

Highlights of Bolivia

9 days | La Paz to San Pedro de Atacama



Discover the highlights of Bolivia as you visit the Bolivian Highlands, colonial Potosi and the incredible salt flats in Uyuni where you stay in a hotel made entirely of salt! Explore the famous rock formations of the Valley of the Giants before finishing up in San Pedro de Atacama in Chile!

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- La Paz - one of the highest capitals in the world.
- The pre-Columbian archaeological site of Tiahuanacu.
- The Miner's market of Calvario and the private silver mines.
- Potosi - a gorgeous example of native artwork with many pretty churches and temples.
- The incredible salt flats of Uyuni.
- The famous rock formations of the Valley of the Giants.
- The multi-coloured Laguna Colorada where the James Flamingos flock.
- San Pedro de Atacama - an oasis town in the expansive Atacama Desert.

What's Included

- 8 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 3 dinners
- 7 nights STANDARD accommodation. Upgrading to SUPERIOR or DELUXE accommodation options are also available upon request. Accommodation rating - See Trip Notes for details
- Services of a English-speaking guides at local sites
- Overnight bus from La Paz to Potosi
- All relevant transfers and transportation
- Guided day tour of La Paz
- Guided tour of Kalasasaya Temple and Akapana Pyramid. Afternoon tour of the miner's market in Calvario
- Guided tour of Potosi including National Mint of Bolivia
- Excursion to the Uyuni Salt Flats including Fish Island and the cemetery of trains
- Visits to the church of San Cristobal and the villages of Culpina and Alota
- Visit to the Laguna Colorada and the Sol de Manana geysers

What's Not Included

- International flights and visas
- Items of a personal nature, drinks and additional meals
- Tipping - an entirely personal gesture

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : La Paz

Welcome to Bolivia, upon arrival you'll be met at La Paz airport and transferred to your hotel in the city. The rest of the day is at leisure for you to independently explore the highest capital city in the world. **Overnight - La Paz**

Day 2 : La Paz

Today you'll enjoy a full day tour of the scenic city of La Paz - visit world-class museums like the Gold, Murillo and Costumbrista, explore traditional street markets and head up to the Mirador de Killi Killi for fantastic views over the city. Later you'll marvel at the geological formations of the Valley of the Moon, located 10km outside the city.

Overnight - La Paz (B)

Day 3 : Potosi



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Travelling through the Bolivian Highlands, you get the opportunity to see the Aymara Indian's way of life – one of the oldest American cultures. It is considered the cradle of the American man and one of the most advanced cultures in development at that time. Their main constructions which you will visit are the Kalasasaya Temple to see its Gate of the Sun, the monoliths Ponce and Fraile, the Akapana pyramid and the Semi underground temple. Visit the old colonial village of Tiahuanaco, where you can see the use of stones from the ruins in their constructions. You also visit the Puma Punku Temple, an example of extremely high quality in stone carving. Tonight we travel by overnight bus to Potosi. **Overnight - Overnight Bus (B, L)**

Day 4 : Potosi

Arriving early on day 4, transfer to your hotel. In the afternoon, you depart to the miner's market "Calvario", where you will be able to buy coca leaves and cigarettes, which can be given to the miners. You'll continue to the silver mines where you can visit the private, cooperative mines and watch the miners at work. Exploration of the silver began in the colonial period and is maintained today using the same working tools. You shall see the traditional rites where the miners pray to Tata Ckajcha or make the "Ch'alla" to the "Tio"(God of the mines, owner of the silver). **Overnight - Potosi (B)**

Days 5-6 : Uyuni



Enjoy a guided tour of colonial Potosi, dating from the days when this city, the highest in the world, was larger than either London or Paris. A gorgeous

example of native artwork with many pretty churches and temples including the church of San Lorenzo. Also visit the National Mint of Bolivia before transferring to Uyuni. On day 6 depart for the incredible salt flats of Uyuni. Arrive into Colchani which is the best place to observe the methods of salt extraction from the salar. Included today is a trip to Fish Island, a unique oasis with giant cacti reaching 10m high. There's also time to see the cemetery of trains where the remains of 19th century steam locomotives rest. Enjoy lunch out on the salt flats. Lunch is taken in the middle of the Salt Flats and later on continue to the archaeology museum of Coqusa and on to the exclusive Hotel Palacio de Sal built entirely of salt. This evening opt for a night stroll through the eerie surroundings. **Overnight - Uyuni / Salar De Uyuni Region (B,2, L:2, D:2)**

