

Tourist Guide

Iquique



Iquique, with a population of 145,139 inhabitants is 1,845 km from Santiago and 307 km from Arica. Although it is a relatively new city, it possesses important works of architecture, including the Municipal Theater. It is a great fishing center and the port is the biggest exporter in the world of fishmeal.

The city lays great emphasis on the events which took place during the War of the Pacific, for example there is a buoy off the coast to mark the site of the sinking of the Esmeralda in 1879. It is a tax-free area and the Freezone is the biggest in South America; it covers 240 hectares, full of warehouses for the storage of goods, and with a mall where the many varied products are sold.

The beaches are very popular with tourists. You can seek entertainment at the Casino of Iquique and a host of restaurants and discotheques. For those who prefer to travel out of the city, you can visit the abandoned nitrate workings, such as Humberstone, or the village of Pica.

How to get to Iquique?



Iquique is 1,845 km north of Santiago and 307 km south of Arica. You can get there:

By Air:

There are daily flights from the Aeropuerto Nacional in Santiago. You can inquire for the timetable of flights from other cities such as Arica, La Serena and Copiapó. Flights come in to Iquique airport.

By Car:

You can get there by the Pan-American Highway from the south or the north. From the north the nearest city is Arica, 307 km away. From the south the road runs through Calama, 389 km away.

By Bus:

There are daily services from neighboring cities and the outlying towns of the area. Inquire about departure times in the appropriate bus terminals.

Where to go in Iquique?



Paseo Costanera

The waterfront promenade is 4 km long, stretching from Playa Bellavista to the neighborhood of Playa Huantajaya, to the south of Playa Brava. It is made up of a wide-open strip, lined with gardens, children's games, fountains and beaches, including Playa Cavancho. Puntilla del Marinero

This little point is in the northern sector of the costanera. Here, sited on a rocky promontory where the waves break thunderously, stands a massive bronze statue in honor of the Navy. From here you can see the buoy which marks the site of the sinking of the Esmeralda. There is also an extensive view of the city.

Boya de la Esmeralda

The Esmeralda Buoy is in the northern part of the costanera, close to the Plaza de Armas of Iquique. The buoy marks the site of the remains of the Esmeralda, which was sunk during the Naval Combat of Iquique, on May 21, 1879. There are boats along the shore which will take you out there.

Every year on May 21, important public figures gather to pay homage to the heroes of the Navy.

Calle Baquedano

This is an avenue with palm trees growing down the middle. The houses along the avenue are in the North American Georgian style, and were all built between 1880 and 1920. There are important buildings on the street, such as the Museo Regional and the Palacio Astoreca. These buildings all have much in common: they are built of oregon pine, they are in an American architectural style, and the construction technique is of a simple framed building. This street was declared a Zona Típica in 1977.

Regional Museum

The Regional Museum is in Baquedano 951 (Baquedano between Zegers and Wilson), and dates from 1892. It was built by the nitrates industrialist Astoreca in oregon pine, and at that time was a family residence.

Up until 1987, it served as the Courts of Justice. It now contains important collections of items of indigenous peoples, objects from the Andean Plateau and a room devoted to photographs. There are also some interesting mummies from the Chinchorro culture.

Plaza Arturo Prat

This is the Plaza de Armas of the city and is the main point of reference for visitors. On one side of the square is the Municipal Theater, and in the center is the clock tower. The trees and palm trees in the square have been there for many years.

Torre del Reloj de Iquique

The clock tower decorates the center of the Plaza de Armas Arturo Prat, surrounded by ancient trees and palm trees. It was constructed in 1877 and is symbolic for the local inhabitants. The structure is of oregon pine and the clock for which it is named is at the top.

Centro Español

The Spanish center is on the plaza, and contains important works of art and architecture. It was built during period of the Spanish colony in 1904 colonia cuando termino?. It is constructed in the Moorish style, with an ornamented facade and projecting balconies.

Barrio Histórico de Iquique

In the Historic Quarter you can see the roofed passenger pier, which has been declared a National Monument. From the pier you can take a trip round the bay, offering views of the city of Iquique in all its glory. Next door is the Customs Building (Edificio de la Aduana).

