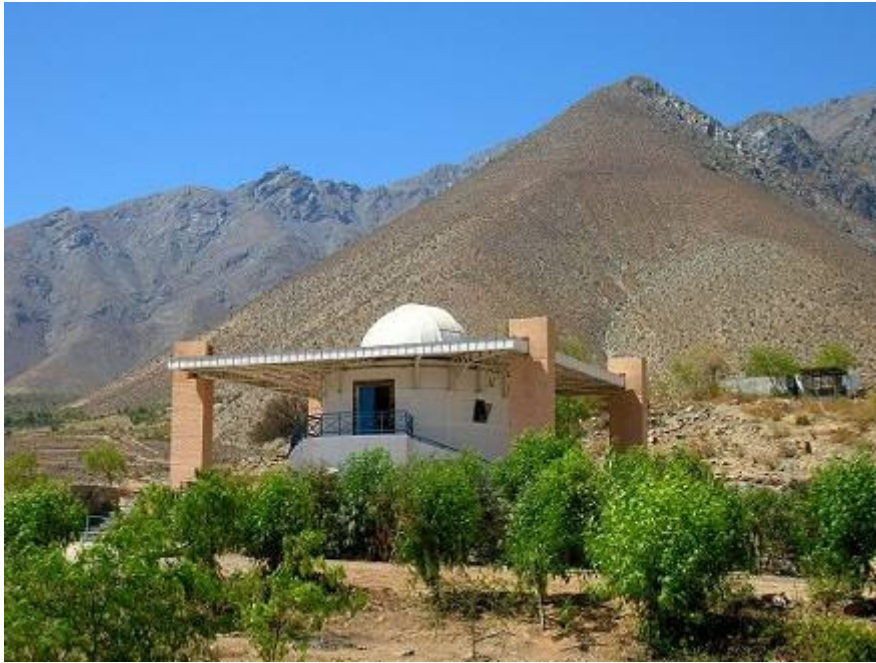


M&R Tours

CHILE

Twinkle twinkle little star... The place where it never rains.

Twinkle twinkle little star,
How I wonder what you are.
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky!



The old nursery rhyme we're all familiar with, first published in 1806. It has a certain nostalgic charm to it. Indeed it comes from a simpler time when we didn't know any better so we had to use poetry to describe the night sky. 200 years later, our understanding of our environment seems to have grown exponentially with each generation.

Within the Southern hemisphere, Chile offers the best of excellent opportunities to study the universe, especially north Chile has the advantage of a clear atmosphere. This, combined with a stable climate and few cities (thus no interference of light), makes Region II, III and IV a paradise for astronomers and visitors. Here more than 300 nights per year have clear skies and it is no accident that three of the worlds' most important scientific observatories are situated in this region. Skies are so clear that up to the eighth magnitude can be observed with the naked eye and the center of a galaxy can be easily seen.

There are four features that provide the district of Vicuña with unique characteristics. One of them is Elqui Valley, the second one is the famous Pisco made in the valley, the third one is the fact that this place witnessed the growth of talented and Nobel Prize winner writer Gabriela Mistral and, last but not least, the fourth of them, is its immense clear sky.

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Aware of the tremendous tourist potential the local skies represent, the municipal authorities of Vicuña resolved to create an astronomic observatory open for visitors: CERRO MAMALLUCA OBSERVATORY, located nine kilometers northeast of the city of Vicuña.

The two-hour evening tours start with a high-tech audiovisual talk on the history of the universe, and end with the chance to look through the telescope. You might see a dazzling display of stars, planets, galaxies, nebulas and clusters, including Jupiter, Saturn's rings, the Orion nebula, the Andromeda galaxy and Sirius. These tours are aimed at utter beginners, but serious astronomers can arrange in-depth, small-group sessions. The observatory also runs less scientific, alternative tours known as "cosmovisión, complete with Andean music.

This amateur observatory with its practical hands on approach and its good location in the hills is increasing its facilities to accommodate the developing interest in Astro-tourism.

Are you looking for an original present and do you want to buy a star? The guide can tell you what procedure to follow.



It is an experience you should not miss!

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