



Welcome to Bolivia and to **BOLIVIA CULTURA**

This guide contains information that you will need during your time in Cochabamba. Please take the time to read through it and be sure to ask if you have any questions or concerns.

Please note that BC holds no responsibility for any violation of Bolivia laws and any participant taking part in illegal activities will be immediately expelled from the program, with no refund.

BC staff is available for any problems 24/7 (placement, homestay, or other), questions or other queries you may have. Office hours are 8:30 to 12, 2:30 to 6 Monday to Friday and the office is located at 342 Calle Ecuador (between 25 de Mayo and España) Remember you can always contact Lee (717 12491) or Javier (722 60218) on their cell phones.

We hope you come to love Bolivia as much as we do and we look forward accompanying you on your journey.

Lee

Javier

Carmen

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VOLUNTEER WORK

Bolivia Cultura offers volunteers a range of placements, relating to your preferences and experience. Both short-term and long-term positions are available, previous volunteers have been with us from 4 weeks to up to a year!

SHORT TERM VOLUNTEERS



Short term volunteers are a crucial part of our program allowing us to fulfill the needs of a variety of children's centers scattered around the periphery of Cochabamba. These centers provide services for: children whose mothers who work as maids; children of incarcerated parents; and children of low incomes families who need additional help with their schoolwork. Our volunteers work alongside Bolivian educators helping children with their homework; designing arts and crafts projects for all ages; or providing a pair of desperately needed extra hands.

LONG TERM VOLUNTEERS

Long term volunteers, are those who stay with us more than five months, speak intermediate Spanish and/or are specialized volunteers who have an expertise that matches our Bolivian colleagues' needs. Many long term volunteers contribute in a collaboratively designed volunteer position in a small local NGO helping in the office, translating, and/or working with the Bolivian staff.



PREREQUISITES FOR VOLUNTEERS

A volunteer position is a serious commitment and the volunteer is expected to act accordingly. A volunteer should:

- Have a positive and collaborative attitude. He/she must be flexible and open to other cultures and customs.
- Arrive to the volunteer position on time.
- Dress appropriately for the work environment.
- Comply with the agreed upon work schedule.
- Inform both Volunteer Bolivia and the institution if you have to miss work for any reason.
- Plan all your long trips and visits from friends and family either before or after your volunteer position. (This applies to volunteer positions of two months or less.)
- Attend periodic meetings between Volunteer Bolivia, the volunteer and/or the organization.



SPANISH CLASSES

Spanish classes are an integral part of our program and we recommend that all volunteers take our month long immersion program. Classes are for all levels: beginner, intermediate or advanced students, and scheduling is flexible. All instruction is one-on-one unless you specifically ask for group classes. There is no standard teaching text as the curriculum is customized to match each students' needs.



Additionally, to complement your language study, we periodically offer talks and cultural exchanges as well as trips to historical and cultural sites in and around Cochabamba.



To provide the most effective teaching strategies, you will study with two teachers who work as a team designing daily lessons. All of our teachers have more than 15 years of teaching experience and are professionally trained in teaching Spanish as a second language.

The objectives of our program are:

- Teach students to speak and understand Spanish within a political, social and cultural context.
- Immerse students in Bolivian culture.
- Encourage students to participate in the wide variety of cultural and social activities in the community.
- Broaden the student's understanding of the political complexities of Bolivia.
- Give students the opportunity to practice and reinforce what they learn in class each day.

Classes are held in our offices Monday through Friday
8:30 to 10 and 10:30 to 12.

Terms and conditions:

- Students must arrive on time, if you are more than 15 min. late your classes will be cancelled, but you will be charged
- You should bring a notebook and pencil.
- All cancellations or changes in the schedules must be made 24 hours in advance.
- All scheduling details or changes must be communicated to staff.

"They offer one-on-one instruction with wonderful teachers, who could ask for more!!! I enjoyed the fact that I had the opportunity, in essence, to design my own curriculum."