Museo Naval de Iquique

The Naval Museum is only a few blocks from the Plaza de Iquique, next to the Edificio de la Aduana, and was built in 1871. It contains valuable relics of the Combate Naval de Iquique, fought in 1879.

Palacio Astoreca en Iquique

The Astoreca Palace, a mansion built in 1904, is on Calle Baquedano, corner of O'Higgins. Today it contains an exhibition of furniture used in that period. The architecture is inspired by the Georgian style. The principal material used in the construction was oregon pine, imported from Canada. It is now the most important cultural center in the city, under the care of the Universidad Arturo Prat.

Teatro Municipal de Iquique

The Theater was inaugurated as an opera house on January 1, 1890, at the time of the boom in the nitrates industry. It stands on the Plaza de Armas of Iquique, and its majestic interior makes it one of the principal attractions of the city. It was built in neo-classical style.

The main types of presentations given in the theater were opera, zarzuelas (Spanish operetta), plays and cultural activities. The structure is of wood and it was declared a National Monument in 1977.

Sociedad Protectora de Empleados de Tarapacá

The Employees' Protection Society stands on the Plaza of Armas, beside the Teatro Municipal. Its importance stems from the fact that it was one of the first buildings in the country housing a workers' organization. The building was constructed between 1911 and 1913.
Edificio de la Aduana

The Customs House is located in the Historic Quarter of Iquique, on the roundabout at the entrance to the port. It was built in 1871, to serve as the customs house and government offices of the Peruvian Government, and was known as the Prefectura Provincial de Tarapacá. The two-story building was constructed in classic colonial style, with clear neo-classical influences. The way into the Museo Naval is through the Customs House. Since 1920, its use has been restricted to storage in the warehouses. The ground plan is rectangular. It has two stories with an interior patio surrounded by corridors on two levels. It is crowned by an octagonal lookout point of stuccoed wooden frame construction. On the northern and eastern sides there are large warehouses built with beams of oregon pine. In 1971 it was declared a National Monument.

Estacion Central de Iquique

The Central Station stands near the Plaza de Armas, together with the Ex Administration del Ferrocarril. It was built in 1883, in the classical Georgian style used in British colonies.

Ex-Administration del Ferrocarril

The old railway administration building is next to the Estación Central, on the Plaza de Armas. It was built in 1883, when the existing train service passed into the hands of J. North. It includes the administration building, platforms, and other structures. You can visit the main block.

Catedral de Iquique

The cathedral is a few blocks from the Estación Central, along Calle Labbé between Bolívar and Esmeralda. The three naves of the interior display its Corinthian style. It was constructed to replace the original church, which was destroyed by a fire in 1883. The church became a cathedral with the creation of the bishopric of Iquique in 1929. It was declared a National Historical Monument, together with its parochial buildings, in 1989.

Casino de Juegos de Iquique

The Casino stands beside the sea, close to the commercial port, in Av. Balmaceda Nº 2755. It is open every day of the year. On weekends dinner-dances with live orchestra are held in some rooms. There is a large gaming room with roulette tables, punto and banca, black jack and one hundred gambling machines.

Capilla del Ex Hospital San Luis

This is a small wooden building, dating from the nitrates era, which is preserved inside the Hospital Ernesto Torres Galdames, in Calle Tarapacá, corner of Héroes de la Concepción.

Zofri

This is the biggest Freezone in South America. It covers 240 hectares, full of warehouses for the storage of the many varied goods which are sold here.

There is also a mall for the retail purchase of perfumes, electrical appliances, electronic goods, computer equipment, cigarettes, toys etc.

It was opened on June 25, 1975, in order to create a center which would support the economic development of the area, particularly in generating employment and achieving economic integration

Attractions around Iquique



Puerto Patillos

This port is on the coast 63 km south of Iquique. There is a mechanized wharf for loading salt. It became famous during the colonial period when shipments of nitrates first began.

British Cemetery (Cementerio Inglés)

Declared a National Monument, it was opened in 1876 for the burial of

English, German and Scandinavian residents in the country, at the peak period of the nitrates industry. It is surrounded by an iron fence and tamarugo trees.

