



Credit: S. Gilard - (ESO)



Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array

At the operation site of the ALMA antenna array, located on the Chajnantor Plateau (which in the original Atacameño language —Kunza— means “place of departure”), the 66 ALMA antennas function as a single, enormous radio telescope for observing the “invisible” Universe. Despite the harsh conditions, the ALMA antennas were installed at an altitude of 5,000 meters, in an area with exceptional conditions for astronomical observation. The high altitude and lack of moisture prevent water in the atmosphere from absorbing the radio waves, which would normally hinder observation from Earth. The vastness of the Chajnantor Plateau is also an advantage, because the ALMA antennas can be distributed over 16 kilometers.