EDIN RANDALL, USA



HOMESTAY



"The family we were with was absolutely incredible!! We had fun with them and really felt part of the family."

Dominique Chanin , Quebec

One of the most important parts of your cultural experience is staying with a Bolivian family. A homestay is an incredible opportunity to discover a different culture, and brings challenges that will draw on your flexibility and ability to adapt. Your family will learn as much from you as you will learn from them, so make the effort to interact with them.

You will have a private room, a house key (to come and go as you please), and 3 meals a day. Be sure to let your family know if you are going to miss a meal or be home later than arranged. Both your family and the BC office should be informed if you plan to travel.

You can receive phone calls at your family's home, and make short, local calls to landlines however you will not be able to call cell phones from your home phone. Remember that electricity, gas, lights, phone and water are expensive so be considerate. Laundry service is not included but there are a number of laundry services in town or you can "go native" and wash your clothes in the laundry sink.

No opposite-sex visits should be made to your private room, and there should be no loaning of money from or to your family.

Your family will be happy to give you relevant information on the area you live in, such as where you can find an internet caf  and which radio taxis the family uses. Don't forget to let us know before you arrive if you have any special dietary requirements.



A bit of give and take is necessary for your homestay; respect your family and they will respect you. If you choose to do a homestay, it is certain to be a highly rewarding experience. Notify the office of any problems.

If you need to change families you should speak with the office. This can be arranged at no extra cost.



PASSPORTS, VISAS AND IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

Many nationalities do not need to get a visa before coming to Bolivia. To check the status of your country:

http://www.worldtravelguide.net/country/35/passport_visa/South-America/Bolivia.html

For citizens of countries that don't need to apply for a visa in advance (i.e. most western countries), you will receive a 30 day stamp when you arrive in the country. Two extensions of 30 days each can be obtained at any immigration office or by leaving the country and returning. Anyone planning to stay longer than 6 months should plan on getting a one year visa. All of this may seem a bit confusing, so please contact the office if you have any questions or concerns.

Citizens of the United States need a visa which will be valid for 5 years in order to enter Bolivia. The requirements are as follows:

1. The Visa application form, including a passport size color photo
2. A passport valid for six months
3. Hotel reservation or invitation letter (we can provide this)
4. Photocopy of roundtrip ticket or travel itinerary
5. Proof of economic solvency (bank statement or copy of credit card)
6. Payment of \$135 visa fee
7. International yellow fever vaccination certificate



Please check our website or contact the office for more information on the visa process.



Bolivian law requires you to carry identification at all times – we recommend that you carry a photocopy of your passport and show this when asked, never the original. It is a good idea to make copies of other important documents such as: airline tickets, insurance policies and important prescriptions. Be sure to store them separately from the originals. Leave a photocopy of your passport and other important documents with your family at home. When you arrive, leave a copy of your passport and entry stamp/visa with the Bolivia Cultura office.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- Be aware of the expiration dates of your passport and credit cards/debit cards/travelers cheques to avoid having them expire while on the road.
- Insurance which covers medical emergencies, evacuation, personal belongings and repatriation is strongly recommended. Be sure to take note of the medical waiver fees.
- Keep a copy of your vaccination record with you when travelling within the country.



MONEY AND FINANCES

You should plan on getting the cash you need while here from the numerous ATM machines scattered around downtown. Be sure to tell your bank that you are going to be using your ATM card and/or credit card while in Bolivia. You can withdraw money in US dollars or in bolivianos from the ATMs (be sure to check with your bank to find out how much they charge per transaction from an overseas ATM).

How much pocket money you need depends on what you do in your free time. Some average prices are;

- Taxi cab 1 to 3 \$us
- Cappuccino 1 \$us
- Beer 1.50 \$us
- Entrance to play/movie 2-3 \$us
- Internet café 0.50 \$us per hour

Most financial transactions in Bolivia are made in cash. Credit cards are not accepted in many places but it is a good idea to bring a card for emergencies; to purchase more expensive items such as plane tickets; or for a cash advance if necessary.

