



A 990 mile plateau on the Pacific coast of South America, west of the Andes Mountains, is known as the driest place on earth. Most of the region is in Chile, but the southern coastal area of Peru is considered part of the Atacama Desert. It has been arid for at least 3 million years, making it the oldest continuously dry region in the world. There is even some evidence that sections of the desert have been arid since the Triassic period – over 200 million years. Its dryness comes from its location between two mountain chains which prevents moisture from falling due to a constant temperature inversion. The unusual Mars-like landscape is mostly rocky with salt lakes, sand, and silica lava that flows towards the Andes.

Despite the climatic conditions, both flora and fauna are found in this region. Over 500 species of plants, as well as some reptiles and amphibians are known to have evolved in this region, but the most diverse animal group in the Atacama are birds. Humboldt penguins live along the coast, Flamingos are found in the salt flats and along the coast, and a variety of other birds visit the fog oases to feed on the insects and flowers. South American fur seals and Patagonian sea lions often appear along the coast.

Considered one of the top three destinations in Chile, the Atacama is ready and waiting for you to explore this fascinating region on a Lakani organized vacation. Combine it with Peru or perhaps Chile's wine region. With a base in San Pedro de Atacama, here are some highlights of the Atacama Desert sightseeing:

- Explore the Nature Sanctuary and Monument of Moon Valley where you find unique geological formations, salt sculptures, and caves
- Spend the day on the high plateau of Altiplano where you visit its scenic lagoons and salt flats, the nesting place and habitat for three species of flamingos that are found in Chile
- Tour the Tatio Geysers and geothermal field where there are over 60 geysers spouting steam and water to behold (be there early to see them at their best)

Best Time to Visit:

MAR – MAY & SEP – NOV

