

Bolivia

Worth knowing from A – Z

Airport pick up

Your host family will be waiting for you at the customs exit at the airport (Sucre airport is a national airport; it is very small and has only one exit door). You should look for someone with a sign with your name on it. It is advisable to have dollar bills of small denomination on hand as customs porters will help you with your luggage; a tip of \$3-\$5 USD is customary. While you are in customs waiting for your luggage, you will be able to see the sign with your name on, through a glass wall, dividing customs from the people waiting for passengers. If for weather reasons your plane should have to land in La Paz or Santa Cruz the airline will provide you with a hotel room (if necessary) and will organize your transfer to Sucre. Your host family will check with the airport regarding your landing details.

“La Paz Package”

Since it is seldom possible to get a flight to Sucre with a stopover in La Paz or Santa Cruz without an overnight stay, we recommend that you let the school arrange a flight connection from La Paz to Sucre.

When you book the ticket through the school there is a 10% discount and they also arrange:

- Pickup at the airport in La Paz;
- Booking of hotel;
- Booking of flight to Sucre with arrival the next day;
- 24-hour cell phone service to an English speaking representative in case of delayed flight, etc.

When you arrive in La Paz you will be met by an English-speaking representative holding a sign with your name on it. This person will go with you to the airline desk and help you collect your reserved and prepaid ticket to Sucre. The same person will pick you up next day at the hotel and arrange transportation to the airport. If you reserve through the school, the ticket costs about 185 USD including one night at the hotel and breakfast. A round trip La Paz – Sucre – La Paz costs about 260 USD with the same service.

Bolivia

Bolivia was inhabited by the ancient Aymará civilization, which lived on Lake Titicaca. Later, this

civilization was conquered by the Incas, who were themselves conquered by the Spanish in 1538. The name “Bolivia” derives from the independence fighter Simón Bolívar, who broke away from Spanish rule in 1825. Throughout the country’s colonial history, it was known as Upper Peru. In its early years, independent Bolivia was ruled by a succession of caudillos (military dictators) who tried, with mixed success to integrate the country’s three disparate regions – the central region, the eastern Andes and the Altiplano – into a national entity.

Bolivianos

1 Boliviano (Bs) = 100 centavos. Notes are in denominations of Bs200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of Bs2 and 1, and 50, 20, and 10 centavos. There are no restrictions on the import or the export of either local or foreign currency, subject to declaration.

Clothing

No matter when you're traveling, it's always a good idea to bring a warm jacket or woolen sweater, a rain jacket, shoes or hiking boots, and thick socks. If you plan to visit any religious or cultural sites, remember that you'll need something besides tank tops and shorts to be respectful.

Electricity

220 volts AC / 50 Hz. Be mindful that in some areas 110 volts is still used and that electricity is turned off at night. Torches are often essential.

Email

In order to keep in touch with your family and friends at home, please make sure you have an e-mail address before you leave (hotmail, yahoo or others are free of charge). It is free to send and receive email at the school for the students (although no access to the internet) but there are several internet cafes around the school area.

Excursions

As part of the language program, the school offers 2-3 organized activities every week. In addition, students will find a daily schedule of cultural events in Sucre and surrounding areas, locations of theaters, museums, festivals as well as ticket prices are available. Activities include: Visits to local areas

of interest, dance classes, cooking classes, parties & fiestas, Spanish languages videos & movies, seminars & discussion groups.

Please Note: You may need to pay "out-of-pocket" expenses (bus fare, entrance fees, etc.)

Food

Although it has yet to become a widespread international delicacy, the food of Bolivia will not leave you unsatisfied. The staples of the region are enhanced with delectable spices and careful preparation. "Chairo" is a popular Bolivian dish which is made of lamb, potatoes and other vegetables. Another is "Sajta" which is chicken in a sauce of hot peppers. Typical drinks are coffee, black tea and chocolate. "Mate de Coca", a drink made of coca leaves is a good cure for altitude sickness, and a local specialty. The wine available is from Bolivia and is not very expensive. Soft drinks include brand names from the northern hemisphere as well as local varieties which have their own unique flavor; these tend to taste a little bit like bubblegum. Be mindful that sanitation and hygiene in Bolivia can be rather poor particularly in the countryside areas. Please use caution when consuming anything. Wash your hands frequently. Juices made from the region's abundant exotic fruits are common and delicious, especially closer to the jungle. A favorite dairy drink is yogur, a drinkable combination of milk and yogurt. If you're looking for something a bit more intoxicating, never fear. South American liquor is cheap and abundant. Many a tasty drink is made from aguardiente, an extremely potent sugar cane alcohol.