American dollars and Euros can be exchanged in banks or with money changers in the street. When changing money, be sure to count it carefully and be aware of false bills. It is common that euros or dollar bills with tears in them will not be accepted.

PAYMENT POLICY

Bolivia Cultura requires a \$us 200 deposit to reserve your spot in our program. This should be paid once you are accepted into the program and is non refundable.

\$ All fees need to be paid in full upon arrival (no exceptions).

\$ Payment can be made in cash, by personal check (made out to Bolivia Cultura) or credit card

\$ All payments must be made in US Dollars.

\$ Once the program begins a maximum of 25% of the total paid will be refunded.

\$ If a participant wishes to defer participation to a future date, the deposit will be applied.



IMMUNIZATIONS

It takes time to have an effective course of immunizations so you will need to speak with your doctor or travel clinic at least 12 weeks before you intend to travel.

We recommend the following immunizations for Bolivia: Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Typhoid and **Yellow Fever (required to enter the country)**.

Serious tropical diseases are spread through infected mosquitoes. Malarial pills are not necessary in the highlands of Cochabamba but you may want to bring some along in case you travel to the tropical regions of the country. They are generally cheaper to purchase from a pharmacy here.

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 away for an extended period of time (+3 months).

Check out these websites for up to date information:

<http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/>

CDC info for travellers, very complete

<http://www.drwisetravel.com/index.html>

good FAQ, check it out!



COMMON HEALTH PROBLEMS

"BOIL IT, COOK IT, PEEL IT OR FORGET IT"

DIARRHEA

The most common health problem "diarrhea", caused by nasty bugs found in water. More serious diarrheal illnesses Giardia and Amoebic Dysentery, or by Typhoid. The best way to avoid the attention to what and where you eat and drink. Your host family will always have purified water and clean food.



for volunteers is "traveler's diarrhea" in contaminated food and caused by internal parasites are bacteria eg. Cholera and above is by paying careful attention to what and where you eat and drink.

- DO NOT DRINK TAP WATER IN BOLIVIA OR BRUSH YOUR TEETH WITH IT.
- Always ensure bottled water is properly sealed. It is cheap and available almost everywhere.
- Be wary of ice in drinks.
- Always wash your hands thoroughly before eating and drinking.
- Street food is never certain to be safe. Particularly avoid undercooked meat and fish, dairy products and raw vegetables.

Dehydration can easily occur at higher altitudes and is a serious danger when you are experiencing diarrhea (be sure to drink at least a cup for each trip to the bathroom). At high altitudes you should drink at least 2 liters of water per day.

Remember that the sun is strong especially at high altitudes. It is a good idea to follow the advice of our Australian friends.



SLIP on some clothes

SLOP on some high factor sunscreen

SLAP on a hat

If you do find yourself suffering from dehydration (symptoms include: headache and muscle spasms) a good re-hydration mix is: 1 liter of water, 1 spoon of sugar, 1 spoon of salt. You can also buy re-hydration salts in any pharmacy.



ALTITUDE SICKNESS (SOROCCHI)

Altitude sickness (sorocchi) can occur (especially when first arriving to the El Alto airport!). The best cure if possible is to descend to lower altitude. The symptoms (headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, insomnia, loss of appetite) can be avoided or alleviated by taking it easy your first few days, eating small meals and avoiding alcohol your first few nights in town.

Sorocchi pills are sold in almost all pharmacies and are a mixture of caffeine and aspirin, which can also be helpful in alleviating symptoms. The best cure is coca. You can drink the tea or chew the leaves and they have worked for centuries to alleviate altitude problems.



Local health care is inexpensive and readily available. You may even find yourself taking advantage of being here and getting that teeth cleaning you can't afford back home. Be sure to get the information card from the office with the name and number of our English speaking doctor!

SAFETY and SCAMS

Bolivia is one of the safest South American countries and most Bolivians are friendly and helpful although, as in every country, you should take precautions.

