

EX PLO RA



Atacama Explorations

Our explorations in Atacama are divided into five different altitude zones, each with a set of unique geographic, cultural and biospheric characteristics. All explorations have been designed in order to gradually unveil the territory's essence – either on foot, bicycle or from within the Explora observatory.

Our travelers have the possibility of choosing different explorations every day. These explorations have different lengths and difficulty levels.

Zones

CUENCA DEL SALAR

Hikes

- Kari
- Puricamar
- Huayra
- Cornisas
- Kamur
- Cuchabrache

Overland

- Cordillera de la sal
- Gran Salar
- Tebenquinche
- Kunza

Bike

- Ayllus
- Cejar
- Catarpe
- San Isidro
- Ckuta
- Pidera de la coca
- Tambo

Horseback ride

- Dunas de la chula
- Solor
- Séquiton
- Valle de marte
- Beter

- 3 cordilleras
- Cúcuter
- Valle de la luna
- Río salado

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- Punta del inca
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- Wanaku
- Peñaliri
- Incahuasi

Overland

- Cardones
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Bike

- Arcoiris

Horseback ride

- Gautin

ALTIPLANO

Hikes

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- Altiplano
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High Mountain

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- Toco
- Láscar
- Corona
- Soquete
- Sairecabur
- Colorado

Expedition

- Licancabur

CIELO

Sky

- Astronomía andina

Cuenca del salar

Geometric and seemingly infinite, the Atacama salt flat abruptly interrupts the desert's chromatic continuum.

HIKES

Kari

Duration: 2:45 hrs
Distance: 6,3 km / 3,9 mi

We take a van to the Salt Mountain Range. We begin our walk at a viewpoint with panoramic views to the Moon Valley. We go down a dune and walk along Kari creek, a canyon carved by the erosion of water and surrounded by sedimentary walls of clay, plaster, and salt. We return by van.

Half day | Easy ● ○ ○ ○

Puricamar

Duration: 2:30 hrs
Distance: 4,9 km / 3 mi

We take a van to the Moon Valley. Once there, we begin walking throughout this reserve, among moon-like landscapes with rock formations, natural sculptures and huge sand dunes. We end up with a 360° view of the desert. We return by van.

Half day | Easy ● ○ ○ ○

Huayra

Duration: 2 hrs
Distance: 3,8 km / 2,4 mi

We take a van to the Mars Valley in the Salt Mountain Range, where we begin a walk with views to the different mountain ranges in the region and felling the wind of the area. We descend through sand dunes and continue walking across the valley, where the van will be waiting to take us back.

Half day | Easy ● ○ ○ ○

Cornisas

Duration: 3 hrs
Distance: 8 km / 5 mi

We take a van to the Catarpe Valley, where we will walk along the edges of the Salt Mountain Range, with views to the oasis, the salt field and the mountain ranges that define the geography of this destination. We then cross different dunes of the Mars Valley and return by van.

Half day | Moderate ● ● ○ ○

Kamur

Duration: 3:30 hrs
Distance: 8,5 km / 5,3 mi

We take a van to the Moon Valley to appreciate the different landscapes of the Salt Mountain Range, where erosion by water and wind has originated dunes and unique geological formations that can only be seen here. This hike, from west to east, goes through a path that is not frequently used.

Half day | Moderate ● ● ○ ○

Cuchabrache

Duration: 3 hrs
Distance: 5,8 km / 3,6 mi

We take a van up to the Catarpe Valley, where we begin ascending the Salt Mountain Range. On the way, we'll see petroglyphs and from the top, we can admire the green valley landscapes contrasting with the colors of Salt and Andes Mountain Ranges. This is an ideal introduction to the Atacama region. We return by van.

Half day | Moderate ● ● ○ ○

OVERLAND

Cordillera de la sal

Duration: 3:30 hrs

We take a van to the Salt Mountain Range to see typical desert landscapes: open reddish clay grounds, sand dunes, and sedimentary rock formations. We walk up to the highest point of this mountain range to see the panoramic views. We will take a 30 minute walk through one the least known mountainsides of the Salt Ridge.

Half day | Easy ● ○ ○ ○

Gran Salar

Duration: 4:30 hrs
Distance: 2,1 km / 1,3 mi

We leave in a van to Toconao, located to the south of San Pedro de Atacama. We walk to the village square and then through an area of vegetable gardens. We finally take a van to the Chaxa Lagoon, located in the Los Flamencos National Reserve, an ideal place for bird watching within Atacama's Salt Flat.