Day 7 : Villa Mar

Transfer to Villa Mar enroute visiting the colonial church of San Cristobal, the villages of Culpina and Alota and the famous rock formations of the Valley of the Giants. You'll also visit local cave paintings and the fort of Tomas Lakjas **Overnight - Villa Mar (B, L, D)**

Day 8 : San Pedro de Atacama



On the morning of day 8 visit the multi-coloured Laguna Colorada where James Flamingos flock. The rich red colouration is derived from algae and plankton, which thrive in its minerals. Continue to Laguna Verde where the Licancabur Volcano looms large. Along the way visit the Sol de Manana geysers, the Chalviri thermal waters and the Valle de Dali. This is a site of

intense volcanic activity. After lunch cross the border into Chile and enjoy the impressive views of the Atacama Salar with a beautiful view of the Licancabur Volcano of 5916 meters of altitude as you transfer to the oasis town of San Pedro de Atacama. Rest of the afternoon is at leisure. **Overnight - San Pedro de Atacama (B, L)**

Day 9 : San Pedro de Atacama

Today marks the end of services with a departure transfer to Calama Airport.(B)

BEFORE YOU GO

Tipping

Tipping is an essential part of the culture. For a job well done, we would suggest for your tour guide: USD \$5-6 per traveller, for each day of sightseeing.

For your driver and On The Go Representative we'd recommend USD\$2-3 per traveller for each day of service. Tipping is an entirely personal gesture and ultimately the amount is up to you.

Accommodation ratings

On our Private trips, you can often choose your style of accommodation. The price quoted on our website is reflective of the included accommodation, please see the "included" section on the first page of this document for details. Should you opt for an alternative hotel category, this will be confirmed in writing with the respective price on your invoice.

For further details about the indicative hotels, please see the "hotels" tab on our website. Here we rank hotel's in their respective country (REGIONAL CATEGORY) - but we also tell you how it ranks by Western standards (OUR CATEGORY).

STANDARD - Equates to a Western 3-star standard, always featuring en-suite rooms and usually a restaurant.

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SUPERIOR – Equates to a Western 4-star standard, featuring en-suite rooms and usually a restaurant and often a swimming pool and/or a fitness centre.

DELUXE – Equates to a Western 5-star standard, usually featuring spacious, en-suite rooms, a restaurant, swimming pool and fitness centre and an array of amenities, excellent service and customer care.

LUXURY – Equates to a Western 5-star plus standard – the creme de la creme. Featuring spacious, en-suite rooms, a restaurant, swimming pool and fitness centre and an array of amenities, this accommodation is a cut above the rest. Sheer opulence!

Bolivia Country Guide

Bolivia – Fact File

- Official Name: Republic of Bolivia
- Capital: La Paz (administrative), Sucre (judicial)
- Population: 8.4 million
- Total Area: 1.1 million square kilometres
- Official Language: Spanish, Quechua and Aymara
- Religions: Roman Catholic 95%
- Voltage: 110 volts in La Paz and 220 volts in the rest of the country
- Dialling Code: +591
- Time Difference: GMT/UTC –4
- Airport Departure Tax: US\$25

Bolivia – Visas

Citizens of the EU, Canada and Australasia do not need a visa to enter Bolivia. Entry is granted on production of a passport valid for more than six months, a return air/bus ticket and proof of funds to support yourself for the duration of the stay. Many other nationals, including US and South African citizens do require visas. For the latest information on your specific visa requirements you should contact the local Bolivian Embassy or Consulate well in advance of your planned date of travel.

Bolivia entry/exit requirements: Your passport must contain a Bolivia entry

stamp, without this you'll have to pay a fine when you leave the country. If you enter Bolivia overland ensure that your passport is stamped on both sides of the border, with an exit stamp from the country you are leaving and an entry stamp on the Bolivian side.

Bolivia – Climate

Nicknamed the 'Tibet of the Americas', landlocked Bolivia is the highest and most isolated country in the Americas. With elevations ranging from sea level to over 6,880 metres, the Bolivian landscape offers a mind blowing array of complex ecosystems and stunning scenery. It is basically divided into three regions: Altiplano (a plateau at an average of 4,000 metres above sea level, 800 kilometres long and about 130 kilometres wide); the yungas (a series of forested and well-watered valleys); and the llanos (the Amazon-Chaco lowlands). Because of the wide range of elevations and topography, there are many different climatic patterns. The overall temperatures are probably cooler than most people expect. Even in the humid forest regions of the north, frosts are not unheard of. Bolivia's unprotected expanses contribute to variable weather conditions and the two climatic 'poles' are Puerto Suarez for its stifling, humid heat, and Uyuni for its near-Arctic cold and icy winds.

