

La Silla — ESO's First Observatory

La Silla Observatory, inaugurated on 25 March 1969, is ESO's original observing site and was the largest astronomical observatory of its time. Located at 2400 metres above sea level in northern Chile, in the southern part of the Atacama Desert, it is in a privileged place for astronomical observation, with more than 300 clear nights per year. Its dry and transparent climate, along with the low atmospheric turbulence, allows astronomers to obtain high quality data.

With a varied range of telescopes and instruments, the La Silla Observatory has allowed astronomers from all over the world to perform first-class research over the last four decades. Currently, ESO operates several of the most productive 4-metre-class telescopes in the world at La Silla. Among these is the 3.58-metre New Technology Telescope, the first telescope in the world to have a computer controlled main mirror. ESO's 3.6-metre telescope is home to HARPS, the world's foremost extrasolar planet hunter. La Silla has incorporated new technologies that maintain its place at the forefront of astronomy.



Telescope domes at the La Silla Observatory beneath the beautiful southern sky.



Omega Centauri — the glittering giant of the southern skies.



The revolutionary ESO 3.58-metre New Technology Telescope (NTT) in its octagonal enclosure. Credit: ESO/C. Madsen



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