

## OBSERVATORIES

As mentioned earlier, the skies of northern Chile are considered the best in the world for astronomy. A growing number of Chileans and foreigners are visiting the various facilities to observe the skies over the last decade. However, most of the observatories positioned in the Norte Chico (Third and Fourth Region), since the 60s have been for scientific use only, leaving very little for the tourist. In the mid-90's, a study by European scientists from the European Southern Observatory (ESO) decided to build a new and more sophisticated observatory, this time in the Norte Grande (Second Region), for highly scientific purposes, which will determine and reveal many mysteries in space. The place chosen was Cerro Paranal Observatory, considered the largest in the world.

In Chile, there are three institutions established for astronomical research, being the country with the highest concentration of equipment for these purposes. These institutions are: the Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy (AURA), European Southern Observatory (ESO) and Carnegie Institution.

And what about an observatory for tourism?

It was created in the late 90's with the establishment of the Communal Observatory Center of Mamalluca in 1998 to be precise, on the insides of Vicuña, which focuses exclusively on tourism. Given the increase in this new concept of tourism in the area, their goal was to spread and develop tourism and boost the "culture of the skies" with advanced night observations.

Before you reach the Region of Coquimbo, specifically its interior valleys, we want you to know why the skies of the north of Chile were chosen for Astronomical Tourism. Here are 4 reasons:

- a- A large number of clear-sky nights per year
- b- A particularly dry climate (moisture is the enemy of astronomical observation)
- c- Skies without air pollution
- d- Atmospheric stability, meaning areas where there is very little turbulence.

The Fourth Region has implemented a fairly new system which gives the tourist the possibility of getting closer to space and looking closely at the stars and planets around our galaxy. Aware of this and the tremendous potential of the Elqui skies, various entities of the commune of Vicuña, headed by the Municipality, had the idea of creating an observatory open to the public. This is the Mamalluca. Nonetheless, in the last 2 years, new projects have joined the Mamalluca project, allowing the opening of new astronomical centers dedicated to tourists. They may be a bit smaller, but with an incipient process of expansion and growth. These centers are Collowara, located near the towns of Andacollo and Cruz del Sur, situated in the Limarí Valley. Another more rustic center, but not less new, is the one in Cochiguaz which is called Cerro Cancana.