Half day | Easy ● ○ ○ ○

Tebenquinche

Duration: 4 hrs

Departure from Explora by van to the northern part of the Salar de Atacama arriving at the Tebenquinche lagoon, habitat for various birds in the area. We can walk along the lagoons to learn more about these special formations with views of the Andes. We will continue by van to Céjar, the salty lagoon where we can bathe and float.

Half day | Easy ● ○ ○ ○

Kunza

Duration: 3:30 hrs

In this exploration we learn about the Atacameño history and culture. We start with a guided tour of an archaeological deposit where we can see ceramic pieces and other historical artifacts fit for a museum. Later on, we move on to the village of Tulo, one of the first settlements. We end the exploration at the mythical desert bookstore.

Half day | Easy ● ○ ○ ○

Catarpe

Duration: 2:30 hrs
Distance: 18 km / 11,1 mi

We bike ride to the San Pedro River and follow its course to Catarpe. We go through the Quito pukará, an old fortress, and cross the Garganta del Diablo (Devil's Throat), a canyon inside the Salt Mountain Range with zigzagging paths between striking rock formations. We return through the same road.

Half day | Easy ● ○ ○ ○

Piedra de la coca

Duration: 4 hrs
Distance: 32,8 km / 20,4 mi

We leave by bicycle to Catarpe through a road that goes up to the Salt Mountain Range. We go through an ancient tunnel before starting a descent that will take us to the Piedra de la Coca, a site with petroglyphs. We continue our trip to the Paciencia plains through stony grounds and on our way back we pass through the Mars Valley.

Half day | Advanced ● ● ● ○

BIKE

Ayllus

Duration: 2:30 hrs
Distance: 21,8 km / 13,5 mi

We bike ride to the archaeological site of Beter, one of the first Atacameño settlements. We get off the bicycle to visit the site and learn about the local history. Next, we continue to the ayllu in Solor to visit the Librería del desierto, the first rural book store in Chile. We return to the hotel by bicycle.

Half day | Easy ● ○ ○ ○

San Isidro

Duration: 3:30 hrs
Distance: 25,5 km / 15,8 mi

We ride our bicycles to the Catarpe Valley in the Salt Ridge. We pedal through switch paths between canyons made of reddish soil in a place known as Garganta del Diablo (Devil's Throat). We visit the San Isidro church into a historic area.

Half day | Moderate ● ● ○ ○

Tambo

Duration: 4 hrs
Distance: 30 km / 18,6 mi

We bike ride to the Catarpe Valley. We ride up to Cuchabrache, through an old road that crosses the Salt Mountain Range. We ride through plaster and crystallized salt creeks. This exploration includes seeing part of the local culture and petroglyphs, as well as the San Isidro church.

Half day | Expert ● ● ● ●

Cejar

Duration: 2 hrs
Distance: 18,1 km / 11,2 mi

We leave by bike from Explora, we will cross different ayllus (old social and agricultural communities atacamañeñas) to enter the northern part of the Atacama salt flat to one of its first lagoons, Laguna Cejar. We can bathe in one of its lagoons.

Half day | Easy ● ○ ○ ○

Ckuta

Duration: 3:30 hrs
Distance: 29 km / 18 mi

We take a van to the Salt Mountain Range and begin bike riding in the Paciencia plains. We travel to the Moon Valley through sandy soil and beautiful landscapes. The return trip is an uneven path that includes different ascents and descents.

Half day | Moderate ● ● ○ ○

HORSEBACK RIDE

Dunas de la chula

Duration: 2:30 hrs
Distance: 9,2 km / 5,7 mi

We horseback ride to the Salt Mountain Range. We go across the San Pedro River and sand dunes, from where we have panoramic views of the Andes Mountain Range and the oasis. Afterwards, we follow through a dry riverbed and come back to Explora through the pampa.

Half day | Easy ● ○ ○ ○

Solor

Duration: 2:30 hrs
Distance: 11 km / 6,7 mi

We travel to the ayllu in Solor, located to the south of San Pedro. Here we can see one of the oasis's most developed farming areas. On our way, we can see typical desert constructions—using adobe and straw roofs—and we go across a small irrigation canal. Before we return, we visit the mythical Librería del desierto.

Half day | Easy ● ○ ○ ○

Séquitior

Duration: 1:45 hrs
Distance: 7,6 km / 4,7 mi

We horseback ride to the ayllus located in Séquitior, Yaye, and Checar, Atacameño social and farming communities that are also considered small oasis in the middle of the desert. Here, vegetable gardens still prevail and the Atacama construction technique using adobe and straw roofs is still seen.

