



# Trekking the Planet

Discovering the Cultural and Natural Significance of the World



## Where are we now?

- Darren and Sandy are in Santiago, Chile, located at 33° S, 73° W.
- We have traveled 67,895 miles (109,311 kilometers) from our starting point in California.



## People and Culture

- The Atacama Desert is sparsely populated, with most cities located along the Pacific coast. It lies within the Arica-Parinacota, Tarapacá, Antofagasta and Atacama regions of Chile.
- Some interior areas, oases and valleys have been populated for more than 1,000 years. The Arica-Parinacota region holds the largest population of indigenous peoples of Chile including Quechua, Aymara, Atacameno, Diaguita, Mapuche and Kaweskar.
- Much of the Arica-Parinacota and Tarapaca regions were once part of Peru. They were taken by Chile in 1883 at the close of the War of the Pacific. The region was once important economically as a site of (saltpeter) mining.
- The largest cities in Atacama are Arica (pop. 185,000), Iquique (pop. 216,000) and Antofagasta (pop, 296,000). Calama (pop. 138,000) is the largest inland city in the Atacama Desert.
- The Antofagasta Region is the heart of Chile's mining industry. It represents 53% of Chile's mining output, led by copper and followed by potassium nitrate, gold, iodine and lithium. The mining industry accounts for 94% of the region's exports. Fishing and manufacturing also contribute to the income of the area.

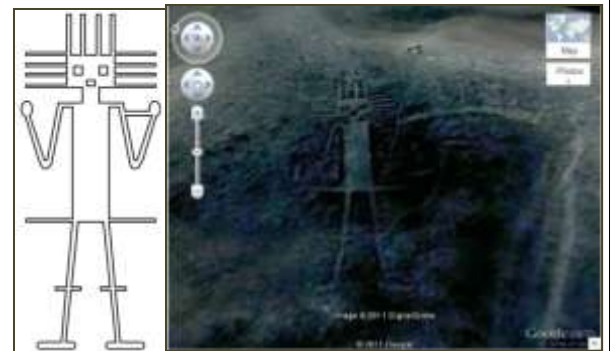


*Iglesia San Pedro de Atacama*  
(source: [Flickr.com/scspons](http://Flickr.com/scspons))

### Atacama Giant

The Atacama Giant is a large anthropomorphic geoglyph in the Atacama Desert, Chile. Located in the Atacama it is the largest prehistoric anthropomorphic figure in the world with a height of 390 feet (119 meters). It represented a deity for the local inhabitants 1,000 years ago. The figure was an early astronomical calendar used to predict rain.

source: [Wikipedia.org](http://Wikipedia.org)



*Atacama Giant*

(sources: [Wikipedia.org](http://Wikipedia.org), [Google Earth](http://Google Earth))



*South American Gray Fox (Zorro)*  
(source: [Flickr.com/andrea\\_ugarte](http://Flickr.com/andrea_ugarte))

## Salar de Atacama

Salar de Atacama is the largest salt flat in Chile. It is located 34 miles (55 kilometers) south of San Pedro de Atacama. It is surrounded by mountains and has no drainage outlets. Large volcanoes dominate the landscape. The Salar of Atacama is the world's largest and purest active source of lithium.

source:

[Wikipedia.org](http://Wikipedia.org)



*Dry lake in Salar de Atacama region with the Licancabur volcano in the background.*  
(source: [Wikipedia.org/Francesco\\_Mocellin](http://Wikipedia.org/Francesco_Mocellin))

## Nature and Environment

- The Atacama Desert is a 600-mile (1,000 kilometer) strip of land on the Pacific coast, west of the Andes Mountains. The Atacama is surrounded by the less-arid areas of Sechura Desert, Altiplano, Puna de Atacama and Norte Chico.
- The average rainfall in the desert portion of the Antofagasta region is just 0.04 inch (1 millimeter) per year. It is known as the driest place on earth. Some weather stations in the Atacama have never received rain.
- The Loa River is a U-shaped river. At 273 miles (440 kilometers) long, it is Chile's longest river and the main watercourse in the Atacama Desert.
- The protected areas within the Atacama Desert include Pan de Azúcar National Park, Pampa del Tamarugal National Reserve and La Chimba National Reserve.
- The Atacama is the home of many animals including the South American Gray Fox. Other animals include the Culpeo Fox, Guanaco and European Hare. The shoreline area is home to marine mammals such as the Marine Otter and the South American Sea Lion. Among the birds are the Humboldt Penguin and Peruvian Pelican.

## Our Plans

- We are staying in Chile's capital city, Santiago, for a few days. Afterwards, we will visit the northern city of Coquimbo, near the Atacama region. Our sea voyage back to the U.S. will then take us next to the countries of Peru and Ecuador.
- As we move north, send us any questions you might have and we will try to include our answers!

## More Information

- <http://warofthepacific.com/>
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous\\_peoples\\_of\\_the\\_Americas#Chile](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_peoples_of_the_Americas#Chile)
- <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/features/world/south-america/chile/atacama-text>
- <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0308/feature3/>
- [http://www.idrc.ca/EN/Themes/Natural\\_Resources/Pages/ArticleDetails.aspx?PublicationID=698](http://www.idrc.ca/EN/Themes/Natural_Resources/Pages/ArticleDetails.aspx?PublicationID=698)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dakar\\_Rally](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dakar_Rally)

## Very Large Telescopes

The ESO Very Large Telescope (VLT) is located in the Atacama Desert of Chile. The four telescopes work together (using a technique called interferometry), allowing the astronomers there to see details up to 25 times finer than any of the individual telescopes.



sources: [Flickr.com/ESO](http://Flickr.com/ESO) (Text),  
[YouTube/NikoBustos](http://YouTube/NikoBustos) (6:24)

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