

# Destination LA HIGUERA

SERNATUR Coquimbo Region  
Matta 461, off. 108, La Serena, Chile

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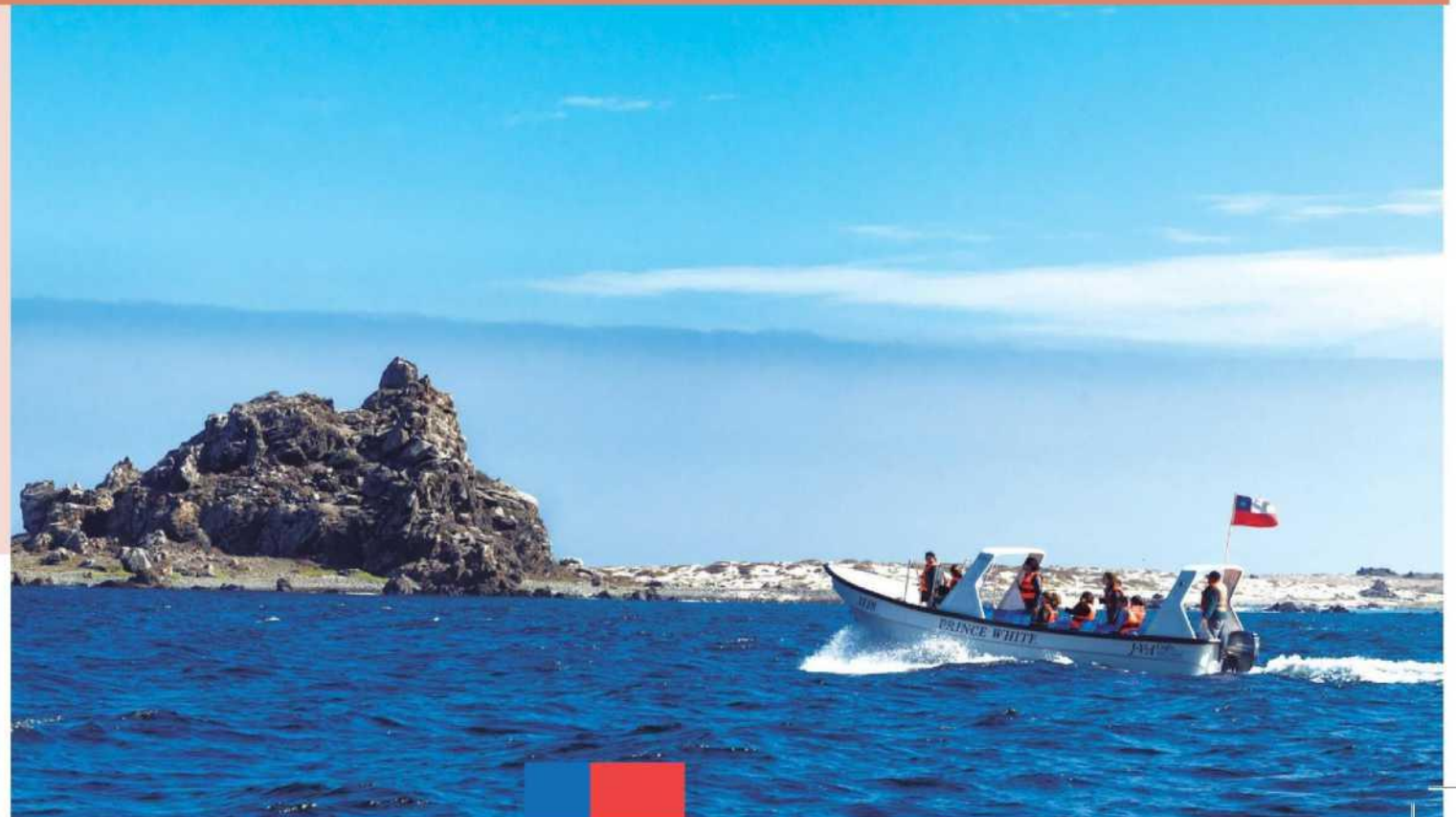
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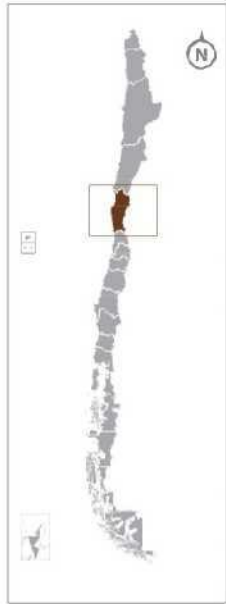
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## COQUIMBO REGION AND ITS DISTRICTS



### Districts

1. Andacollo
2. Canela
3. Combarbalá
4. Coquimbo
5. Illapel
6. La Higuera
7. La Serena
8. Los Vilos
9. Monte Patria
10. Ovalle
11. Paihuano
12. Punitaqui
13. Río Hurtado
14. Salamanca
15. Vicuña



## Must-sees

### Coquimbo Region

#### Humboldt Penguin National Reserve



From Punta de Choros, explore the stunning natural surroundings through boat tours from local fishers to nearby islands. You will encounter colonies of penguins, sea lions, marine otters, boobies, bottlenose dolphins, and a diverse array of birdlife. Be sure to bring binoculars and cameras for observation.

