



SURIRE



S U R I R E

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STUDY GUIDE

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SURIRE STUDY GUIDE

Surire is a film that privileges visual images over words and narration to document the disparate elements that form a natural and social landscape in northern Chile's isolated Surire Salt Flat, near the border with Bolivia. A Chilean Natural Monument, the salt flat and several small salt lakes make up a protected area that is home to a number of Andean species of plants and wildlife, including flamingos, llamas and vicuña. Surire gets its name from the Aymara word "suri," which refers to the large flightless birds, related to the ostrich and emu, that inhabit the area. A small number of Aymara elders live in this part of the desert, not far from trucks and machines that mine borax from an important deposit.

The Surire Salt Flat is located in the Andean Altiplano (high plateau), 4,300 meters above sea level. It forms part of the Lauca Biosphere Reserve. This reserve, designated a World Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO in 1981, encompasses three protected areas: The Surire Salt Flat Natural Monument, the Lauca National Park and Vicuñas National Reserve. The vicuña, a relative of the llama, is a protected species prized for its very fine and expensive wool. The Suri, known as rhea in English and nandu in many European languages, is categorized as "near-threatened" in their native habitats of South America.

This film presents occurrences in the daily lives of four persons of Aymara origin who live in Surire: an old couple keeping watch over their animals, a man who works as a caretaker at the national park, and a woman in her eighties who lives alone with her dogs. The Aymara are an indigenous people of the Andes, who inhabited the region for centuries before falling under the control of the Incan empire in the late 1400s and early 1500s. Although Surire's small Aymara population is in decline, numbers of Aymara communities are located throughout the Andean Altiplano in Chile, Peru, Bolivia, and to a lesser extent Argentina. In Chile, the Aymara, who number around 100,000, make up only a small percentage of Chile's indigenous peoples, 80% of whom are Mapuche. The largest contemporary Aymara population resides in Bolivia, where they are a significant political force, including cocalero activist Evo Morales, who became Bolivia's first indigenous president in 2006. Family networks in Surire stretch over the somewhat porous border into Bolivia. Yet nationality continues to shape local identities.

Chile and its Borders

Chile, officially the Republic of Chile, is a long, narrow South American nation that runs along the Pacific Ocean and borders Bolivia, Peru and Argentina. A combination of natural boundaries, colonial expansion and modern military campaigns accounts for its current shape, which, with an extension of 2,653 miles (4,270 km) north to south, is approximately 25 times longer than it is wide. Chile's northeastern border with Bolivia and more than a third of its western border with Argentina lie in the Andean mountain range. The vast Atacama Desert and outlying arid areas, where the Surire Salt Flats are located, cover much of Northern Chile. The country's boundaries also include Peru to the north and the Drake Passage in the far south.

The Inca ruled present-day northern and central Chile prior to Spanish colonialism. In the 1500s, the Spanish, in search of gold and silver, headed south from Cusco and the Peruvian colony. They settled in what is today Chile's capital city of Santiago. European efforts to expand farther south

were held back by intense resistance from the Mapuche and other indigenous groups. The Mapuche had also resisted earlier attempts of subjugation from the Inca. At the time of its independence from Spain in 1818, Chile had only one-third of its current territory. In 1880s, the Chilean army defeated the Mapuche, taking what is today southern Chile. During the same decade, Chile also acquired its northern territory, including a stretch of coastal lands and part of the Atacama Desert, as a result of its victory in the War of the Pacific against Peru and Bolivia. These arid lands were rich with minerals, including nitrate and copper, and proved lucrative for Chile. Bolivia, on the other hand, lost its entire Pacific coast to Chile, leaving it a landlocked nation. The Aymara living in the region became Chilean nationals.