There's no time that is perfect for the entire country, but December to March is when most of the rain falls. La Paz is always cool to cold at night, so be prepared with sweaters and windbreakers. La Paz can get quite warm during the day but sometimes mists swirl through the streets and the city can be literally wrapped in the clouds. Throughout the country, night temperatures drop dramatically, and on the high Altiplano, when a cloud passes over the sun, the temperature plunges noticeably. In Cochabamba, Sucre and Tarija, winter is the time of clear, beautiful skies and optimum temperatures. The lowlands experience

hot sunny days and an occasional shower to cool off and settle the dust.

Visit www.worldclimate.com to get an idea of what the weather will be like on your tour.

Bolivia – Money

Important

In Latin America you will have problems changing the US\$100 CB B2 2001 series notes and it is important you do not to bring them. In some countries banks won't even take them. The serial number is located in the top left hand corner and bottom right hand corner on the side with the President's face. This serial number starts with CB and then a few more numbers and then directly under that B2. At the bottom of the note near the signature of the Treasurer it says which series of notes it is and it is there that it says 2001 series.

Local currency

The monetary unit in Bolivia is the boliviano (often referred to as the Peso), which is divided into 100 centavos. For up-to-date exchange rates with your own currency visit www.xe.com.

Changing money, credit cards & ATMs

We recommend that you bring cash in US dollars only. There is no restriction on the amount of foreign currency that you may bring into Bolivia, however very large sums should be declared on arrival.

There is often a general lack of small change and we recommend maintaining a supply of small denomination notes and coins – you may sometimes be offered sweets, cigarettes or even razor blades as change!

When arriving at the La Paz El Alto International Airport we suggest that you change some money at the bank ("Cambio") in the main terminal building. Change enough money to see you through the first few days of your tour – particularly if it is a weekend.

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Please note you can only change cash (not traveller's cheques) at the Cambio.

There are ATMs in the city where you can get money out 24hrs a day.

Bolivia – Local Transport

Most of La Paz is easy to visit on foot, although the high altitude can take its toll, especially when walking up hill. There are various types of buses and minibuses which are very cheap but you will need to know which routes to use (ask at the hotel reception for assistance). There are also fixed route taxis "trufis" which are "colectivos" (meaning other people will be on-board). You can tell these taxis apart by their red number plates. We recommend the use of taxis at night as they are fairly cheap and much safer than walking. It is not common, however, for taxis to have meters so you will need to barter for a good price. In other Bolivian towns and cities walking is basically the best and cheapest way to see the sights.

Bolivia – Food & Drink

Food

In Bolivia the basic diet focuses around chicken, beef or seafood, mostly with french fries or rice (or both) and possibly a little salad. The Bolivian national dish is the parillada, a mixed grill with everything meaty including offal and intestines. Sajta de pollo is hot spicy chicken with onion, fresh potatoes plus dehydrated potatoes called chuno, lomo ala pimienta is a pepper steak popular with travellers, fricase is juicy pork with chuno, silpancho is bread-crumbed meat with fried eggs, rice and banana, saice is a dish of mince meat with spicy sauce and potatoes, rice, onions and tomatoes and milanesa is beef or chicken breaded and fried like a schnitzel. For a simple fish, you should ask for pescado which can be grilled, pan fried with breadcrumbs apanado or served with a sauce. Trout trucha is especially good from Lake Titicaca. Typical snacks include empanadas, pasties filled

with cheese, humitas (maize pies), pucacapas (spicy cheese pies) and saltenas (meat or chicken pasties which you can get super spicy or mild). Much of Bolivia's food is not too hot and spicy but you will find a bowl of aji (which is a chilli or hot pepper sauce) on most tables which can be added to spice things up.

In most of the larger cities and towns you will find an array of international cuisine. There are pizzerias on every corner and Chinese (chifas) food is very common. A cheap, filling 3 course lunch (normally called a comida del dia) can often be had for about US\$1.50.

Vegetarians

If you are a strict vegetarian you may experience a distinct lack of variety in the food available, especially in small towns. You might find that you are eating a lot of omelettes and other egg dishes. Our tour leaders will do their best to provide interesting vegetarian alternatives when arranging group meals in the campsite, but your patience and understanding is requested.

Drink

You should be wary of drinking the local tap water. Bottled water and carbonated soft drinks are widely available and are generally safe to drink. Plastic sachets of flavoured chocolate and strawberry milk are also available.

