



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



Where is Volunteer Bolivia located?

We are located in the heart of downtown Cochabamba, the third largest city in Bolivia. Check out our website or a guide book for more information about the city.

How old do I have to be to participate in the program?

We require that you are 18 years of age to participate in our programs. In certain cases i.e. if you're travelling with one of your parents, a teacher, or group leader, we will accept younger participants.

What support does VB provide?

Think of us as your family away from home. We are willing to help you with just about anything. Included in our volunteer package is: pre-trip information, airport pickup and drop-off, orientation on arrival, Spanish classes, homestay with 3 meals a day, custom designed volunteer position and on site staff support 24/7.

What immunisations do I need?

You should get Hepatitis A and B, Typhoid, Yellow Fever and Rabies. If you plan on travelling in the tropical areas of the country you should bring Malaria pills. In addition to the above, check that your other vaccinations are up to date (polio, TB, meningitis, MMR, diphtheria, tetanus). It is recommended that you have a general check-up and dental exam before you travel especially if you will be away for an extended period of time (3+ months)

Do I need a visa?

No, in most cases, you don't need one unless you plan on staying for more than 3 months. If this is the case please be sure to contact the office for more information before you arrive.



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Can I travel while I am in the program?

You can and should!! Many of the volunteers take short weekend trips out of Cochabamba to nearby tourist areas and our travel agency can help you with any of these plans. However, we do ask volunteers to limit their travel to weekends while they are in classes and doing their volunteer work. So please save any plans for long trips for after your participation in our program.

Your website says my volunteer placement will be decided upon arrival why is this the case??

There are a number of reasons why this is the case. First, we feel it is important that the volunteer work you do meets both your needs and the needs of the organizations we work with in Bolivia. Secondly, once you get here and get to know us, settle into the country, etc., you may decide you want to do something very different from what you had in mind when you first set out. Thirdly, it allows us to custom design or personalize our program and your time with us.

Ok, but give me some idea of what I might do...

It is important to note that we only accept volunteers for periods of one month or more. The majority of our short term volunteers (3 months or less) work as assistants in local day care centres assisting Bolivian educators. Longer term volunteers may work in small local NGOs helping in the office or doing translations. Specialized volunteers work in their profession; these include health care workers, graphic designers and others. Therefore you could be a volunteer like Jacob who spent three months here teaching children photography and ended his time with us with a public exhibition of the kids work. Or maybe you are more like Suzy who spent seven months here helping a small NGO with translations of the reports on their local water projects and other tasks.

What is a typical day like?

It varies depending on your personalized program. Typically, the first month you are here you will spend your mornings at the centre in language classes. The afternoons will be free for exploring the city, spending time with your host family and new friends or just relaxing. Once you have some Spanish under your belt you will begin to do volunteer work for at least part of the day. The rest of the time is yours to fill, many volunteers take music classes, learn to sew or paint, visit local sites, learn to dance.... the only limitation is your imagination!

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Cochabamba - Bolivia



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Can I contact past participants??

Yes, in fact we encourage you to. Let us know and we will send you their contact information.

Can I just take classes and not do volunteer work or vice versa?

Yes, we are flexible so you can do practically any combination your heart desires just let us know what you want and we will try to set it up.

How are the Spanish classes structured?

Our language classes are unique in several ways. Typically you work with two teachers who function as a team, each reinforcing what the other has taught you. A session is an hour and a half and is followed by a 30 min. break. Our intensive program consists of two sessions a day for a month. Our professors are very experienced and our curriculum is designed to teach you Spanish while you learn about Bolivian history, culture and current events.

I am a more advanced student and would like to improve my writing skills, is that possible in your program?

Yes, it certainly is, we can custom tailor your classes to both your level and your needs as a Spanish second language learner. We also offer group classes if students are at the same level.

Why do I have to pay to volunteer?

Many folks are surprised to find out they have to pay to volunteer so here are few things to think about. The costs of recruiting volunteers, producing literature, running an office and website are significant, albeit we do our best to keep them to a minimum. We do all the foot work for you such as setting up your language classes, identifying appropriate host families and a volunteer placement, which means you are able to jump right in as soon as you arrive. We cover the cost of your housing, feeding and supervision. Lastly the local organizations where you volunteer have limited resources and are unable to either subsidize your trip or cover the costs of hosting you. If they did have the resources it certainly would be more cost effective to hire a local person, someone who already knows the language and the culture.



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How much does the program cost?

The answer to this depends on two factors: how long you stay with us and which of our services you select (language classes, homestay...). We encourage you to be sure you understand how much the program will cost before you come; this will save us all a lot of frustration.

How do I pay and when?

Before you arrive you will be asked to pay a \$200 US deposit to reserve your space. This can be paid by personal check or a direct transfer to our bank account in Bolivia. If you pay by check it should be made out to **Bolivia Cultura** and sent to: **Bolivia Cultura, Casilla 2411, Cochabamba, Bolivia**. We recommend that you send it by a traceable means such as certified mail to ensure its safe arrival. The remainder of your balance should be paid upon arrival and can be paid by personal check, travellers' checks or cash.

How can I get my hands on money while in Bolivia???

We recommend that you travel with an ATM debit card or a Visa card that you can use for cash advances (check out your card's interest rates before you get here!!). There are numerous ATM machines in the country. It isn't a bad idea to bring a couple personal checks for paying us (see above) and some people like to bring some travellers checks (only American Express accepted) as a back up. Beware travellers checks can be hard to cash.

How can I contact the office?

You can contact us by:

Email : info@volunteerbolivia.org
Phone : 591-4-452-6028
Fax : 591-4-452-9459
Mail : Casilla 2411, Cochabamba, Bolivia

Or by walking in the door: Calle Ecuador 342 (between 25 de Mayo and España streets) the colonial looking building in the middle of the block