Guanillos

This settlement is on the coast 80 km south of Iquique. There used to be a salt-producing plant here, but all that remains are the ruins of the offices and accommodation blocks, built of adobe. There is also a cemetery.

Playa Chanabayita

This beach is on the coast 64 km south of Iquique. It is in a beautiful setting among the rocks, and there are restaurants and vacation houses.

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There is also a mall for the retail purchase of perfumes, electrical appliances, electronic goods, computer equipment, cigarettes, toys etc.

There are around 500 shops offering these products, and many others which are for sale both wholesale and retail.

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It has become a location for nearby communities to exchange foreign goods which are also sold in Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay and Peru.

Humberstone Saltpeter Office



This Ghost Town is 52 km from Iquique. Its complete name is Oficina Santiago Humberstone; it was established in 1862 and has been declared a National Monument. It was originally named Palma, but when it changed owners in 1934, the name was adopted by which it is known today.

The office functioned until 1960, when the saltpeter business suffered a decline. The buildings have been well preserved and you can go in and appreciate their sumptuous construction. A good example is the theater, which stands in the square and

still has its original seats. You can also see the church, which has been recently restored.

Elsewhere you will find a copper swimming pool with a bamboo roof against the sun, tennis courts, old houses for the miners, the Pulpería (shop) and the administration building.

Salar Grande

Located 89 km from Iquique and 26 km from Puerto de Patillos, in a depression of the Cordillera de la Costa. Here you can see great mountains of sodium chloride, a mineral which is mined in this sector. This is the biggest open cast mine of common salt in the world.

The mine is approximately 6 km wide by 40 km long, with an average depth of 100 m. It supplies large quantities of salt for sale both in Chile and abroad (North America, Europe and Asia). It is not possible to visit the mine.

Río Seco

Río Seco is a fishing village not far from Iquique, 95 km south along the coast. It used to be the port for the processing of salt extracted from the Salar Grande, which was then milled and shipped.

In the village you can see the old evaporation tanks, the conveyor belt and the road which led to the mine.

At the edge of the village there is a museum containing images and artifacts of the history of the north of Chile and the rise of the salt industry. From Río Seco you can visit other places involved in the business, such as Pabellón de Pica, Puerto Patillos, San Marcos and Guanillos.

Pisagua

The town of Pisagua is located 191 km north of Iquique and 90 km north west of Huará. It has a pleasant climate, with temperatures ranging between 13° C and 26° C. Beautiful beaches with calm waters are set among rocks and cliffs, for example Punta Pisagua and Punta Pichalo. To the north you will find the beaches of Seis and Pisagua Viejo.

Originally it was one of the most important nitrates ports of the north of Chile. The houses are in the typical architectural style of the golden age of the nitrates industry, and many of them have been declared National Monuments. The most notable of these are the Teatro Municipal and the Torre del Reloj.

Teatro Municipal de Pisagua

The Municipal Theater was built in 1892. The building formed an ensemble with the market, the municipal building and the opera house. It is built of oregon pine, with fluted columns, balustrades and beautiful cornices. It has been declared a National Monument.

Torre del Reloj de Pisagua

The clock tower was built of wood in 1887 and has been declared a National Monument. Twelve meters high, it became a well-known feature of what used to be an important nitrates port. There is a balcony half way up and the clock is above it.

Ex Edificio Hospital

The construction of the old hospital is of oregon pine and dates from the end of the 19th Century. It was equipped for 60 beds and is sited on a wide platform surrounded by stone walls. It has been declared a National Monument.

Edificio Cárcel

The construction of the prison in oregon pine dates from 1940. The style is neo-classical. There are two floors with a central patio in the Georgian style. It no longer serves as a prison and has been declared a National Monument.

Minera Doña Inés de Collahuasi

This is the biggest mining project in the country, and is located 180 km from Iquique. It is an open cast working, including three separate deposits of copper ore. The ore extraction and treatment processes are carried out using modern technology.