- Don't walk alone after dark. Take a radio taxi.
- Be aware that Bolivians drive on the right and pedestrians do NOT have right of way.
- Lock your baggage when travelling
- Keep your valuables, including passport, in a money belt under your clothing.
- Don't wear expensive jewelry



"I wish I had known about the robbery schemes! I had read a book before I came that said "when in a bad situation, follow the Bolivians" - which is great, until the other hombre is in the robbery scheme with the fake police"

Stephanie Nemcsok, Canada

These will be tried on you throughout Bolivia ...read through the list below, be aware, and remember that they happen when you least expect it...



1. The friendly tourist and the plain-clothes police officer.

A “tourist” approaches you and asks for directions, moments later, someone else comes over and shows you an official looking ID. He claims to be a police officer and asks to see your passport/entry stamp. Your new “friend” says this isn’t unusual and takes out his own ID / passport / entry stamp. The “police officer” then asks to inspect your money for counterfeit notes and / or your bag for drugs. During the process the two will steal your money / contents of your bag. Variations include being asked to get into a taxi to go to the police station, and during the ride they will go through your wallet / bag.

What to do?

Assume plain-clothes police officers are con – artists. Don’t allow anyone to search your bags. Ask to go to the police station. Only show a photocopy of your passport. Never get into a taxi with a stranger or with other people already in it (unless it is a trufi taxi with the number clearly displayed).

2. It’s raining money / credit cards / white powder, etc.

Someone drops money or some other potentially valuable item near you. You bend down to pick it up and:

- a. You are accused of stealing it and asked to pay to avoid arrest.
- b. You are asked to share your find while being robbed
- c. While bending over, you are pick-pocketed / have your bag snaked/stolen.

What to do?

Ignore “accidentally” dropped items – keep walking, minding your own business. If someone approaches you with “dropped” money / phonecard / credit card, become suspicious, watch your bags, and get away from the situation. Be rude if necessary.

3. Helpful cleaners

You’re walking down the street and a helpful person points out spit / vomit / mustard / dulce de leche etc. on your bag / jacket. They, or someone else, offer to help clean it off – while another person empties your pockets / bag or runs off with the jacket / bag you’ve just taken off to clean.

What to do?

Ignore said mess and keep walking. Wait until you get to your hostel / hotel / a safe restaurant to clean it off. Be careful; the nearest convenient spot may be a set up to rob you.



4. The unlucky traveler

A "respectable looking traveler" tells you they've just been robbed / they've just got out of prison / their sister's just died, etc. and ask you for money.

What to do?

Do not give them anything. If in doubt, give them information on the nearest police station / their country's embassy details.

5. Bag – slashers and pick – pocketers

You are in the busy market / bus terminal and someone casually brushes against your back / bumps into you. The contents of your pockets / your bag have disappeared.

What to do?

Always carry your valuables in a safe place (ex. moneybelt) underneath your clothes. Don't have large amounts of cash in your pocket / bag. Wear backpack / bag on the front of your body.

6. People lurking at the bus terminal / café / outside hostel

Someone distracts you, asking for directions, telling you their life story etc., while someone else snatches your bag.

What to do?

Always have one eye on your belongings. Try not to travel alone. Make a habit of hooking your leg / arm through the strap of your bag.

7. The extra – long bus ride

You are on the bus and the person next to you asks you to open their drink. You oblige, and being polite, the person offers you a little. You take a swig and hours later you wake up in a daze, having been drugged, with no belongings; even your shoes are gone.

What to do?

Never accept cigarettes, drinks or food from strangers.



CULTURAL DO'S AND DON'TS

"The Bolivian culture is fabulous – the most vibrant and authentic example of indigenous cultura I found anywhere in South America or Central America"

Julie Shea , Maine, USA

It is almost certain that one of the reasons you are coming to Bolivia is its culture. Bolivian culture is still a vibrant part of every day life and the innumerable festivals and remote small villages will allow you to experience it first hand.