Health

Unless urgent visits to the nearest restroom are your idea of fun, avoid drinking tap water. Water advertised as purificada (purified) may have only been passed through a filter, which does not necessarily catch all of those diarrhea causing demons. Water that has been boiled or treated with iodine is safe to drink; otherwise, bottled water is best. Watch out for refrescos and other water-based juices, and freshly-washed fruit. Also use bottled water when brushing teeth. Milk is also untreated therefore it needs to be boiled beforehand. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.

Host families

Families belong to Bolivia's middle class, although students should take note that living standards in Bolivia are much lower than Europe or North America. Family homes are located in neighborhoods usually no more than a 20 to 30 minute walk to school. Participants should recognize

that a certain degree of flexibility will be required to adjust to the Bolivian customs and way of life.

Lake Titicaca

Lake Titicaca is the world's highest lake navigable to large vessels, lying at 3,810 m above sea level in the Andes Mountains of South America, it astrides the border between Peru to the west and Bolivia to the east. Lake Titicaca is the second largest lake of South America (after Maracaibo). It covers some 8,300 square km and extends in a northwest to southeast direction for a distance of 190 km. It is 80 km across at its widest point. The meaning of the name Titicaca is uncertain, but it has been variously translated as Rock of the Puma or Crag of Lead. Titicaca lies between Andean ranges in a vast basin that comprises most of the Altiplano (High Plateau) of the northern Andes.

Luggage

- Copy of insurance policy, plane ticket and passport;
- Visa card;
- Dictionary;
- Paper and pen for school;
- Insect repellent;
- Sandals, walking shoes;
- Something for the children in the institutions (toys, teddy bears, dinky toys, games etc);
- Pictures of your friends and family in Europe;
- Some US dollars for the first days;

Market places

Bolivia has a rich variety of traditional hand made handicrafts, such as carved objects in silver, wood and other materials, textile threads, and a wide variety of textiles. You can find all of these at market places.

Money

In more expensive establishments, sometimes prices are quoted in Dollars. Travelers' checks can be changed into Bolivianos or Dollars at exchange offices in major cities. You can also change \$US into Bolivianos at banks and casas de cambio (exchange houses). It is suggested to use casas de cambio and not street vendors.

It is common that nobody wants to accept Dollar bills that look old or are torn. Not even banks! Credit cards - Visa (most common), and Master Card are accepted in main cities. Cash can be withdrawn from your credit card at some banks without extra commission, in Bolivianos and Dollars and from Bancomat in Bolivianos.

Ordinary courtesy

You don't have to bring gifts for the family but it is a nice gesture to do so (some ideas: chocolate or candy, a picture frame or something local from your home town). If you need an extra sheet, blanket, a new light or anything else, ask your family. Overall, the homestay should be one of the highlights of your trip but sometimes problems do arise. Notify the director of the school of any problems or if you wish to change families (there is no charge for this). You will receive a key to the outside door and will be able to come and go as you please. You are not obliged to eat your meals with the family, but you should notify them when you will not be eating at home. Food and drink served by your host family is safe. Your host family respects your beliefs and we ask that you show the same respect for theirs. You can discuss anything with your teacher, but some subjects regarding religion, culture or politics may be inappropriate to discuss with your family. It is a good idea to bring some pictures of family, friends, your house and even a map that shows where you live. These can be used to begin discussions.

For those of you who may want to bring gifts for your foreign hosts, here are a few suggestions:

For the Señora: Box of chocolates, fresh flowers from a flower store, towels, table cloth, etc.

