

Very Large Telescope ready for action

As the Sun sets in the north-western sky above the Chilean Atacama Desert, astronomical work is about to begin. This is home to ESO’s Very Large Telescope, one of the most powerful astronomical devices ever constructed. It is located atop Cerro Paranal, a 2600-metre high mountain some 120 kilometres south of the city of Antofagasta.

This unusual 360-degree panoramic projection reveals the observing site from a fresh perspective. In the centre of the image, staff at Paranal have gathered to watch the sunset. On the right, the enclosures of the VLT’s Unit Telescopes can be seen: vast machines, each with a primary mirror 8.2 metres across and weighing 23 tonnes. Also visible are several of the smaller 1.8-metre Auxiliary Telescopes, which complement the Unit Telescopes. On the left of the picture is the control building, from where the telescopes are operated remotely during observations. No one remains inside the telescope domes after they are opened.

Since first light in 1998 the Very Large Telescope has been used by ESO astronomers to study the Universe, including some of the most exotic phenomena known, such as exoplanets, supermassive black holes, and gamma-ray bursts.

An amazing interactive virtual tour of Paranal is available here(/public/products/virtualtours/paranal/).

Links

- Extended to 360x180 degrees (with black) version of the image(/public/images/potw1130a-ext/)

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About the Image

Id:	potw1130a
Type:	Photographic
Release date:	25 July 2011, 10:00
Size:	9865 x 3685 px
Field of View:	360° x 134.5°

About the Object

Name:	Panorama, Paranal(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paranal_Observatory), Very Large Telescope(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Very_Large_Telescope)
Type:	Unspecified : Technology : Observatory
Category:	360 Panorama(/public/images/archive/category/360pano/) Paranal(/public/images/archive/category/paranal/)

Image Formats

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Wallpapers

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