However, Bolivia may at times irritate or disturb you because it is different from what you are used to. You may find the trash or treatment of domestic animals disturbing or be frustrated by Bolivians' lack of punctuality. It is very important that you try to gain a respect for, and understanding of, the cultural differences. One way to do this is to read about Bolivia before you come (see appendix for suggested readings).

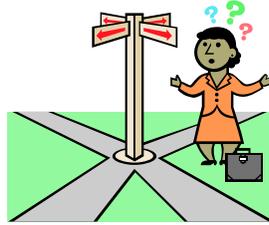
Here are a few tips for lessening that culture shock and helping you figure out some common social situations.

- Greeting is an important part of Bolivian culture; one should always acknowledge all the people in a room when you enter or leave it. You can do this by looking at each person and saying buenos días/tarde/noche, shaking hands or by a simple kiss on the right cheek.
- It is considered rude to stretch, yawn or burp in front of someone.
- If there is a mat or rag in a doorway take the hint and use it to clean your feet.
- If someone is eating and you leave the table, you should say "provecho" or "permiso," and if it is said to you, respond with "gracias". The same "permiso" should be used when you enter or leave a group or meeting.
- Bolivians are, in general, quiet people so be aware of the volume of your voice – especially when in a group of foreigners
- Drinking is a part of almost all fiestas, weddings, baptisms, and even Todos Santos. Bolivians can often times be very insistent that you join in. If you don't feel up to having a few drinks with them it may be best not to go attend the event. It may work to say you are "mal de estomago" (sick), pregnant or a Mormon but the social pressure will still be there. If you are at a family event you can ask your "dad" or "big bro" to give you some protection.





GENERAL INFORMATION



Cochabamba is a fairly big city. It has modern facilities including:

- Innumerable internet cafés (3 – 4 Bs./ hour)
- Phone centers where you make local, national and international calls as well as call cell phones. You can also buy phone cards which may work out cheaper. Most landline phones cannot call cell phones or internationally.
- Cellphones galore!!! You can bring your phone from home and get a SIM card (for less than \$5 and sometimes for free) or you can buy a used one here (for as little as \$25) or you can enjoy living without a phone ☺
- The main Post Office ("Correo") is located at Heroínas and Ayacucho, where letters, postcards and packages can be sent to any part of the world. It takes about 2 weeks to/from Europe, and about a week to/from North America.

If you want receive snail mail while in Cochabamba, have it sent to this address. Be sure it weighs less than 2 kilos or it will be hard and expensive to get out of customs.

c/o Bolivia Cultura
Casilla 2411
Cochabamba – Bolivia

Office phone number: 591 – 4 – 452 – 6028



TRANSPORT

"...if there was ever an extreme sport of bus driving, the Bolivians would win hands down!"

Beverly Wagner, US

Transportation is inexpensive and everywhere.

TAXI: Radio taxis are the ones which have a logo on the door and are considered safer than the independent taxis. Agree on a price before getting in, if in doubt, ask the locals what a reasonable price would be. Airport taxis have fixed rates; look at the sign to see what the rates are. Never get into a taxi that has other people already in it.



MICROS-TRUFIS-TAXI TRUFIS: Communal taxis, vans and buses that will take you around Cochabamba on set routes. They display their destination in the window and run frequently until about 10 p.m. When you are approaching the street where you would like to get off, say "esquina por favor," or "voy a bajar," and the driver will stop the vehicle to allow you to exit. On Micros, pay as you get on; for trufis, pay when you get off.



FLOTA: Long distance buses leave from the terminal (Av. Ayacucho). Seats can be reserved in advance, but tickets are cheaper right before departure. There is a departure tax when you leave the terminal.

AVIÓN: (Airplane) BOA (the state airline) Aerosur and TAM Militar are the main domestic airlines. A number of international airlines operate as well.



TRAIN: Expreso del Sur and Wara Wara del Sur go from Oruro to Salar de Uyuni and Tarija.

Rental car hire is available – ask in our



offices.