Imported beers and spirits are available but usually at a high price. If you are happy to drink the local spirits then there is an array of rums and singani (distilled grapes). Imported Chilean and Argentine wine can sometimes also be found cheaply. A bottle of rum could be as little as US\$5 in a local shop and quite often the mixer to go with it (Coke) is more expensive. There are various brands of beers including Pacena, Ducal and El Inca (dark sweet stout).

Chile Country Guide

Chile – Fact File

- Official Name: Republic of Chile
- Capital: Santiago
- Population: 18 million
- Total Area: 756,102 square kilometres
- Official Language: Spanish
- Religions: Roman Catholics 77%, Protestants 16%
- Voltage: In Chile the standard voltage is 220 V and the frequency is 50 Hz. You can use your electric appliances in Chile, if the standard voltage in your country is in between 220 - 240 V (as is in the UK, Europe, Australia and most of Asia and Africa).
- Dialling Code: +56
- Time Difference: GMT/UTC -4 . For other time differences please visit www.timeanddate.com
- Airport Departure Tax:\$30 USD

Chile – Visas

Most nationals, including citizens of the EU, North American and Australasia do not need to acquire a visa in advance to enter Chile. However some nationalities must pay an entry fee on arrival by air (e.g. United States \$100, Canada \$55 and Australia \$34, these costs may change). Entry is granted on production of a passport valid for more than six months, a return air/bus ticket and proof of funds to support yourself for the duration of the stay. Most nationalities can enter for up to 90 days, although it's up to the immigration official to decide whether you're allocated 30, 60 or 90 days on arrival. Visa requirements do change periodically so you should check for the latest information on your specific visa requirements with your local Chilean Embassy or Consulate well in advance of your planned date of travel.

APIS and ESTA – important flight information:

ESTA – if flying to the US, or via the US you will need to fill in your application to ESTA online.

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This costs \$14 per person. This must be done by you personally.

Passports must also be machine-readable (MRP). Avoid locking suitcases if transiting the USA, as their customs authorities retain the right to break into them.

APIS - Many countries now oblige airlines to provide additional information about passengers prior to the flight departure. This Advance Passenger Information (APIS) must be supplied to us promptly in order to issue tickets and avoid fare increases. We will provide the airlines with the relevant details if we are booking your international flights. If the information is not provided you may be denied boarding.

Chile - Climate

Chile is very long and narrow (it is no more than 180 km wide at any point) and the Andes Mountains are a dominant feature running down the entire length of the country. Because of its length, Chile encompasses a variety of climates (the country contains both arid deserts and icebergs). There's no one time that's perfect to visit every part of the country, but it seldom rains during October to March, humidity is low, midday temperatures reach about 32°C and the nights are cool. It is colder and rains a lot in Santiago and in the south in May to August. A sweater (and, in the south, a heavy jacket) should be taken no matter when you go, as nights can be cool-to-cold nearly everywhere.

Santiago, due to its position in the central region, has a Mediterranean climate with well-defined seasons. Spring, between September and November is mild, which contributes to the flourishing green colour of the plants and trees. Summer, between December and February, is dry and hot although at night it cools down slightly, and on the coast this temperature drop can be much more extreme. Autumn is between March and May,

and temperatures decrease gradually. Daytime winter temperatures are reasonable but mornings can be very cold.

Visit www.worldclimate.com to get an idea of what the weather will be like on your tour.

Chile - Money

Important In Latin America you will have problems changing the US\$100 CB B2 2001 series notes and it is important you do not to bring them. In some countries banks won't even take them. The serial number is located in the top left hand corner and bottom right hand corner on the side with the President's face. This serial number starts with CB and then a few more numbers and then directly under that B2. At the bottom of the note near the signature of the Treasurer it says which series of notes it is and it is there that it says 2001 series.

Local currency

The monetary unit in Chile is the Chilean peso, which is divided into 100 centavos. For up-to-date exchange rates with your own currency visit www.xe.com.

Changing money, credit cards & ATMs

We recommend that you bring cash/ travellers cheques in US dollars only. Visa, Mastercard, Diners and American Express are the best credit cards to bring however there can be problems at times getting money out from ATMs, so make sure you have sufficient cash for emergencies. Travellers cheques must be changed before 12pm except at 'casas de cambio' (which do tend to offer better rates than banks anyway).