Half day | Easy ● ○ ○ ○

Valle de marte

Duration: 3 hrs
Distance: 14 km / 8,4 mi

We leave the hotel to go to the Mars Valley, where we horseback ride among typical desert landscapes: dunes, reddish sedimentary rock formations and clay grounds. This exploration is perfect to get an idea of the geography and origin of the Salt Ridge.

Half day | Advanced ● ● ● ○

Beter

Duration: 3 hrs
Distance: 11 km / 6,6 mi

In this exploration, we visit the two ayllus, ancient Atacameño farm communities, where we can see the local lifestyle, vegetable gardens and archeological remains. To begin, we will go to the ayllu in Solor. Next we continue to the ayllu dunes of Beter, one of the first Atacameño settlement.

Half day | Advanced ● ● ● ○

3 cordilleras

Duration: 4 hrs
Distance: 20 km / 12,6 mi

We horseback ride to the Catarpe Valley through a road immersed in the oasis, where we will be able to trot and gallop before climbing up a ledge in the Salt Mountain Range. On our return to Explora, we ride around the ledge with panoramic views of the three mountain ranges and descend through dunes to the Mars Valley.

Half day | Advanced ● ● ● ○

Cúcuter

Duration: 6 hrs
Distance: 36,5 km / 22,7 mi

We horseback ride to the Moon Valley, explore its clay grounds, and see landscapes that seem to be from another world. Afterwards, we go for lunch to the ayllu in Cúcuter, an oasis whose colors contrast with the desert landscape and where the whitish colors of Atacama's Salt Flat begin to appear.

Full day | Advanced ● ● ● ○

Valle de la luna

Duration: 4 hrs
Distance: 23 km / 14,5 mi

We travel to the Salt Mountain Range, going through different dunes and rock formations. As we go along, among trots and gallops, we ride into the Moon Valley, a site whose lunar landscapes have given Atacama its worldwide fame. During this ride, we explore pristine and solitary landscapes.

Half day | Advanced ● ● ● ○

Río salado

Duration: 6 hrs
Distance: 33 km / 20,4 mi

We gallop to the Catarpe Valley through the San Pedro de Atacama oasis, towards the Salt Mountain Range. We go through an archeological site of great value and, after lunch, we go down to the Salado River following its course till its confluence with the Grande River. On our way there, we can see petroglyphs. Afterwards we return to Explora.

Full day | Advanced ● ● ● ○

Quebradas intermedias

As if sliced off from the desert's mantle, the ravines in this zone were created over millions of years by the forces of water and wind. Plunging into the abyss, they are sculptures that only time could shape.

HIKES

Matancilla

Duration: 2:30 hrs
Distance: 5 km / 3,1 mi

We take a van to the Domeyko Mountain Range where we walk following a creek that used to be a route for gathering and bartering caravans. The walk ends at the Rainbow Valley formed by huge multicolored walls of mineral-rich soils. We return by van.

Half day | Easy ● ○ ○ ○

Kezar

Duration: 2 hrs
Distance: 3,4 km / 2,1 mi

We start our exploration at the Puritama River creek. We descend to walk along the creek following the river bed between large rock walls, shrubs and cacti over an irregular terrain. At the end, we arrive at the Puritama Hot Springs to enjoy the amazing properties of these thermal waters.

Half day | Easy ● ○ ○ ○

Punta del inca

Duration: 2:40 hrs
Distance: 3,8 km / 2,3 mi

We take a van to Guatín, a grazing area and junction point of the Puritama and Purifica rivers, and source of the Vilama River. There, we walk along a canyon known as the Valley of the Cacti due to the existence of giant cacti. We cut cross the canyon crossing the river several times and descending along different waterfalls.

Half day | Easy ● ○ ○ ○

Puritama

Duration: 2:30 hrs
Distance: 5,1 km / 3,2 mi

We take a van to Guatín where we begin an ascending walk. We walk for almost 30 minutes along giant cacti up to the Puritama River creek. There, we descend to walk along the river, through rock walls and vegetation. We arrive to the Puritama Hot Springs where we will have some time to relax.

Half day | Moderate ● ● ○ ○

Wanku

Duration: 6 hrs
Distance: 10 km / 6,2 mi

We take a van to the Domeyko Mountain Range, where we walk through trails that were formerly used as transit and bartering routes and where we can still see remains of the Atacameño culture. We continue to the Rainbow Valley, a place with huge multicolored walls that explain the geological shaping of the Atacama region.

