A: Welcome back to Round the World. It’s been raining here on the East Coast all week, and I’d love to get away to somewhere warm and dry. And, well, my next guest happens to have just returned from the driest place on earth. Nathan Simms, welcome to Round the World.

B: Thanks, Lynne. It’s good to be here. And believe me—I’ve been enjoying the rain this week!

A: I’m sure! So, tell me, Nathan—where is the driest place in the world? Africa? Siberia?

B: No and no. I’ll give you another guess.

A: Well, it has to be a desert, right—a hot, dry place with very little rain. So, where is the driest desert?

B: Well, Lynne, the driest place in the world is in South America. The country of Chile, in fact.

A: The Atacama? That’s probably new to most of our listeners. Could you spell it for us?


A: So, how dry is the driest place on earth?

B: Well, Lynne, it almost never rains there. Officially, the driest place is the very center of the desert. At the center of the desert, there are a few millimeters of rain per decade—that is, a few drops of rain every 10 years!

A: How interesting! Is it possible for anyone to live there?

B: Oh no. In fact, almost nothing lives there—no plants, no animals, no people. Maybe there are some really tiny living creatures in the soil, but scientists haven’t found any yet. In fact, I didn’t actually go to the very center of the desert. It’s very difficult to reach, and the temperatures make it very dangerous.

A: So where do people live in the Atacama Desert?

B: Well, remember that the Atacama Desert reaches to the sea. There are towns along the coast and about one million people live in them.