



BOLIVIA CULTURA

VOLUNTEER BOLIVIA

"Creating a bridge to understanding Bolivia and her people"



STAYING HEALTHY IN BOLIVIA

Bolivia Cultura has compiled the following information to give you a brief overview of how to stay healthy while in Bolivia. We highly recommend that you inform yourself further by visiting your local travel clinic and/or checking the websites listed at the end.

IMMUNISATIONS

It takes time to have an effective course of immunisations so you will need to speak with your doctor or travel clinic at least 12 weeks before you intend to travel. The Center for Disease Control has all the information you need to stay healthy while in Bolivia. Please visit: <http://www.cdc.gov> You can click on "Travelers' Health" from the menu on your left. From there you will be asked to choose a region of the world in which you will be travelling, the site will then display health information, common health problems, recommended immunizations or precautions and more.

Yellow Fever vaccination is required before you are allowed to enter Bolivia. We also recommend the following immunisations: Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, and Typhoid.

Serious tropical diseases are spread through infected mosquitoes. Malaria pills are not necessary in Cochabamba (city and surrounding high areas) but you may want to bring some along in case you travel to the Chapare or other tropical regions of the country or can be purchased here (cheaper).

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).

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 altitudes. The symptoms (headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, insomnia, loss of appetite) can be avoided or alleviated by taking it easy the first few days, drinking plenty of water, eating small meals and avoiding alcohol during 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. Mate de coca or chewing coca is also an effective and common remedy.





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COMMON PROBLEMS

The most common health problem for volunteers is "traveller's diarrhoea", caused by nasty bacteria found in contaminated food and water. More serious diarrhoeal illnesses are caused by internal parasites. The best way to avoid the 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.
- Be wary of ice in drinks and uncooked salad items.
- Bottled water is available almost everywhere. Always ensure it is properly sealed.
- 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 diarrhoea (be sure to drink at least a cup of water for each trip to the bathroom). At high altitudes you should drink at least 2 litres of water per day.

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

GENERAL MEDICAL CARE

Local health care is inexpensive and readily available. We work with number of highly respected local doctors. You may even find yourself taking advantage of being here and getting that teeth cleaning you can't afford back home.



For your eyes - bring contact lens fluid, it is available but can be hard to find and expensive, as well as a current eye prescription, just in case something happens to your glasses. It is also a good idea to bring prescriptions for any drugs you use and a supply of your medications (be sure to check expiration dates, including for condoms/other contraceptives). Birth control and tampons are available but maybe more expensive here. Remember the sun is strong especially at high altitudes. Be sure to use a high factor sunscreen and a hat.

Check out these websites for up-to-date information.

www.who.int

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

www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk