

Sunday, December 13, 2009

### **VISTA Now Online**

This image is the first one released from VISTA. It shows the clearest picture ever attained of the Flame Nebula, in the constellation of Orion, and its surroundings. A new telescope has just gone online down in Chile. Called VISTA (the Visible and Infrared Survey Telescope for Astronomy), the infrared telescope features a 4.1 meter mirror of the highest quality ever achieved.

The mirror is so perfectly polished that its only deviations are less than a few thousandths of the thickness of a human hair.

VISTA sits on a peak in the Atacama Desert, which has some of the best night viewing conditions on the planet. Its infrared technology allows it to "see through" dust clouds that block the view of normal telescopes.

Inside VISTA is a special 3 ton camera that records the images, and the camera has to be cooled to -200 degrees Celsius so its own heat won't interfere with the faint infrared radiation the mirror picks up from space.

The VISTA camera was a team project built by the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, the UK ATC and the University of Durham in the United Kingdom.

<http://www.eso.org/public/>

Posted by Green Man at 08:31