

From a female spectator's POV, just seeing a little of the course terrain that they have to ride through, it's obvious that this competition is a world-class event, and the guys (and gals) that ride it successfully for 6 days straight, year after year, are in a league of their own.

The terrain and landscape are breath-taking, and the photo's we've taken barely do it justice. The city of La Serena has an interesting mix of new and old world. The days are long, with sunset around 8:00 pm and it gets quite warm up in the mountain areas in the middle of the day, but it's very cool in the morning and evening. The low humidity is quite nice! Reminds me of New Mexico and Colorado. The beach is right across the street from our hotel, on the Pacific Ocean, and the mountains surround us on the other 3 sides.

It's obvious that this event is a major media event for the country of Chile, and the local area. There was an Olympic-style opening ceremony on Saturday. A lot of the town has been spruced up just for this event, and everyone is quite friendly and hospitable. Of course, all of us that are here for this race are dumping a LOT of money into the local economy, so they have reason to be smiling!! We see one extreme to another, from the barios where families live in shacks, to stores that look just like the Super Wal-Mart. One of them near the hotel is called Hyper-Lider! Trying to communicate with people who don't speak English has been interesting, to say the least!

Later,

Angie Stelly

PS- Contrary to sensationalized news media, we're not at the bottom of a 10 ft earthquake crevasse!! It happened way north of here. A lot of people felt movement for a few seconds here in La Serena, (Kevin and a couple of others here at the hotel felt it) but we were on the road at the time, going from one check-point to the next, and never noticed it.