Collahuasi is one of the principal copper producing sites in Chile, with an annual production capacity of 400,000 tons, equivalent to 3% of world production and 10% of the production of Chile.

There are two working areas: Cordillerana and Puerto. The former consists of three mines for ore extraction, up in the Andean Plateau. The port zone is some 60 km from Iquique in Punta Patache and is where the copper concentrate arrives for shipment to its final destination.

Santa Laura Saltpeter Office

The Santa Laura Ghost Town is 47 km from Iquique and has been declared a National Monument. It is not far from the Humberstone Ghost Town but has not been so well preserved.

It was constructed in 1872, by the firm of Barra y Riesco, and then passed into the hands of the firm of Foelsch y Martin in 1897. In 1913 the office suspended its activities, re-starting in 1915, after the machinery had been replaced with new equipment using the Shanks system, which improved productivity. The office was closed again during the Depression and only continued functioning until 1960. It was purchased by the Compañía Salitrera de Tarapacá y Antofagasta, and shared the fate of Humberstone.

It is one of the few workings which have not been totally dismantled, and some of the buildings are preserved, such as the administration offices, the plaza and sports facilities.

Among the ruins you can see the silent machines with their reminder of the splendid if arduous past. You can walk the streets, visit the houses and the buildings which served their various functions, such as the market, the church, the school etc.

Pampa del Tamarugal National Reserve



This reserve covers 24,000 hectares of artificial plantations of Tamarugo (*Prosopis tamarugo*). It is 70 km inland from Iquique, in the municipalities of Huara and Pozo Almonte.

It was created in 1987, and is divided into three lots: N°1 in the Zapiga sector, N° 2 in the Native Forest of La Tirana, the biggest of the three, N°3 in the Pintados sector.

The Tamarugo is related to the Algarrobo (Carob) and other species which grow in similar habitats, characterized by a high degree of adaptability to dry soil conditions. The plant captures moisture from the atmosphere, and from subterranean water through its main root. It can grow to approximately 15 meters high and the trunk can reach a diameter of more than a meter. It produces a protein-rich fruit, which is generally used for cattle feed. The wood is highly sought after for furniture production.

When the Spanish arrived to conquer this part of South America, it was covered in Tamarugo forests, but the excellent quality of the wood caused its almost total extinction, especially at the height of the nitrates epoch.

There is very little wildlife in the area, and most of the species which can survive the dry conditions are reptiles, such as snakes and lizards. Other species include carnivorous mammals such as the chilla fox, the culpeo fox and the quique. The rodents which may be found are the tuco tuco del tamarugal, the ratoncito andino and the lauchón orejudo.

In order to protect the Reserve a camping and picnic area has been created, where you can engage in a number of activities. The main office is 25 km from Pozo Almonte.

Victoria Saltpeter Office

The Victoria saltpeter office is 115 km southeast of the city of Iquique, in the abandoned settlement of the same name. It was formed on the site of the previously existing Sistema Shanks office.

Construction began in 1941 and was completed in 1944. A very similar system was used here to that used in the María Elena office.

It belonged to the group formed by Osvaldo de Castro, who modernized several nitrates mines.

It was worked until the late 1970s, making it the last functioning office in the Tarapacá zone.

At the height of its activities, this office had upwards of 2,000 workers, who, together with their families and other inhabitants, both private and state employed, made up an urban center with a population of over 9,000.

History of Iquique



The date of the foundation of Iquique is uncertain; all we have is an approximate date of 7,000 BC. Iquique, whose name means "the gizzard of a bird" was founded by the pre-Colombian Chango people.

The city's history has been defined by economic cycles. The first of these was the guano extraction period. After this came

the mining of silver, first worked by the Spaniards in 1542. Then, in 1830, the first shipment of nitrates to a foreign destination was made, marking the start of the period which would raise the city to the pinnacle of fortune.

When the last nitrates plant, Victoria, was closed, the end of that magnificent period was greeted with sadness, but it was replaced by fish, which is a rich resource along the coast. This occurred around 1960.

All the economic development which has occurred in the city has brought with it the construction of beautiful houses and buildings for various purposes. The occurrence of two earthquakes and tidal waves in 1868 and 1877 destroyed virtually all of these.