#### Caleta Los Hornos Circuit - Chungungo



Enjoy exquisite seafood cuisine, secluded beaches to explore, remnants of the mining boom, and excursions into rugged nature.

#### La Higuera







It is located 57 km north of La Serena via Route 5 North and 527 km north of Santiago.

#### Boundaries

To the east, it borders the Andes Mountains; to the west, the Pacific Ocean; to the south, the districts of La Serena and Vicuña; and to the north, the Atacama Region.

## USEFUL INFORMATION

### Emergencies

	Ambulance	131
	Carabineros (Chilean Police)	133
	Firefighters	132
	Andean Rescue Corps	136
	CITUC (Toxicology Center)	(56-2) 635 6800
	Denuncia Seguro (Safe Report)	4242

### Dialing Phone Numbers

From Chile to abroad:

*carrier + 0 + country code + city code + phone number*

To another city within Chile:

*area code + phone number*




From landline to mobile:

*9 + phone number*

From mobile to landline

*0 + area code + phone number*

### Transportation Phones

	Arturo Merino Benítez International Airport	(+56 2) 2690 1796
	La Florida Airport, La Serena	(+56 51) 2270353
	Bus Terminal, La Serena	(So 51) 222 45 73

### Information Contacts

Sernatur, Tourist Information Office

Matta No. 461, La Serena.

+ Info.: [www.turismoregiondecoquimbo.cl](http://www.turismoregiondecoquimbo.cl)

## INTRODUCTION

Traveling north from La Serena on Ruta 5, starting from Km 503 (Juan Soldado bridge) you will reach the district of La Higuera, which extends to Km 556, on the border with the Atacama Region. The vast district territory offers numerous opportunities to explore, get to know, and discover the secrets of rugged tourism. From hidden beaches to lesser-known pre-Andean areas, places where the peaks and declines of their productive activities have left their mark on the landscape. The district is perfect for excursion tourism, with the most attractive routes being the Caleta Los Hornos – Chungungo circuit, Quebrada Honda – El Maray, La Higuera Interior, and the well-known trip to Punta de Choros and the Humboldt Penguin National Reserve. Ecotourism is a welcome practice to develop in this fragile area, where you can observe diverse birdlife and marvel at the natural phenomenon known as the "Flowering Desert" and its colorful burst during certain times of the year.



**Top:** Boat tours in La Higuera Coves. **Center:** The full majesty of dolphins along the coasts of this district. **Bottom:** Guanacos at Llano de Los Choros, on the road to Punta de Choros.

## LAHIGUERA

Historically recognized as a mining district, it peaked between 1855 and 1880. Today, silent testimonies of this glorious era are the tailings visible at the northern entrance of La Higuera, along with countless underground tunnels crossing the town. The traditional mining vocation in the area has been complemented by extensive agricultural communities dedicated to livestock farming and small-scale agriculture. Only in recent years has its coastal zone begun to thrive, thanks to the emerging appreciation of valuable tourist resources.

It is a rural district located in the Coquimbo Region, a vast territory stretching from the mountains to the sea. It has 11 villages spread over 4,158 square kilometers and a population of no more than 4,200 people.

## TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

**Caleta Los Hornos.** This coastal village offers a wide variety of seafood-based gastronomy. It has two beaches, Caleta Los Hornos and La Despensa, located about 200 meters apart, and delight visitors. The main activity in the area is shore and rock fishing, with a diverse selection of species such as pejesapo, apañado, and flounder. Boat tours can also be arranged at the local pier, allowing visitors to explore nearby islands and islets.

**9** Located beside Ruta 5 Norte, 36 km northwest of La Serena.

**Quebrada Honda.** A primarily agricultural village that preserves its old rural traditions. About 7 km inland lies Estancia El Maray, a site of outstanding natural appeal. An old Jesuit church adds to the charm of this location.

**9** Located 40 km from La Serena along Ruta 5 Norte, with a 2 km dirt road leading to the village.

**Totalillo Norte.** Located 40 km north of Caleta Los Hornos, this former mining export port has now become a fishing cove for artisanal fishers.

**9** It can be accessed via two routes: from the north along Ruta 5 Norte at Bahía Honda, a crossroad toward the old El Tofo mine; or from the south at the Quebrada Honda junction (Km 511), heading toward the coast along the so-called “Camino Costero” (Coastal Road).

**Chungungo.** A peaceful fishing village that emerged alongside the El Tofo mine, one of the largest open-pit iron deposits in the world (until the 19<sup>th</sup> century). It offers visitors various recreational opportunities. Chungungo Viejo Beach is ideal for fishing and water sports, while Cruz Grande Beach, with its calm green waters and soft sands, is perfect for relaxation. Cerro El Tofo, home to now-extinct Camanchaca project, showcases local ingenuity in harvesting water from coastal fog. Restaurants are available in the area.

