



Elevators of Valparaíso

Chile

With its labyrinth of interconnecting stairways, cobblestone alleys, pedestrian plazas, and vistas, Bellavista Hill is one of the most distinctive of Valparaíso's 45 hill neighborhoods. The majority of the houses in the neighborhood were constructed between 1880 and 1940 of oak and Douglas Pine with sheet metal façades. A series of sharply inclined cable cars, called the Elevators of Valparaíso, transport people and goods along the steep topography.

The Elevators of Valparaíso have been included on the 2014 Watch to emphasize the continuing need for the restoration of the city's most picturesque feature and an important vehicle for social interaction. The elevators have served as the main method of transportation in the city and were fundamental to its urban development. They symbolize Valparaíso's preeminence as a maritime center, a position it lost after the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914. Of the 31 original elevators, only 15 remain, of which just 7 are operational. The loss of these vital transit arteries has had negative impacts on the city. A plan unifying community, municipal, and private entities in a collective effort to protect and maintain the elevators is needed to ensure their long-term survival and the revitalization of important neighborhoods in Valparaíso.