There is no restriction on the amount of foreign currency that you may bring into Chile, however very large sums should be declared on arrival. There is often a general lack of small change and we recommend maintaining a supply of small denomination notes and coins. When arriving at

the Santiago International Airport we suggest that you get some Pesos at one of the little banks just inside the luggage hall or use one of the ATMs outside the terminal. Change enough money to see you through the first few days of your trip - particularly if it is a weekend.

Chile - Local Transport

Much of Santiago can be visited on foot. There is a very good underground metro system which has three lines and is very cheap at US\$0.40-\$0.60 per journey. You can also buy a 10 journey card for about US\$4. The last trains are at around 10pm. There are local buses called micros, which are also cheap, but you should try to have the right change (ask at the hotel reception for prices). They also have 'colectivos' (shared taxis on fixed routes). We recommend the use of taxis at night as they are fairly cheap and usually have meters - just make sure that the driver turns it on when you get in. Remember that you will pay more for taxis at night.

Chile - Food & Drink

All meals are included when camping and lunch is included on travelling days in the truck. When staying in hotels all meals are at your own expense. As a guideline a simple snack (e.g. a sandwich) can cost as little as US \$1.50, a light meal will cost around US \$5-8, and a meal in one of the better restaurants in Santiago will compare with developed countries in the west. Obviously this does depend on what you order and if you have wine or other drinks which will certainly increase the bill. In cheaper restaurants where Chileans and backpackers eat, you can get meals for as little as US\$3 if you shop around.

Your tour leader will be able to recommend restaurants.

Food

In Chile the basic diet focuses around chicken, beef or seafood, mostly

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with french fries or rice (or both) and sometimes salad. Compared to countries further north, Chile's cuisine is quite creative and tasty. 'Cazuela de ave' is a stew of large chunks of chicken, potatoes, rice, onions with green peppers and 'pastel de choclo' is a casserole of beef, onions and olives topped with a maize mash baked in an earthenware bowl. 'Parillada', a mixed grill of meats, offal and intestines served at your table in a charcoal brazier (miniature barbecue) is popular here as in all the southern countries. Other favourite dishes include 'lomo ala pimiento' (pepper steak) and 'humitas' (mashed corn mixed with spices and butter baked in a maize leaf).

Seafood is the basis for many of Chile's favourite dishes and the 'congrío' is their national fish. One of the most popular ways to serve it is 'caldillo de congrío' (a soup with large pieces of the fish with onions and potato balls). Other delicious fish include 'corvine' (bass), 'albacore' (swordfish) and 'cojinoda' (no translation). Try a 'paila choncha' (a bouillabaisse type dish with heaps of flavour) or a 'parillada de mariscos' a mixed seafood grill. There is a whole host of other seafood available including clams (almejas), mussels (choritos/ cholgás), sea-urchin (erizo), barnacles (picorocos) and seaweed.

Typical snacks are 'emanadas de pino' (pasties with onions, raisins, olives meat and peppers) and 'prieta', a blood sausage (black pudding) stuffed with cabbage

Vegetarians

If you are a strict vegetarian you may experience a distinct lack of variety in the food available, especially in small towns. However vegetarian alternatives are becoming more popular you will just have to search a little harder for the restaurants that cater to your tastes. Our tour leaders will do their best to provide interesting

vegetarian alternatives when arranging group meals in the campsite, but your patience and understanding is requested.

Drink

All drinks such as water, soft or alcoholic drinks are at your own expense at all times. The following is a guideline for drinks bought in a shop in the street. Prices in restaurants and hotels can sometimes be more than double the prices specified below:

- 1 litre of water US\$1.50
- 30cl bottle of soft drink US\$1
- 30cl bottle of beer US\$1.50
- 50cl bottle of beer US\$3

You should be wary of drinking the local tap water (especially outside of Santiago). Bottled water, carbonated soft drinks and fruit juices are widely available and much safer. However fruit juices are sometimes made from unboiled tap water, so could upset your stomach. An easy way around this is to order the juice 'con leche' with milk instead. For decent coffee try one of the cafe chains: Cafe Haiti, Tio Pepe or Cafe Brasil.

In Chile some of the hotels we use have bars or serve alcoholic drinks. If there is not a bar in the hotel then there is sure to be one within walking distance. In more up-market hotels, imported beers and spirits are available, but tend to be expensive. Alternatively there is an array of local rums, gins, brandy available and the fabulous Chilean wines which can be extremely cheap (from US\$1.50 a bottle). There are various brands of beers including Cristal, Escudo, Austral, Heineken and Royal Guard (light), there is also a brown ale type beer from the south called Malta. Please note that many places will charge a refundable deposit for the bottles.

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