

NEIGHBOURHOOD ON THE UP

Settled by immigrant artisans in the 19th century, Santiago's Italian quarter is carving out a new

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHS GABRIEL O'RORKE



Clockwise from top left: the terrace at Carménère Eco-Hotel; El Emporio de Dominga sells traditional Chilean crafts in a Creole style; cheesecake at Café de la Candelaria; a blue ceramic bird with cage at interiors store Amoblé; inside Carménère Eco-Hotel; Xoco Por Ti chocolate bar; sofas and wall art at Italia Mia shopping centre and studios

Barrio Italia, Santiago, Chile

reputation for itself, with beautiful furniture and crafts, boutique cafés and antique bargains

SLEEP

When it opened in June 2013, **Carménère Eco-Hotel** became Barrio Italia's first upmarket hotel. This converted 1930s townhouse, which has retained its original parquet floors, has five bedrooms named after Chilean wine valleys: Aconcagua, Maipo, Casablanca, Colchagua and – the best of the bunch – Curico, which opens onto a leafy garden. Wine and cheese tastings are held in the cellar. *Maria Luisa Santander* 292 (+56 2 2204 6372; www.hotelcarmenere.com). Doubles from about £110

EAT

Bare brick walls, bistro-style pendant lights and harlequin tiles lend **Casa Luz** a cool, New York-style vibe. It's also the best place for Saturday lunch, while the long bar serves a mean pisco sour, and the terrace, with its colourful paper lanterns, is straight out of *Alice in Wonderland*. The owners met in Barcelona, so *patatas bravas* have made it onto the menu, but otherwise there's locally caught fish – grouper with quinoa risotto or *merluza austral* (hake) – and an unmissable deconstructed apple strudel. *Avenida Italia* 805 (+56 2 2918 7204; www.casaluzrestaurant.cl). About £35 for two

■ **Lusitano** has the best roof terrace in the area. The owner's grandparents came to Chile from Portugal in 1910, and the restaurant pays tribute to his heritage. Fake grass underfoot lends a somewhat surprising Wimbledon vibe, but limited menu hits the spot with old-school dishes such as *costillar de cerdo a la Lusitana* (pork ribs cooked in honey and mustard). Be sure to save room for a rice pudding, flan or crème brûlée. *Avenida Córdell* 1414 (+56 9 9710 1381; www.lusitano.cl). About £25 for two

■ Family-run **Restaurante y Trattoria Da Noi** is one of Barrio Italia's oldest restaurants and has a substantial Italian menu (truffle risotto, pumpkin tortellini). Before tucking into a huge plate of fresh handmade pasta, poke your head into the kitchen to watch the cook in a floury apron flinging pizza dough around. The Da Noi is where, in 1998, a group of friends met to discuss the arrest of Pinochet on London's Harley Street. Angered by the Chilean media's timid coverage of his detainment, the friends decided to found a left-wing newspaper, naming it *The Clinic* in recognition of the scene of his capture. *Avenida Italia* 1791 (+56 2 2274 2001; www.danoi.cl). About £20 for two

SNACK

The loveliest venue in Barrio Italia for afternoon tea (known in Chile as 'onces'), **Café de la Candelaria** has dainty doll's-house chairs and tables set around a little fountain in a leafy courtyard. Try the Chilean classic of toast with mashed avocado, followed by passionfruit cheesecake and a steaming pot of tea. *Avenida Italia* 1449 (+56 2 2880 4137; www.cafedelacandelaria.cl). About £15 for two

■ **Xoco Por Ti** is a brightly painted wooden cabin serving possibly the best hot chocolate ever. Five different types of cocoa (Peruvian, Ecuadorian, Brazilian, Venezuelan and Bolivian) are used in the drinks and the Swiss-Chilean owners (see 'My Barrio Italia', overleaf) also make frappés or ice cream in the summer. *Avenida Italia* 1634 (+56 9 5774 2673; www.xocoporti.com). About £6 for two

DRINK

The barrel outside **La Ibérica** suggests there are good times to be had within. Full of noisy Spaniards eating paella and drinking *cerveza*, the bar gets very busy at weekends, particularly when Real Madrid are playing. *Avenida Italia* 1250 (+56 9 5406 8065; www.laiberica.cl). About £10 for two

Don't miss FOR AUTHENTIC CHILEAN HOME-COOKING, HEAD TO **BAR EL HOYO** (ON CALLE CREDITO NEAR SANTA ISABEL). OPEN MONDAY TO FRIDAY, LUNCHTIMES ONLY, THIS SIMPLE WOODEN HOUSE OFFERS A SET MENU OF HOMELY, TRADITIONAL DISHES, INCLUDING CORN PIE, FISH STEW, AND MEAT AND MASHED POTATO WITH A CHILEAN SALAD OF TOMATOES AND ONIONS. THE HELPINGS ARE HUGE AND SERVED WITH FRESH FRUIT JUICE, ALL FOR JUST £4.