Full day | Moderate ● ● ○ ○

Peñaliri

Duration: 6 hrs
Distance: 16 km / 9,9 mi

We take a van to Machuca, an Andean Plateau village. We begin exploring a wetland and then walk along a creek to the Grande River. In this exploration we can see fauna and typical Andean farming terraces. We have lunch at Peñaliri, an abandoned village.

Full day | Moderate ● ● ○ ○

Incahuasi

Duration: 6 hrs
Distance: 14,3 km / 8,9 mi

We start walking in an old farmhouse at the foot of the volcanoes of the Andes mountain range. We will enter the Jorquencal gorge where we will explore the varied vegetation, history and study of the Andean cat in the Puritama reserve. After crossing a varied landscape we will arrive at the Puritama hot springs, to rest there. Return by van to Explora.

Full day | Advanced ● ● ● ○

OVERLAND

Cordones

Duration: 4:30 hrs

We go by van to the town of Guatín, where we will walk through the beginning of the Vilama canyon, with various species of cactaceae, flora and fauna of this area. We continue by van to the Puritama Reserve.

Half day | Easy ● ○ ○ ○

Quebradas

Duration: 4 hrs

We take a van to the Yervas Buenas archaeological site located in the Domeyko Mountain Range. Here we can see different styles of petroglyphs.

We continue to the Rainbow Valley, where a special formation with varied shades of colors welcomes us to walk through the valley.

Half day | Easy ● ○ ○ ○

BIKE

Arcoiris

Duration: 2:45 hrs
Distance 15,1 km / 9,4 mi

We take a van to the Domeyko Mountain Range (one hour travel), where we will pedal through a path to the valley creek between multicolored walls. Guanacos, other typical fauna and the varied flora of the area can be seen during this exploration. We return by van.

Half day | Moderate ● ● ○ ○

HORSEBACK RIDE

Gautin

Duration: 5 hrs
Distance: 24 km / 14,9 mi

We go to the Catarpe Valley and continue to go through a place known as Garganta del Diablo (Devil's Throat). We horseback ride through water courses and different creeks. Finally, we ride up a hill until we reach ancient cattlemen roads. Lunch at Puritame Reserve.

Full day | Expert ● ● ● ●

Altiplano

The Altiplano exists up there, somewhere between the mountains and the sky. Within, a whole new world silently awaits the intrepid explorers that venture its way. For us, this is a territory that words simply fall short of.

HIKES

Río Blanco

Duration: 5 hrs
Distance: 9,2 km / 5,7 mi

We take a van to the Tatio Geysers, where we first walk up and then down a creek to reach an unknown warm water river, the Blanco River. We walk along the river's bed near geysers and mineral formations unique to this geological landscape.

Full day | Advanced ● ● ● ○

OVERLAND

Ckausama

Duration: 8 hrs

We take a van to the Tatio Geysers. Along the way, an important part of the Andean Plateau fauna –including vicuñas, flamingos, foxes, and others– can be appreciated. We walk across the reserve feeling the inner activity of the land with views to the Andes Mountain Range and the hot water springs from where steam rises. We return by van.

Full day | Easy ● ○ ○ ○

Reserva Tatio

Duration: 5 hrs
Distance: 2,4 km / 1,5 mi

We take a van to the Tatio Geysers. Along the way, an important part of the Andean Plateau fauna –including vicuñas, flamingos, foxes, and others– can be appreciated. We walk across the reserve feeling the inner activities of the land with views to the Andes Mountain Range and the hot water springs from where steam rises. We return by van.

Half day | Easy ● ○ ○ ○

Altiplano

Duration: 6 hrs
Distance: 266 km / 165,3 mi

We leave in a van and travel to the border-line with Argentina to appreciate multicolored landscapes and the Andean Plateau Salt Flats. We explore different ecological floors, which allow us to see the diversity in flora and fauna. We come down from the van to feel what is like to walk over 4,000 m.a.s.l (13,123 f.a.s.l).

Full day | Easy ● ○ ○ ○

Nómade

Duration: 8 hrs
Distance: 2,6 km / 1,6 mi

We take a van to Talabre, where we visit the archaeological site of Kezala with petroglyphs as old as 800 - 400 B.C. We continue our journey through solitary pathways into the heart of the mountain range in the Andes Plateau. We have lunch in the middle of a natural environment and then come back to Explora.

