

SELFDRIIVE – The Atacama Desert

10 days/9 nights

Highlights of the journey :

- San Pedro d'Atacama village
- Tatio Geysers
- Atacama salt flat
- Moon valley
- Lauca National park

Trip details :

- **Type trip:** Selfdrive
- **Possible departures :** All year round
- **When to travel :** All year round
- **Physical level :** All public
- **Technical level :** none



Northern Chile is mineral world with one of the driest deserts on the planet: the Atacama Desert. However, in the Andes, life sprouts alongside turquoise and emerald lakes. Condors, pumas and flamingos live under the quiet shadow of impressive volcanoes such as Parinacota (6342m), and Licancabur (5916m).

This trip starts in Santiago and takes you through the desert up to Arica, on the Peruvian border. You will discover the main attractions of the Atacama Desert and the Altiplano: San Pedro de Atacama, the moon valley, Tatio geysers, lake Chungará, Surire salt lake... All these magical places, cradle of Amerindian civilization, will unveil their beauty and secrets.

« DAY BY DAY » ITINERARY:

DAY 1: SANTIAGO

Meet at Santiago airport. Transfer (**private service with english speaking guide who will hand you over all necessary documents for your trip**) to your hotel.

Suggested visits today: Downtown Santiago (La Moneda palace, Plaza de Armas, Central market), Bellavista neighborhood, San Cristobal hill.

Overnight at Hotel Galerías (or similar according to availability), **no meals.**

<http://www.hotelgalerias.cl/>

DAY 2: SANTIAGO – CALAMA – SAN PEDRO DE ATACAMA (approx 100km –1 hour drive)

Transfer to Santiago airport (**private service without english speaking guide**). Flight to Calama (2h). **Upon arrival, head to selected rent-a-car desk and receive your vehicle.** Drive to San Pedro de Atacama.

Suggested visits today the Moon Valley and of course the vilalge of San Pedro where you will spend 3 nights.

Overnight at Ecocasa (or similar according to availability), **breakfast included.**

www.ecocasa-sanpedrodeatacama.blogspot.com

DAY 3: SAN PEDRO DE ATACAMA

Suggested visits today: Cejar lagoon, Atacama Salt flat the biggest salt flat of Chile with a surface of 3.000 square kms and natural habitat of three flamanco species. Drive to the highland lagoons of **Miñique and Miscanti**, from where we have a spectacular view on the high plateaus and can appreciate the contrast of colours: the blue sky, the yellow tones of the vegetation, reddish and black rocks, snowy volcano tops and the blue lagoons with their white mineral borders. Drive back to San Pedro de Atacama

Overnight at Ecocasa (or similar according to availability), **breakfast included.**

DAY 4 : SAN PEDRO DE ATACAMA

Suggested visits today: Tatio geysers. Leave before dawn to the Tatio Geysers, where impressive fumaroles can reach up to 7meters. The geyser field is situated in the Andes Range at the feet of the Tatio and Linzor volcanoes. After breakfast, drive down to Puritama hot springs for a relaxing bath in the natural pools with their thermal waters which reach 25° to 30° Celsius.

Overnight at Ecocasa (or similar according to availability), **breakfast included.**

DAY 5 : SAN PEDRO DE ATACAMA – IQUIQUE (approx 460 km – 6 hr drive)

Suggested visits today: Take the road to Calama and on to the Pacific coast. Drive past Tocopilla, a small town founded by a frenchman in 1843, and then continue to Iquique. This small beachside and port city developed during the heyday of the nitrate mining in Atacama Desert in the 19th century. Today it is still possible to see some architectural vestiges of that era, mainly downtown (Palacio Astoreca, Casino Español).

Overnight at hotel Terra 2* (or similar according to availability), **breakfast included.**

www.terrahotel.cl/

DAY 6 : IQUIQUE – CODPA (approx 300 km – 5h30 drive)

Suggested visits today: **Humberstone** Founded in 1872, this former mining town, was originally known as La Palma and in its heyday was home to around 3'500 people. Life revolved around the extraction of salpêtre, a natural fertilizer which was sent all over the world. It accounted for more than 50% of Chile's fiscal revenue between 1880 and 1930. Now a ghost-town, Humberstone is declared a United Nations World Heritage Site. Follow the panamericana road up north and arrive to Codpa village.

Overnight at Codpa Valley lodge (or similar according to availability), **breakfast included**

www.codpavalleylodge.cl

DAY 7 : CODPA – PUTRE (approx 160 km – 3hr drive)

Suggested visits today: **Lake Chungara** and its wildlife, **Catacotani** lagoons with its beautiful scenery, and **Putre** village.

Overnight at Terrace (or similar according to availability), **breakfast included**

www.terracelodge.com/fr

DAY 8 : PUTRE – SURIRE – PUTRE (approx 280 km – about 5h drive)

Suggested visits today: **Parinacota** village with its typical andean architecture and church, **Surire** salt flat, a protected area designated World Biosphere reserve together with **lauca** National park. Return to Putre.

Overnight at hotel Terrace (or similar according to availability), **breakfast included**

DAY 9 : PUTRE – LAUCA NATIONAL PARK– ARICA (approx 200 km – about 4hr drive)

Suggested visits today: **Lauca** national Park. With more than 140 bird species, this park is one of the best national parks for birding in Chile! Drive down to Arica.

Overnight at hotel Casa Beltran 3* (or similar according to availability), **breakfast included**

<http://hotelcasabeltran.cl/en/>

DAY 10 : ARICA (OUT)

Return the vehicle at the rent-a-car desk at the airport.

End of services.

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