

# The Clearest Night Sky? In Chile

Star gazing is becoming a popular activity of globetrotters seeking romance and beauty in remote destinations.



The Atacama Desert of northern Chile is a dream destination for stargazers, with high altitude, a virtually cloudless climate (300 clear nights per year), and sparse settlements that minimize distracting light pollution and radio interference.

A series of near-perfect conditions such as dry clear nights, low light pollution, and high elevations, have made Chile a favourite location for research observatories. Diego Mardones, Astronomer from the University of Chile comments, “If you want to find another [observation area] like Chile, your options are Antarctica or space”.

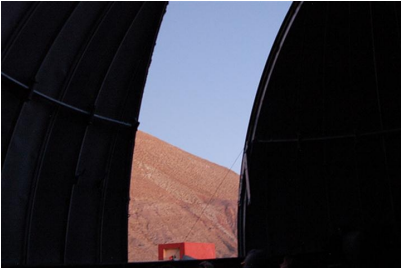
It’s no surprise that Chile provides the view for 40% of worldwide astronomical observation and with the addition of three new telescopes, LSST (Large Synoptic Survey Telescope), GMT (Giant Magellan Telescope), and the Alma (Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array), Chile will produce over 50% of worldwide astronomical viewing.

Chile’s tourism sector runs all sorts of astronomically focused tours from naked eye trips into the Atacama desert to the ‘Route of the Stars’ that runs from observatory to observatory across the length of Chile.



The area surrounding La Serena is home to many of the world’s biggest observatories including the European Southern Observatory. Most can be visited only during the day and as part of a guided tour but the Cerro Marmalluca Community Observatory is open for night-time viewing for those who are really looking to explore the Southern hemisphere’s magical night skies in depth.

Chile is a great destination for just getting out into the wild and really losing yourself in the fabulous skies; take a star chart and some binoculars and look out for the infamous Southern Cross and the mind-bogglingly distant Magellanic Clouds.



For a more personal experience, book a room at the Hotel Elqui Domos in the Elqui Valley, where seven geodesic domes feature upstairs bedrooms with detachable roofs so guests can enjoy a stunning view of the heavens from the comfort of their bed.

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