For the Children: Balloons, gum, cassettes of current popular music, local city/state T-shirts, baseball cap.

Population

Bolivia has the highest number of Indigenous people in South America, about 70%. Many people still speak Quecha or Aymara. The literacy rate is 75 %.

Public Holidays

January 1: New Year's Day (Nuevo Año)

February 2: Fiesta de la Virgen de Candelaria

floating: Good Friday

floating: Corpus Christi

May 1: Labour Day (Día del trabajo)

August 6: Independence Day (Día de la Patria)

November 1: All Saints Day (Todos Santos)

December 25: Christmas Day (Navidad)

Religion

95 percent of Bolivians are Roman Catholic. Religion used to be the field of women and men had no obligation to attend church or to practice their religion.

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. Roman Catholicism is the official religion.

Safety

Foreigners may find it difficult to blend in, but respecting local customs (in many cases, dressing more conservatively) may placate would-be hecklers. Familiarize yourself with your surroundings before setting out and carry yourself with confidence; if you must check a map on the street, do it discreetly. If you are traveling alone, be sure someone at home knows your itinerary and never admit that you're traveling alone. Do not walk alone late at night. If you feel uncomfortable, leave as quickly and directly as you can.

Sucre

The city of Sucre is also known as the City of Four Names, being those names La Plata, Charcas, Ciudad Blanca (White City), and Sucre. On December 13, 1991 in Carthage (Tunisia) the [UNESCO](#) declared the Historic City of Sucre a "[World Heritage Site](#)" in recognition for its rich history and its wealth of colonial architecture. Sucre is the beautiful colonial judicial capital located in the Andean highlands of Bolivia. Known as the "White City of the Americas" due to its numerous colonial buildings, all of which are painted in white and topped with shiny red tile roofs. Set in a valley surrounded by low mountains, Sucre is small (pop. 150,000) so it is very easy to explore on foot. A university town, known as the center of learning and progressive thought within Bolivia, Sucre has many museums, a lively central plaza, shops and restaurants. The city has a youthful, energetic feel despite its old-fashioned look created by the numerous ancient mansions and colonial churches. This charming colonial city and its nearby villages has a sizable Indigenous population who maintain their customs and colorful dress. Locals and visitors are attracted to the markets where food, textiles and other products are sold in barter fashion. Nearby is Potosi, which was one of the most important silver mining centers in the world with the largest and richest population in Latin America and an integral part of Bolivian history.

Tuition

Tuition takes place either in the spacious classrooms or, depending on the weather, out in the garden or wherever the students might prefer. Clothes and social conversation are informal and the teachers and students often arrange social and leisure activities together. The atmosphere is very relaxed. Classes have a maximum of four students.

Visa

No visa is necessary for citizens of US, Canada, most Western European countries, Latin American countries (except Mexico & Venezuela), Japan,

Australia, New Zealand, Israel, **for a visit up to 90 days**. For other nationalities, check with the nearest Bolivian Embassy or Consulate.

Volunteers receive their tourist visa at the airport when they arrive. It can be extended in Bolivia if the volunteer wants to **stay more than 90 days**. The cheapest solution for visa extension is: Take a little sightseeing tour across the border (as most volunteers do anyway) and get a new stamp for another 3 months on re-entry.

The school helps to organize these trips.

The other solution is: Pay extra fees to the authorities to get another stamp - easy but pricey!

Voluntary work

As a volunteer you have to be in good physical condition and be willing to lend a hand wherever you are stationed. The work demands flexibility, initiative, maturity and a sense of drive. In return you will get a unique opportunity to get to know Bolivia from the inside. If you chose to work for a children's school/home or orphanage you may like to bring along toys, paper, pencils play dough etc...

Weather

The city of Sucre is located an altitude of 2.790 m above sea level. Its weather is mild and pleasant around 20 °Celsius (68 °F).

Weather forecast information can be found at:

<http://www.wunderground.com/global/GU.html>

All suggestions to improve and give advice when considered relevant to this document are very welcome. We are well aware of the limited content and kindly ask you to participate in improving it. Send us an e-mail with your suggestions to: info@global-volunteers.de

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