The Arica y Parinacota Region

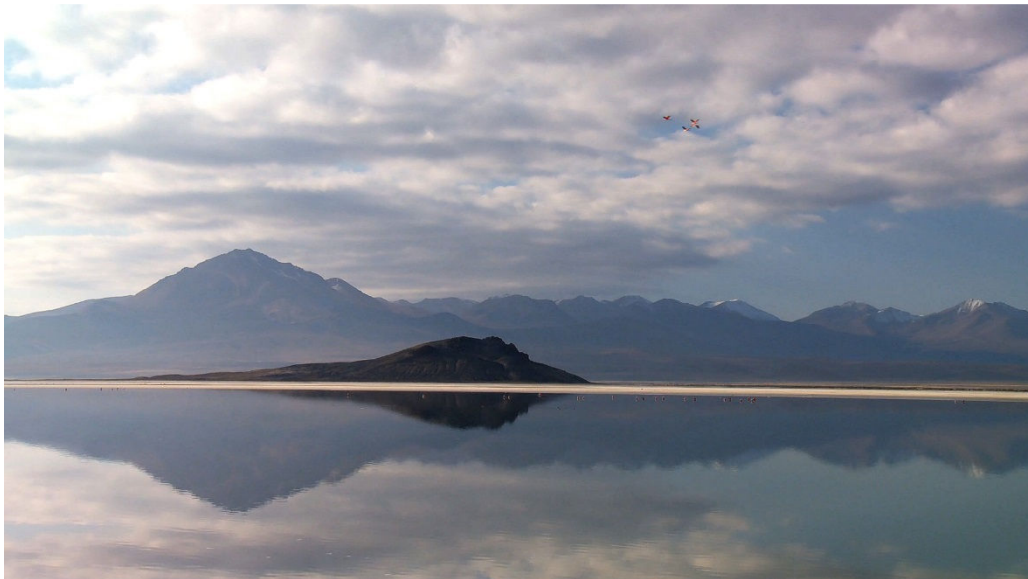
The Lauca Biosphere is located in the Arica y Parinacota Region, one of Chile's fifteen administrative regions. Chile's Aymara communities, where most people live in poverty, are concentrated in this region. The creation of the national park and other kinds of development have impacted Aymara communities and traditional livelihood. Just outside Lauca Park, about 79 miles (127 km) northwest of Surire and more than five hours by car, is the small Chilean town of Putre. In this film, the elders travel to Putre to attend a small New Year's party with other Aymara elders at a government-run program. While there, a medical professional tends to the old woman's feet, using an electric pumice to reduce calluses, thick from the harsh arid environment.

Another 81 miles west of Putre is the port city of Arica. The capital of the Arica and Parinacota region, Arica is Chile's northernmost city and lies just 11 miles south of the Peruvian border. The city serves as a free port for Bolivia and the end station of the Bolivian oil pipeline. With much of its trade managed through this region, Bolivia has been pressing for an agreement with Chile that would allow Bolivia sovereign control and direct access to the coast through the Atacama Corridor, along the Chilean-Peruvian border. The Chilean government has rejected the proposal. Bolivia, under the Evo Morales administration, cut off dialogue with Chile on the issue to pursue litigation in international courts in 2013.

Glossary

- Andean Altiplano – The high plains of the Andean Mountains, the Andean Altiplano, is an extensive plateau located primarily in Bolivia and Peru, with its southern parts reaching into Chile and Argentina. After the Tibetan Plateau, it is the second largest high plateau in the world.
- Aymara – The Aymara are an indigenous people of the Andes and Altiplano of contemporary Bolivia, Peru, Chile and Argentina. The largest population lives in Bolivia. The Aymara inhabited the region for centuries before falling subject to the Incan Empire in the late 1400s and early 1500s. During the 16th century the Aymara became part of the Spanish Empire.
- Inca – The Inca had the largest empire in pre-Columbian America. Scholars believe that Inca civilization arose in the Peruvian Andes in the 12th or early 13th century. The city of Cusco, often spelled Cuzco in English, was the administrative, political and military center of the Incan Empire, which encompassed a combination of diverse peoples, languages and cultures. The Spanish, led by Francisco Pizarro and his brothers, reached Inca territory in 1526. The last Inca stronghold fell to the Spanish in 1572.
- Mapuche – The Mapuche are a group of indigenous peoples of south-central Chile and southwestern Argentina. Today they make up over 80% of Chile's indigenous population, and approximately 9% of Chile's total populations. The Mapuche are the most politically vocal and active indigenous group in Chile, and have an expanding urban population, due to internal migration.
- War of the Pacific – (1879-1883) During this war between Chile, Bolivia and Peru, Chile emerged the victor, gaining a significant amount of land, including the Atacama Desert, where the Surire Flats are located. Bolivia also lost all of its coast, leaving it landlocked.
- Surire Salt Flat – This Chilean Natural Monument consisting of a salt flat and several salt lakes. Part of Lauca National Park.
- Atacama Desert – The Atacama Desert is a sparsely populated plateau on the Pacific Coast that lies southwest of the Andean Altiplano in northern Chile. Over 40,000 square miles, this vast territory of sand, stony terrain, salt lakes and felsic lava, is the driest non-polar desert in the world. The desert is rich in mineral deposits, including copper, nitrate and boron. The discovery of its mineral wealth led to the War of the Pacific between Bolivia, Peru and Chile. As a result of this conflict, Chile gained control of most of the desert and several coastal cities, which developed into international ports.
- Lauca National Park-- Biosphere Reserve Lauca – UNESCO 1981. Its lagoons and wetlands are home to flamingos, llamas and vicuñas, a protected animal related to alpacas.