Full day | Easy ● ○ ○ ○

Lagunas

Duration: 7 hrs

Departure of Explora by van to the central area of the Atacama Saltflat reaching the Laguna Chaxa, habitat for various birds in the area. We can walk along a path immersed in the Salar de Atacama. We will continue by van towards the altiplano, visiting lagoons and natural scenes of the Altiplano on the Andes, where a special habitat is generated for different species of birds and fauna. We will have lunch and then return to Explora.

Full day | Easy ● ○ ○ ○

Montaña

These colossal massifs not only hoard minerals, but also encompass cultural expressions of people past and present. Axes of mystery, Atacama's mountains frame its territory, remaining vigilant of all whom explore it.

HIGH MOUNTAIN

Kimal

Duration: 6 hrs
Distance: 6,1 km / 3,8 mi

We ride a van for two hours to the Domeyko Mountain Range, until we reach the Kimal hill, the source of one of the most iconic Atacameño legends. We walk up a steep trail to the summit with panoramic views to the salt field and the mythical Licancabur and Juriques volcanoes. We descend and return to the hotel.

Full day | Moderate ● ● ○ ○

Toco

Duration: 4 hrs
Distance: 5,7 km / 3,5 mi

We leave by van and head to the Andes Mountains, an hour from Explora, where we begin ascending. We take a steep trail up to the summit with views to Bolivia, Argentina, and the surrounding volcanoes.
*Ideal introduction to high mountain.

Half day | Moderate ● ● ○ ○

Láscar

Duration: 5 hrs
Distance: 5,3 km / 3,3 mi

We take a van for two hours entering the altiplano of the Andes Mountain Range. At the base of the active Láscar volcano we begin our ascent through a soft terrain and gradually climb. At the summit we will have a wide view with different volcanoes and the Salar de Atacama basin.

Full day | Moderate ● ● ○ ○

Corona

Duration: 6:30 hrs
Distance: 5,1 km / 3,2 mi

We take a van for two hours up to the base of the Corona Hill. There, we begin ascending through a challenging terrain due to the presence of crags and loose sand that make movement difficult. At the summit, we see different volcanoes, among them the Láscar with its typical vent.

Full day | Advanced ● ● ● ○

Soquete

Duration: 5 hrs
Distance: 8,3 km / 2,5 mi

We start walking through mud geysers, crossing green valleys with high Andean flora and fauna. After passing through different geological formations we reach the needle, its particular summit formed by eruptions and carved by the erosion of wind and water.

Full day | Advanced ● ● ● ○

Sairecabur

Duration: 5 hrs
Distance: 2,4 km / 1,5 mi

After a one-and-a-half hour drive by van, we reach the Sairecabur Volcano's caldera, where we begin ascending. We walk through rocks, stones and loose crags and cross a former sulfur mine before taking the final steep hike.

We will reach the highest point of our explorations at the summit of the "mountain of rain", the meaning of its name.

Full day | Expert ● ● ● ●

Colorado

Duration: 8:30 hrs
Distance: 5,8 km / 3,6 mi

We take a van during two hours up to the base of the Colorado Volcano to begin ascending an increasingly steep slope. We'll walk among loose rocks up to the summit. We'll hike down a scree slope.

Full day | Expert ● ● ● ●

EXPEDITION

Licancabur

Duration: 11:30 hrs
Distance: 8 km / 4,9 mi

After having conducted several explorations at more than 4,000 m.a.s.l. (13,123 f.a.s.l.) and gradually acclimatizing our body, we leave by van from Explora to a remote camp in Bolivia on the sixth day. Once settled in the camp, we take a walk across the areas of the Verde and Blanca lagoons, from where we have a good view of the Licancabur Volcano. The next day we wake up early to begin walking before dawn. We use headlamps to light a well-marked trail.

Halfway along the ascent we watch the dawn over the Blanca and Verde lagoons. We reach the summit after walking for several hours. From here, we have a view to the crater and the world's highest lagoon. Descent can be challenging due to steep slopes and unstable terrain. We cross old Inca ruins on the way back.

* Acclimatization required

Full day | Expert ● ● ● ●

Cielo

Atacama's night skies are a constant spectacle. When night falls, the sky becomes alive with the infinite powder of the Milky Way or Celestial River, as it is known in Atacama.

ASTRONOMY

Astronomía andina

Duration: 1 hrs

It takes place almost every day at Explora. We begin with a briefing of basic concepts under the open sky. We then learn about orientation, distances, and local culture under one the world's clearest skies. In our own observatory, we get to watch stellar objects in the solar system and deep space. Ask our guides for availability. Spaces are limited, so please book in advance.

Half day | Easy