**Dársena and Cruz Grande.** In Cruz Grande, a former mining camp near Chungungo, a mechanized dock was built to ship iron ore from El Tofo. This impressive and innovative structure was constructed by the Americans in 1915. Today, the Armada de Chile (Chilean Navy) manages these port facilities. Other remnants of the area's mining past include the Casa de Fuerza (a former thermoelectric power plant) and an old theater.

**9** Located 24 km northeast of La Higuera and 65 km north of La Serena (40 km via Ruta 5 Norte and 25 km on a rural road heading northwest).

**La Higuera.** A district founded in 1891, named after the family that owned the largest mine in the area. Visiting this town offers a historical journey through one of the iconic mining heritage sites in Chile. Visitors can explore remnants of old smelting operations, underground tunnels, and mining excavations, some of the unique attractions you will find in La Higuera.

**9** Located 60 km north of La Serena and 25 km from Caleta Los Hornos.

**El Trapiche.** It is a small town located 77 km north of La Serena and 17 km from La Higuera. It is known for its windmills, carnation cultivation, and mineral processing plants. Typical local products include cheeses, homemade bread, empanadas, and various colorful carnations. The town stretches along both sides of the road. Although it has shifted from mining to agriculture, it still has five mineral processing plants.

**Flowering Desert.** Delight your eyes with a unique and stunning display of colors. Between July and August, it begins with a green blanket and reaches its full multicolor bloom in September. During this time, insects and other animals cover vast expanses of land.

**Punta Colorada.** What was once a railway station is now a rural settlement where the inhabitants are engaged in goat farming, mining, and some agro-industrial projects. Inland from Punta Colorada, 37 km away, you can find the old settlement of Los Pajaritos. Before reaching the area, it is possible to spot a colony of the well-known and beautiful Trichahue parrots, a protected species. The return to the main road is via the path leading to the El Pelicano ravine, passing through the Colorada pass, where areas are suitable for astronomical observation. The area is also home to the Punta Colorada Wind Farm, which generates electricity using 10 wind turbines.

**9** Located north of La Serena (87 km) on Ruta 5 Norte, via a 2 km eastward detour.

**Los Choros.** A picturesque village with around 300 inhabitants, known for its peaceful atmosphere and history. Notable among its buildings is the San José Chapel, built in 1600. The temple preserves some old polychrome religious images. An unmissable event is the religious celebration of the patron saint, San José Obrero, held on March 19. An essential resource in the area is olive cultivation, a tradition dating back to the Colonial period, known for the quality of its olives.

**9** Located 94 km north of La Serena and 34 km north of La Higuera. Paved road.

**Punta de Choros.** A visit to this rural fishing village, located in the northwestern part of the Los Choros ravine, offers a well-deserved reward: the chance to encounter a colony of bottlenose dolphins, the southernmost species in the world. In addition, you can explore ancient indigenous settlements, enjoy its beautiful beaches, and take boat tours to the Humboldt Penguin National Reserve. The area offers a variety of quality restaurants and accommodations.

**9** Located 114 km north of La Serena and 54 km from La Higuera. Paved road.

**Humboldt Penguin National Reserve.** A natural paradise in the area, accessible by boat from Punta Choros. This reserve consists of three islands: Damas, Choros, and Chañaral de Aceituno. During the boat trip, visitors can see the sea lion colonies on Choros Island, along with a variety of birds, including the Humboldt

penguin. On rare occasions, bottlenose dolphins can be seen near the boats. Locals mention that it is possible to spot whales around Chañaral Island in late February or early March. The waters around Damas Island stand out for their turquoise color and white sand beaches. Visitors can stay on Damas Island for only one hour, and swimming and camping are prohibited.







**Top:** In the background, Damas Island. **Center:** Olive groves for olive oil production. **Bottom:** Boat tours in Humboldt Penguin National Reserve.

**Las Campanas Observatory.** An international scientific observatory which is located at an altitude of 2,500 meters. It has five optical telescopes and one solar telescope. Visits are only available on Saturdays, and reservations must be made in advance. The visit is free and guided.

**9** Located 161 km north of La Serena and 102 km from La Higuera.

**La Silla Observatory.** An international scientific observatory located at an altitude of 2,400 meters. It operates a 3.6-meter ESO telescope, the 3.58-meter New Technology Telescope, and a 15-meter radio telescope. Visits are available every Saturday at 2:00 p.m., during the months of July and August. The visit is free and guided.

**9** Located 156 km north of La Serena and 96 km from La Higuera.



**Top:** Night sky at the La Silla Observatory.

**Advice.** Prefer service providers that are registered and certified with Sernatur. Registration for accommodation and adventure tourism services is mandatory. [serviciosturisticos.sernatur.cl](http://serviciosturisticos.sernatur.cl)