- Vicuña -- The vicuña, a relative of the llama, is a protected species prized for its very fine and expensive wool. Because the vicuña's coat grows slowly, it can only be sheared every three years. The Inca also regulated the use of vicuña wool, reserving it only for royalty.
- Arica and Parinacota Region – The newest and northernmost of Chile's fifteen administrative divisions. Surire Salt Flats, Lauca National Park and the port city of Arica are located in this region, which borders Peru and Bolivia.
- Borax – A mineral and salt of boric acid that is a common component of detergents, cosmetics and enamel glazes.



Timeline

- 600s or earlier: Aymara inhabit the Andes in what is now western Bolivia, southern Peru and northern Chile.
- 1100: The Inca migrate to Cusco Valley and establish their capital at Cusco, present-day Peru.
- 1425-1532: The Inca Empire flourishes in South America, bringing Aymara populations under its control.
- 1470s-1530s: The Inca control the lands of contemporary Chile, expanding south towards the Mapocho and Maipo rivers. The Mapuche resist subjugation by the Inca.
- 1535: Indigenous Mapuche groups resist first Spanish invasion.
- 1541: Spanish conquest, led by Pedro de Valdivia. City of Santiago founded.
- 1553: Mapuche uprising leads to capture and killing of Valdivia.
- 1810: King of Spain overthrown by Napoleon, military Junta in Santiago proclaims independence for Chile.
- 1814: Chile returns to Spanish rule.
- 1818: Chile declares independence from Spain. Liberal reforms aimed against church and aristocracy begin.
- 1879 – 84: The War of the Pacific between Chile on one side and Bolivia and Peru on the other. After Chilean victory, Chile annexes a large amount of land, including the Surire Salt Flats, most of the Atacama Desert and several port cities. Aymara populations living in the area become part of the Republic of Chile.
- 1883: Chilean army completes the occupation of Araucanía, the heartland of the Mapuche people.
- 1970: Salvador Allende becomes first democratically elected Marxist President in the Americas, begins a program of nationalization and radical social reform.
- 1973: CIA-backed military coup overthrows Allende. Allende dies during the coup at La Moneda, Chile's presidential palace. General Augusto Pinochet comes into power. The repression of leftists and other opponents of Pinochet resulted in approximately 130,000 arrests and over 3,000 dead or missing over the next three years.

- 1981: UNESCO designates Surire Salt Flats National Monument, Lauca Park and Vicuña Reserve a World Biosphere Reserve.
- 1990: General Pinochet steps down as head of state, but remains commander-in-chief of army.
- 1998: General Pinochet retires from the army, and is named senator for life. He is arrested in the UK, on Spain's request, for murder charges. Placed under house arrest in London
- December 10, 2006: International Human Rights Day, Pinochet dies of natural causes.
- April 24, 2013: Bolivia files a case with the International Court of Justice in its pursuit of sovereign access to the Atacama corridor.



Books

- Eisenberg, Amy. 2013. *Aymara Indian Perspectives on Development in the Andes*. Tuscaloosa, Al.: The University of Alabama Press.
--Based on participatory ethnographic research in sixteen Aymara communities in northern Chile, this book examines how mining, highway construction, the diversion of water resources and “Chilean national park policies regarding Aymara communities and their natural resources and cultural properties” in Lauca National Park have impacted the “social fabric” of Aymara communities. According to the author, the findings “aid in understanding and appreciating the needs and cosmological vision of Andean communities in the poorest province of Chile. The Aymara are actively involved and are committed to having their perspectives and cultural concerns expressed and incorporated into historic, natural, and cultural resource preservation legislation and policy.”
- Frazier, Lessie Jo. 2007. *Salt in the Sand: Memory, Violence, and the Nation-State in Chile, 1890 to the Present*. Durham: Duke University Press.
--Historical ethnography of memory and state violence in the formation of the Chilean nation-state, focusing on northern Chile.
- Hutchison, Elizabeth Q., Thomas Miller Klubock, Nara B. Milanich and Peter Winn, eds. 2014. *The Chile Reader: History, Culture and Politics*. Duke University Press.
- Crow, Joanna. 2013. *The Mapuche in Modern Chile: A Cultural History*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
--This book examines the relationship between the Mapuche and the Chilean state from the military occupation of Mapuche territory during the second half of the nineteenth century through to the present day.

Online Resources

Atacama Corridor Dispute

- <http://dijlp.org/6099/the-atacama-corridor-spoil-of-war-or-illegal-occupation/>

Why is Chile So Long and Skinny?

- http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/explainer/2010/03/why_is_chile_so_long_and_skinny.html

Atacama Desert

- <http://www.extremescience.com/driest.htm>
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/capital-weather-gang/wp/2015/10/29/the-driest-place-on-earth-is-covered-in-pink-flowers-after-a-crazy-year-of-rain/>

Surire Salt Flats

- <http://ai.stanford.edu/~latombe/mountain/photo/chile-2015/salar-surire-2015.htm>



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