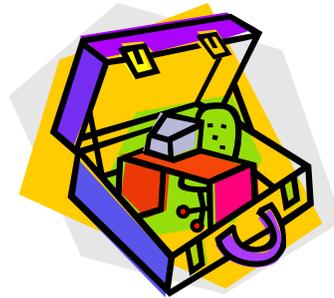


THINGS TO BRING

Light-weight fast drying clothing which is easy to wash is ideal. Layers are most flexible with the climate. When you pack, remember LESS is MORE, many people wish they hadn't brought so many clothes. If you forget something or need an extra sweater, good quality clothing is cheap and easily available in Cochabamba.

We recommend that you bring the following:

- Lightweight layerable clothing
- Something a bit dressy to accompany your family to weddings etc.
- Jacket and sweater or fleece
- Bath towel
- Comfortable walking shoes or hiking boots
- Rain gear
- Small knapsack
- Tampons (expensive) and contraceptives if necessary
- Camera
- Extra memory chip
- Money Belt
- Swimsuit
- Insect repellent
- Sun screen lotion 30 factor
- Sunglasses
- A good sun hat
- Flashlight
- Medical supplies including antiseptic cream, aspirin, charcoal, Imodium/Lomotil, lip and nose moisturizer.





RESOURCES

TRAVEL GUIDES

- Lonely Planet: Bolivia
- Footprints, Bolivia Handbook
- Rough guide to Bolivia



BOOKS POLITICS AND HISTORY

- A Concise History of Bolivia, **Herbert Klein**.
- The Complete Bolivian Diaries of Ché Guevara and Other Captured Documents, **Ernesto Guevara with Daniel James ed.**
- We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us: Dependency and Exploitation in Bolivian Tin Mines, **J Nash**, a classic study of miners in Bolivia.
- Llamas, Weavings and Organic Chocolate: Multicultural Grassroots Development in the Andes and Amazon of Bolivia, **Kevin Healy**, An interesting overview of development in Bolivia especially the first four chapters.
- Teetering on the Rim: Global Restructuring, Daily Life, and the Armed Retreat of the Bolivian State, **Leslie Gill**.
- Impasse in Bolivia: Neoliberal Globalization and Social Resistance by **Ben Kohl and Linda Farthing**, Zed Press, London 2006.
- Whispering in the Giants Ear by **William Powers**, 2006.
- The Price of Fire by **Benjamin Dangl**, 2006
- Revolutionary Horizons: Past and Present in Bolivian Politics by **Forrest Hylton and Sinclair Thomson**, 2007, Verso Press.
- Dignity and Defiance, 2008, co-editors **Jim Shultz and Melissa Crane Draper**

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Or webpage, in English Practical information www.volunteerbolivia.org www.xe.com
- current exchange rates www.xe.com
- general health information, in English, Spanish, French www.who.int
- travel health info www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk
- Center for Disease Control very detailed info www.cdc.gov





BOLIVIAN NEWS AND ANALYSIS

In English

- stats and facts on Bolivia
www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/bl.html
- Andean Information Network <http://www.ain-bolivia.org/>
- The Bolivia Transition Project <http://boliviainformationproject.blogspot.com/>
- The Bolivia Information Forum <http://www.boliviainfoforum.org.uk/>
- Bolivian Studies Association (BSA)
<http://www.bolivianstudies.org/eng/whos.php/>
- Upside Down World Bolivia page <http://www.upsidedownworld.org/>
- Znet Bolivia Watch <http://www.zmag.org/lam/boliviawatch.cfm>
- Bolivia Rising <http://boliviarising.blogspot.com/>

In Spanish

- Info on Bolivia www.embajadadebolivia.com.ar/turismo
- daily newspaper from Cochabamba www.opinion.com.bo
- Daily newspaper from La Paz www.la-razon.com
- Bolpress <http://www.bolpress.com/>
- COMTECO- Toda la prensa boliviana <http://www.noticiabolivianas.com/>
- CEDIB <http://www.cedib.org/pcedib/index.php>
- PIEB - Servicio informativo especializado en investigación, ciencia y tecnología <http://www.pieb.com.bo/>