Then, under Chilean administration, the cove of Iquique became a port, and a busy, feverish, cosmopolitan city. Thus by 1925 there was a wealth of construction of new houses and other buildings for public services, such as the horseracing course and the bicycle track.

Today, the latest economic cycles to bring life and wealth are copper, the Freezone (business) and tourism. What remains of the past are the memories represented by the National Monuments and other important buildings which are still preserved.

Pozo Almonte



The area of Pozo Almonte has a wealth of fascinating history, with towns of great interest to the tourist such as La Tirana, Pica and Mamiña.

Some 4,000 people live in the area. In colonial times, it was a service town for the nitrates industry, providing water. The houses are very picturesque, full of corridors and bustling with commerce.

How to get to Pozo Almonte?

Pozo Almonte is located 1,912 km from Santiago and 52 km from Iquique. There are a number of travel alternatives to get to Pozo Almonte.

By air:

The quickest way is to fly to Iquique. There are flights from Santiago to Iquique both at weekends and during the week. The flight to Iquique takes approximately 2 hours and 20 minutes.

By car:

The journey from Santiago to Pozo Almonte takes approximately 24 hours and 40 minutes. From Santiago take the Panamerican Highway North, Ruta 5, to Iquique, and then take the local road to Pozo Almonte.

By Bus:

The journey from Santiago to Iquique takes 24 hours. There are a number of bus companies which offer the route from Santiago to Iquique, with services which include fully reclining and semi-reclining seats.

Attractions around Pozo Almonte



La Guaica

Founded in 1850, the town lies only a few kilometers from Pozo Almonte. Originally, it was surrounded by forests of Tamarugo trees, but these had to be felled because of the requirements of the nitrates mines in the sector. Nevertheless, the only remaining natural forests of Tamarugos and Carob trees may be seen in the surrounding

area.

The splendor of La Guaica reached its peak in the period of the nitrates industry; now the town lies in ruins.

Geoglyphs (rock-paintings) of Pintados

Declared a National Monument, the site of the paintings lies within the area of the municipality of Pozo Almonte, 94 km from the city of Iquique. These pre-Colombian works of art are spread over an area of four kilometers, and the site is considered to be of special scientific interest. It consists of 964 painted figures divided into different panels or groups by subject matter, representing animals, men, birds and other abstract figures.

Museum of the Virgin of La Tirana

The museum stands opposite the Sanctuary of La Tirana, and in it are kept the gifts presented by the faithful and the costumes used in religious dances. This museum was created by don Andrés "Cacique" Farías, who collected a large number of pieces from the golden age of the nitrates industry.

Pampa del Tamarugal National Reserve

The Pampa del Tamarugal National Reserve comprises 24 thousand hectares of artificial plantations of Tamarugo trees (*Prosopis tamarugo*). It lies 70 km inland from Iquique, in the municipalities of Huara and Pozo Almonte. The central office is 25 km from Pozo Almonte.

Huasco Salt Flat

The salt flat is situated in the vicinity of Pozo Almonte. The surface is dotted with little lakes frequented by large numbers of birds, and around the edge there are water-holes surrounded by vegetation, where camelids may be seen grazing.

Guatacondo

This is a pre-Hispanic walled village, lying 168 km north-east of Pozo Almonte, with a large, oval place, measuring 47 meters in diameter. The main feature of this place is a stone monolith which stands at the center, and for this reason it is thought that the space was used for social and ceremonial activities.

It dates back to 960 B.C. and is associated with the flowering of other centers of population in the north of Chile, such as the dwelling complexes in Quebrada de Tarapacá, and Tulo in San Pedro de Atacama.

Macaya Hot Springs

The springs are located some 200 meters from the center of the village of Macaya, 52 km west of Pozo Almonte. They are reached along a level path surrounded by pampas grass and overlooked by high mountain peaks. The spring itself is carved out of the rock, and the surface of the pool is 3 meters below the path. A stone staircase leads down to the pool, where there is room for up to 10 people.

