, worldly influences, Valparaíso has created itself

By Joe Ray  
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VALPARAÍSO — Pablo Neruda would be proud. Mere moments after arriving in the city the poet and Nobelist once called home, we set out to track down a mysterious lead and find the heart of this place by starting with its stomach.

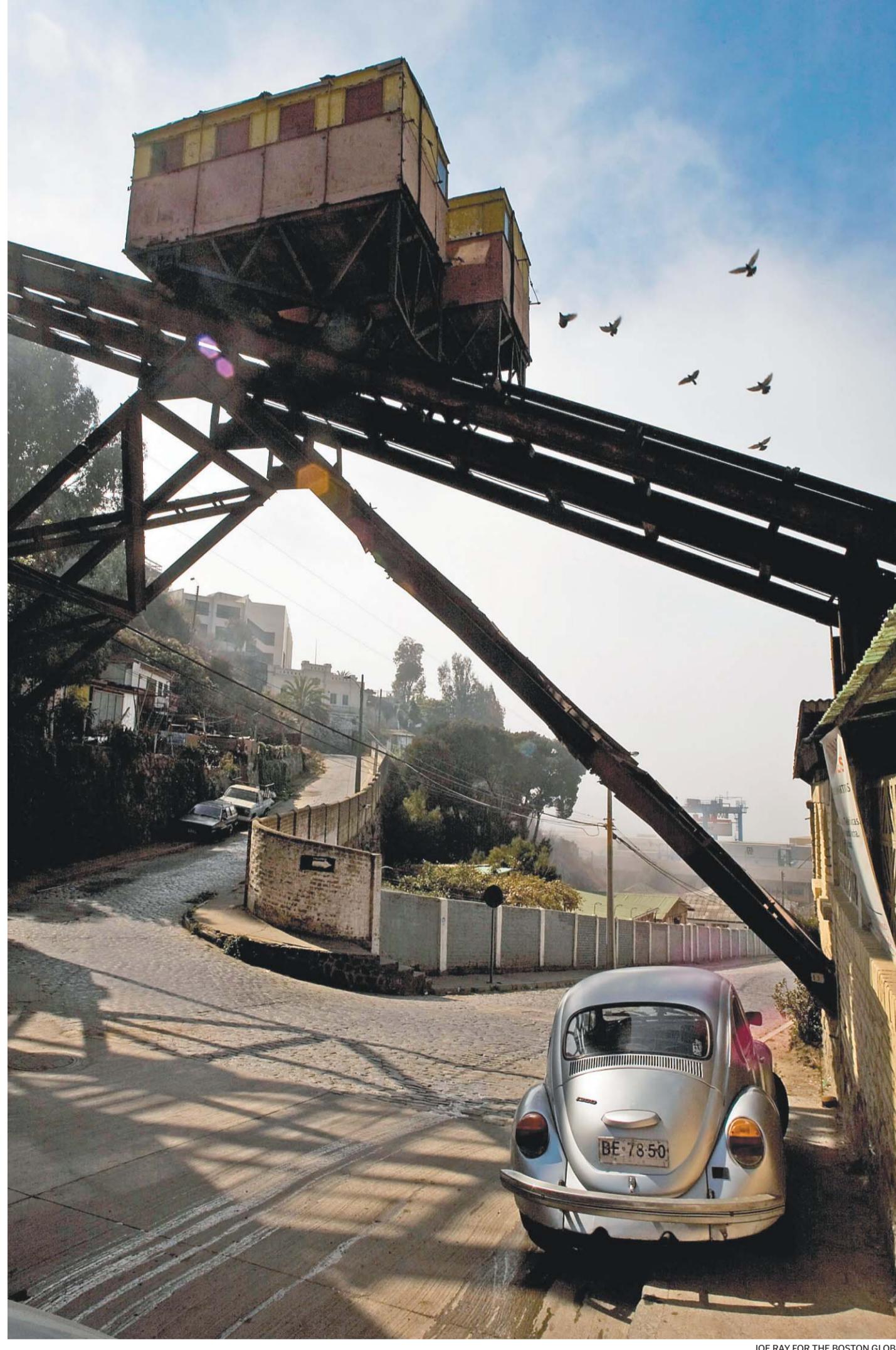
Though ostensibly writing about himself in his "Autoretrato," Neruda might as well have been writing

about the quirky charms of Valparaíso and its people.

*For my part, I am, or believe I am . . .  
... monumental of appetite, a tiger for sleeping,  
quiet in joy, inspector of the nocturnal heavens,  
invisible worker, persistently irregular . . .*

With two friends, one a lifetime local, I head out to find an unmarked restaurant called Los Deportistas, named for its proximity to a soccer field. We buzz across the city's ramshackle flat center in a pint-sized public bus, picking up the port's dock and market workers along with uniformed grade-schoolers on their way home for lunch, getting an accidental slice of life as we

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A vintage "ascensor," or elevator, transports people up one of Valparaíso's many nearly vertical hills.

JOE RAY FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE



BRIAN SCHOTT FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

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JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF

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