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■ **The Jazz Corner** is the place to go for live music and a glass of wine. With long tables for groups and corners for couples, the bar has a good house red, as well as beer and cocktails, to go with its sharing platters. Try the house tabla with cheese, ham, olives and marinated vegetables. *Santa Isabel 451 (+56 2 2274 9941; www.thejazzcorner.cl).* About £20 for two

SHOP

In a quarter known for selling beautiful furniture, **Amoblé** brings design up to date with clean-cut rattan chairs, rustic coffee tables and coal-coloured sofas. More hand-luggage-friendly are the blue ceramic birds and wooden ducks. *Avenida Italia 1372 and 1607 (+56 2 2341 5075; www.amoble.cl)*

■ Minimalist and modern **Blasko** sells chunky, locally made ankle boots and shoes displayed on upturned woodchip boxes. Look out for the limited-edition animal-print range. *Avenida Italia 1439, Local 13 (www.blasko.cl)*

■ Stepping into **Byrt & Co** is like entering a psychedelic dream, but once your eyes have adjusted to the blue-and-white-striped wallpaper you'll find all manner of pretty things. Among the gems are hand-painted crockery, metal antelope wall-hooks and glassware. *Avenida Italia 1476*

■ **El Emporio de Dominga** specialises in traditional Chilean crafts in a Creole style, and is stocked with hand-woven blankets, felt trilbies and mate gourds. There's some very smart leatherwork, including wallets and belts decorated with woven geometric designs. *Avenida Italia 1380, Local A (+56 9 5708 4524; www.emporiodedominga.cl)*

■ With its mixture of local and imported pieces, **Area Design** is the most stylish furniture store in the neighbourhood. You'll find statement chairs, studded leather stools and lots of glass bottles. It's a fun place to explore. *Avenida Italia 1354 (+56 2 2341 7313; www.areadesign.cl)*

SEE

Barrio Italia is like an open-air gallery, thanks in part to its antiques stores. These treasure troves sprung up in the 1990s, and are filled to bursting with wobbly stacks of chairs, spilling out onto the pavement. For bargains, explore the hidden corridors behind the shopfronts. Out in the street, men resurrect furniture with sandpaper and paintbrushes as retro music plays on a gramophone. *Avenida Italia with Caupolicán. Not open Sundays or Mondays*

■ **Galeria de arte Trece** supports modern Chilean art by displaying paintings by a different artist each month, and is easily identified by the colourful mural outside. Recent exhibitions include the vibrant cubist creations of Isabel Brinck and nudes by Felipe Achondo. The café sells empanadas and Chile's famous *torta de mil hojas* (a little like millefeuille but with dulce de leche and cream). *Girardi 1480 (+56 2 2710 3361; www.galeria13.cl)*

DO If you crave action, **Casa Boulder** has 250 square metres of climbing walls waiting to be scaled. Sponsored by North Face, it's great for hardcore rock climbers, and there are 90-minute courses for those who fancy learning how to shimmy up a vertical wall. *Avenida Italia 875 (+56 2 2724 7252; www.casaboulder.cl)*



Clockwise from top left: brightly painted chairs at Amoblé; the entrance and mural at Restaurante y Trattoria Da Noi; roof terrace at Portuguese restaurant Lusitano's; wooden ducks and more at Amoblé; vintage vinyl for sale on Avenida Italia; Blasko boots. Centre, antique bird art at Byrt & Co



MY BARRIO ITALIA

Javieria Ramírez Arévalo
CO-FOUNDER OF CHOCOLATE SPECIALIST XOCO PORTI

'**Barrio Italia** wakes at 11am, and I like to start my day with a cup of tea from the huge selection at **Tetería té Deseo**. At the weekend, I'll go to **Las Hermanas de Trujillo**, a great place to sample typical Peruvian puddings, and during the week there's the homemade empanadas at **Café Emporio Da Noi**. I love the neighbourhood's furniture shops, especially those selling rustic furniture made from rauli, a local red wood. **La Romerita Marionetas** at **Estación Italia** is run by a guy who makes puppets and it's a great place to find an original gift. At **Cachafaz** in Patio Bellavista you can learn to dance the tango to live music, and for the more athletic there's **Cambré** at **Italia Mia**, which runs pole-dancing classes. Obviously my favourite place is **Porta Azul**, the courtyard that's home to Xoco Por Ti, our hot-chocolate bar. With its fountain, it feels like a little corner of Greece.'