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In order to protect the Reserve a camping and picnic area has been created, where you can engage in a number of activities. The main office is 25 km from Pozo Almonte.

Mamiña



This village of approximately 500 inhabitants lies at an altitude of 2,750 meters above sea level. The houses are all built of stone, with straw and mud roofs. In the area you can see the stepped terraces, now abandoned, which were used for cultivation purposes.

The Church of San Marcos was built in 1632, and its architecture is noteworthy for the unique features of the Andean style which it possesses. It has two towers crowned by blue painted wooden belfries. In the interior, the choir

contains an organ, and there are interesting details of wood and stone carving. Outside is the old cemetery, which was relocated in 1865.

Mamiña Hot Springs

These springs lie at more than 2,700 meters above sea level, 73 km from Pozo Almonte. There are two separate springs: Ipla and El Tambo.

The temperature in the former is 45°C while in the latter it is almost 57°C. The springs may be enjoyed in number of ways, as there are both mud baths and hot pools, and the water is so pure that it can also be drunk.

The water is recommended for the treatment of respiratory, nervous, rheumatic, neurological and skin complaints, as well as diabetes, stress, anemia, sciatica, lumbar-sciatica, ulcers and joint problems. The hot pools and steam baths are open all year round.

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Puchuldiza Hot Springs

Located 240 km from Iquique, here you will find thermal pools with a temperature of up to 85°C. There are also many steam vents in the area, and you can see the geysers which they form. In winter, the cold freezes the vaporized water to form ice which is molded by the wind into forms which can be between ten and fifteen meters high.

There are individual, mud and steam baths, or you can enjoy the natural pools. Nearby are the ruins of old sulfur works.

Victoria Saltpeter Office

The Victoria saltpeter office is 115 km southeast of the city of Iquique, in the abandoned settlement of the same name. It was formed on the site of the previously existing Sistema Shanks office.

Construction began in 1941 and was completed in 1944. A very similar system was used here to that used in the María Elena office.

It belonged to the group formed by Osvaldo de Castro, who modernized several nitrates mines.

It was worked until the late 1970s, making it the last functioning office in the Tarapacá zone.

At the height of its activities, this office had upwards of 2,000 workers, who, together with their families and other inhabitants, both private and state employed, made up an urban center with a population of over 9,000.

La Tirana



Despite its religious importance, there is little life in this desert town for most of the year. It lies 72 km southeast of Iquique, 20 km from Pozo Almonte and 1,773 km north of Santiago, at an altitude of 995 meters above sea level. With its population of something over 560 inhabitants, it has been declared a *Typical zone*, and it enjoys a privileged climate with sunshine throughout the year.

It springs to life each year between July 12th and 18th, when thousands of visitors arrive to witness the fiesta in veneration of the Virgin del Carmen. The spectacle reaches its highest pitch on July 16th.

The village, of great cultural importance, is distinguished for its church, which stands on the *Plaza de Armas*. On one side is the Museum of the Virgin of La Tirana, in which are kept the offerings made to the virgin and other articles used in the fiestas held in her honor.

The most striking thing about the people are the dances performed on feast days, with groups coming for the most part from Arica, Iquique, Tocopilla and Chuquicamata. The dancing is accompanied by varied instruments such as trumpets and whistles, and the dancers dress in brightly colored costumes. According to researchers, these dances are said to come from the ancestral rhythms of Inca ceremonies, with traces from other Andean cultures.

The church of La Tirana was built at the beginning of the 20th century, after the previous building had been destroyed by two earthquakes, which occurred in 1868 and 1877. The parish priest Friedrich was responsible for the construction. The old church has been reconstructed and today is used as an alternative on feast days.

To reach this picturesque village from Santiago, Iquique or Arica, travel to Pozo Almonte on *Ruta 5*, either by public transport or in a private vehicle. From Pozo Almonte, go south on the same highway, then at km 9 take the turning to Pica and go 11 km to La Tirana. There is good, regular public transport from Pozo Almonte to La Tirana during the fiesta.

How to get to La Tirana?



By air:

It is the quickest way to get here, you arrive Iquique first and then to La Tirana.

