

From one "alien world" to another

What looks like a barren and inhospitable alien landscape in this 360-degree panorama is in fact the site for ESO’s European Extremely Large Telescope, or E-ELT for short. When construction begins the uninhabited mountaintop left of the centre will become a hive of activity as engineers, technicians and scientists work on building the world’s biggest eye on the sky.

In many ways Chile’s Cerro Armazones may seem like an alien world. The environment is harsh, with low humidity and air pressure, a blazing Sun during the day, but breathtaking skies at night. Cerro Armazones is in the Atacama Desert — one of the driest places on Earth. These conditions, combined with its remoteness, are what make the region such an excellent location for telescopes. Armazones is an isolated peak, 3046 metres above sea level. It is about 20 km away from Cerro Paranal, home of ESO's famous Very Large Telescope. Both summits enjoy crisp skies far away from sources of light pollution.

Among the ELT’s many science goals is a particularly hot topic in contemporary astronomy: the quest for exoplanets. The E-ELT will search for Earth-like planets orbiting other stars and could even directly image larger planets or probe their atmospheres. The E-ELT’s high-tech instruments will also study the formation of planets in protoplanetary discs around young stars. Detecting water and organic molecules will shed light on how planetary systems are produced, and could bring us one step closer to answering the question of whether we are alone in the Universe.

This panorama was taken by ESO Photo Ambassador(/public/outreach/partnerships/photo-ambassadors/) Serge Brunier.

Links

- Extended to 360 x 180 degrees (with black) version of this image(/public/images/potw1105a-ext/).
- See more stunning panoramas of ESO sites in our virtual tours(/public/outreach/products/virtualtours/).
- ESO Photo Ambassadors(/public/outreach/partnerships/photo-ambassadors/) webpage.

Credit: ESO/S. Brunier

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About the Image

Id:	potw1105a
Type:	Photographic
Release date:	31 January 2011, 10:00
Related science announcements:	sciann13048(/public/science/announcements/sciann13048/)
Size:	10630 x 4488 px
Field of View:	360° x 152°

About the Object

Name:	Atacama Desert(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atacama_Desert), Cerro Armazones(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cerro_Armazones), Panorama
Type:	Solar System : Planet : Feature : Surface Unspecified : Technology : Observatory
Category:	360 Panorama(/public/images/archive/category/360pano/) ELT(/public/images/archive/category/elt/)

Image Formats

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31.7 MB
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3.8 MB
-  Screensize JPEG(https://cdn.eso.org/images/screen/potw1105a.jpg)
226.6 KB

Zoomable

-  Zoomable(zoomable/)

Wallpapers

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