From Santiago to Iquique there are 8 frequencies during the week and 4 in weekends. The trip takes 2 hours 20 minutes.

By bus:

The trip from Santiago to Iquique takes 24 hours. There are several bus companies which offers travel services from Santiago

to Iquique.

by car:

The trips between Iquique and La Tirana takes 1 hour approximately.

Attractions around La Tirana



La Guaica

Founded in 1850, the town lies only a few kilometers from Pozo Almonte. Originally, it was surrounded by forests of Tamarugo trees, but these had to be felled because of the requirements of the nitrates mines in the sector. Nevertheless, the only remaining natural forests of Tamarugos and Carob trees may be seen in the surrounding area.

The splendor of La Guaica reached its peak in the period of the nitrates industry; now the town lies in ruins.

Pampa del Tamarugal National Reserve

The Pampa del Tamarugal National Reserve comprises 24 thousand hectares of artificial plantations of Tamarugo trees (*Prosopis tamarugo*). It lies 70 km inland from Iquique, in the municipalities of Huara and Pozo Almonte. The central office is 25 km from Pozo Almonte.

Huasco Salt Flat

The salt flat is situated in the vicinity of Pozo Almonte. The surface is dotted with little lakes frequented by large numbers of birds, and around the edge there are water-holes surrounded by vegetation, where camelids may be seen grazing.

PICA



This village, of pre-Hispanic origin, stands at 1,325 meters above sea level, 114 km south-east of Iquique. The land around is planted with a variety of fruits and other plants, such as oranges, lemons, grapefruit and mangoes. They are grown for the production of home-made jams and other similar products.

The village stands on the Inca Road, and it is known that the Spanish discoverer of Chile, Diego de Almagro, passed through this way, and a Spanish settlement soon grew up here. The majority of the houses, businesses and churches date from the Spanish period.

How to get to Pica?

There are a number of ways to travel to Pica.

By air:

This is the quickest way, flying to Iquique, then traveling on to Pica.

From Santiago to Iquique there are eight flights a day on weekdays and four at weekends. The flight takes 2 hours 20 minutes.

By Bus:

The journey from Santiago to Iquique takes 24 hours. There are a number of bus companies which offer the route from Santiago to Iquique, with services which include fully reclining and semi-reclining seats.

By Car:

The drive from Iquique to Pica takes approximately one and a half hours.

Where to go in Pica?

Church of San Andrés

Located in Pica, is the third construction on the same site, the two earlier churches having been built in 1600 and 1768 respectively. The materials used in its construction include iron and wood. It stands on the Plaza de Armas and its high front in classical style, framed between pilasters, features three doors with circular crownings and two bell-towers. It was constructed between 1880 and 1886, and has been declared a National Monument.

Cocha Resbaladero

This natural swimming pool among the rocks is formed by water flowing out of two caves. It lies in the village of Pica, making it a bathing resort, and providing a remarkable experience in a village in the middle of the desert.

Gólgota del Reencuentro

This is a sanctuary close to Matilla, a few kilometers from Pica, where various scenes from the life of Christ are depicted. Those which have been completed to date are the Crucifixion and the Holy Sepulcher. The construction of a Baptism and a Last Supper are planned for the future.

Pica Hot Springs

The springs are 114 km south-east of Iquique and 62 km south-east of Pozo Almonte, at an altitude of 1,400 meters above sea level.

The thermal waters rise at a temperature of approximately 32.8°C, and the following types of bath are on offer: thermal pool, individual tub, mud and steam. These springs are ideal for those suffering complaints of the bones and respiratory system. They are open all year round.

Attractions around Pica

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Caravan trail from Pica to Casma with Apachetas (sacred cairns)

This trail between Pica and Casma formed a part of the network of paths which linked the oases and valleys of Pica, Casma, Mamiña, Macaya and Tarapacá. Along its course, indicated by white stones, can be found markers and apachetas. The pass was in use during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Matilla

It is at an altitude of 1,160 meters above sea level and is a little village located in an oasis. It dates from 1760, when a group of townspeople from Pica established the village here. At that time, its principal product was wine, and when the vineyards were destroyed, the village fell into ruin.

Huasco Salt Flat

This salt flat is about 55 kilometers to the east of Pica. The main attractions of this salt flat are the lagoons covering its surface, whose waters various fauna rely on to survive. On the banks of the lagoons the watering holes sustain the camelids that inhabit the sector.

Matilla



This is a little village located in an oasis on the eastern edge of the Pampa de Tamarugal, beside the Quebrada de Quisma, at an altitude of 1,160 meters above sea level. It dates from 1760, when a group of townspeople from Pica established the village here. At that time, its principal product was wine, and when the vineyards were destroyed, the village fell into ruin. Some buildings of cultural interest have been restored for tourists to visit.

Church of San Antonio

The church stands in the village square of Matilla. It was constructed in 1887, after the existing church was destroyed by an earthquake. It is close to Lagar de Mantilla, likewise a National Monument. The style is neo-classical, with some baroque features. It has a stone bell-tower.

Lagar de Matilla

A wine-producing industry was established here in the first decades of the 18th century. Equipment, big earthenware jars (known as tinajas) and a large press have been preserved. The last vintage was harvested in 1937, after which it fell into disuse. The site has been turned into a museum where explanatory talks are given.

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(Reads: 2075)

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The most picturesque of the springs is known as "Cocha" or "Baños Resbaladero", set in a natural hollow in the volcanic rock. It is fed by small caves which are in fact fissures in the rock wall, from the floor of which rise the warm, crystal-clear waters.

You can also tour the whole area to visit the typical villages with their pre-Colombian cultures, their priceless archaeological sites, the orchards in the Pica Oasis, etc. Pica hot springs can be visited all year.

Coposa Salt Flat

Lying 154 km from Pozo Almonte, at an altitude of 3,730 meters, the Coposa salt flat is of interest for its fauna.

The bird-life includes the Puna duck, Andean gull, Andean goose and three types of flamingo (Andean, James' and Chilean). Nearby is the Shepherds' Encampment of Aguada Jachucoposa (water-hole).

Pampa del Tamarugal National Reserve



This reserve covers 24,000 hectares of artificial plantations of Tamarugo (*Prosopis tamarugo*). It is 70 km inland from Iquique, in the municipalities of Huara and Pozo Almonte.

It was created in 1987, and is divided into three lots: N°1 in the Zapiga sector, N° 2 in the Native Forest of La Tirana , the biggest of the three, N°3 in the Pintados sector.

The Tamarugo is related to the Algarrobo (Carob) and other species which grow in similar habitats, characterized by a high degree of adaptability to dry soil conditions. The plant captures moisture from the atmosphere, and from subterranean water through its main root. It can grow to approximately 15 meters high and the trunk can reach a diameter of more than a meter. It produces a protein-rich fruit, which is generally used for cattle feed. The wood is highly sought after for furniture production.

When the Spanish arrived to conquer this part of South America, it was covered in Tamarugo forests, but the excellent quality of the wood caused its almost total extinction, especially at the height of the nitrates epoch.

There is very little wildlife in the area, and most of the species which can survive the dry conditions are reptiles, such as snakes and lizards. Other species include carnivorous mammals such as the chilla fox, the culpeo fox and the quique. The rodents which may be found are the tuco tuco del tamarugal, the ratoncito andino and the lauchón orejudo.

In order to protect the Reserve a camping and picnic area has been created, where you can engage in a number of activities. The main office is 25 km from Pozo Almonte.

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Humberstone Saltpeter Office



This Ghost Town is 52 km from Iquique. Its complete name is Oficina Santiago Humberstone; it was established in 1862 and has been declared a National Monument. It was originally named Palma, but when it changed owners in 1934, the name was adopted by which it is known today.

The office functioned until 1960, when the saltpeter business suffered a decline. The buildings have been well preserved and you can go in and appreciate their sumptuous construction. A good example is the theater, which stands in the square and still has its original seats. You can also see the church, which has been recently restored.

Elsewhere you will find a copper swimming pool with a bamboo roof against the sun, tennis courts, old houses for the miners, the Pulpería (shop) and the administration building.