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# Tour Notes

**Bolivia - From the Lowlands to the High Andes**

**Tour Duration – 15 Days**



## Tour Rating

Fitness ●●●○○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●○○ | Culture ●●●●● | History ●●●●● | Wildlife ●○○○○

## Tour Pace

Busy

## Tour Highlights

- ✓ Relish the colonial architecture of the UNESCO World Heritage cities of Sucre and Potosi.
- ✓ Follow in the footsteps of dinosaurs at Cal Orck'o, the world's largest paleontological site.
- ✓ Marvel at the stunning vista of the salt flats at Uyuni
- ✓ Catch your breath in the fascinating city of La Paz



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## Tour Map



## Tour Essentials

**Accommodation:** Mid- range comfortable hotels  
**Included Meals:** Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary.  
**Group Size:** 12  
**Start Point:** Santa Cruz de la Sierra  
**End Point:** La Paz  
**Transport:** Private cars or minibuses, domestic flights  
**Countries:** Bolivia





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## **Bolivia - From the Lowlands to the High Andes**

*Often overlooked in favour of its more famous neighbour Peru, Bolivia offers the adventurous traveller just about all you could want from a trip to South America, without the numbers of tourists found in other areas. On this two week trip we journey through a variety of landscapes from the steamy jungles of the Amazon to the desolate and foreboding salt flats of Uyuni, nestled up against the border with Chile. We visit the lovely Jesuit churches and pretty villages of the Chiquitania, region and the colonial cities of Sucre and Potosi with their amazing architecture, which transports us back to the days of the conquistadors. We also take time to delve into ancient cultures at Tiwanaku, and embark on an adventure through the mountains of the High Andes, where the barren landscapes have to be seen to be believed. Bolivia is a hotbed of nature, adventure and culture that should be high on the list for any prospective visit to South America.*

### **Tour itinerary notes**

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and on occasions alternative accommodation, of a similar standard to that named below, will be used.

### **Tour Guide**

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not just passing through these countries, but are usually locally born. Unlike some companies it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK as we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. Where possible you will have the same guide throughout your trip but on occasions it may be necessary to change the guide at one or more points during the tour.

# Itinerary

## **Day 1 - Santa Cruz de la Sierra**

Arrive in the atmospheric city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra where you will be met and transferred to your hotel to relax after your flight. In the afternoon begin a city walking tour at the busy main square of 24 de Septiembre, including the main sights such as the church of San Lorenzo, the History Museum, and the handicrafts market of Recova Vieja. Overnight at Hotel Americana or similar.

## **Santa Cruz de la Sierra**

Santa Cruz de la Sierra was founded in 1561 by a Spaniard, Nuflo de Chavez, 220km east of its present location to grow a range of products to supply the rest of the colony. The city continues to prosper today and there is a strong desire for the region to be independent of the rest of Bolivia. The best way to appreciate the city is to stroll through its busy cosmopolitan streets joining the locals at any of the many cafes that abound

## **Day 2 – Samaipata (approx. driving time 2.5 hours)**

Today we visit the Fort and village of Samaipata. En route we have spectacular views of the Los Volcanes mountain range, and on arrival we take a 45-minute guided tour of the archaeological site. We discover the pre-Columbian architecture in the ruins of the defensive, religious and esoteric buildings. In addition, we hear the history of Fort Samaipata, which has belonged to the Chané, Inca and Spanish civilizations. After our stroll we visit the Samaipata Archaeological Museum, located just 12 miles from the archaeological complex. This colonial building exhibits the objects discovered during the excavations of the fort in its six rooms. After lunch at a local restaurant, we'll start our return journey back to Santa Cruz de la Sierra, making stops along the way at Las Cuevas waterfalls where we take a hike of approx. 1 hour and a half round trip to visit the rain





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forest and bathe in pools. We return to Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Overnight at Hotel Las Americas or similar. (BL)

### Day 3 – Sucre

This morning we transfer to the airport to catch the short flight south to “The White City” of Sucre (2.700m). After lunch we visit the impressive paleontological site of Cal Orck’o to see the rock face with its thousands of dinosaur tracks. On our way back to Sucre we visit the Indian market to understand the local folklore. After a short coffee break, we walk up to the roof of the tower of the San Felipe Neri Church. Overnight Hotel De Su Merced or similar (B).

### Sucre

Sucre is the official capital of Bolivia but has long been eclipsed by La Paz as the economic and political hub of the country. However, it has been declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO and is widely considered to contain some of the finest examples of colonial architecture within Latin America. Founded in the 16th century by the conquistadors, Sucre gained prominence and power due to the silver mines, located nearby at Potosí. Growing rivalry with La Paz over the years, led to a civil war in the late 19th century, in which La Paz became the de facto capital of the country. Sucre contains numerous elegant churches dating back to the time of the initial conquest, and strict building regulations have meant that the city has changed little over the last century, giving visitors a great insight into how many other Latin American towns once looked.

### Day 4 – Sucre – Potosi (approx. 3 hours driving)

This morning begins with a visit to the Museum Casa de la Libertad, the site of the declaration of independence, for an insight into the history of Bolivia. We then drive to the Recoleta viewpoint for panoramic views across the city, and visit Museo Asur to learn something of the development of textiles in the region. We will continue on foot to enjoy close up, the wonderful colonial buildings and churches. **After** lunch we depart Sucre for Potosi City driving through beautiful landscapes. Overnight at Hotel Santa Teresa or similar (B)

### Potosi

Potosi became one of the largest and wealthiest cities in the world during the 16th and 17th centuries, a consequence of the insatiable demand of the Spanish, for silver from the mines nearby. Full of exquisite colonial architecture like its neighbour Sucre, Potosi’s buildings serve as a testament to a lucrative era, and it has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage site. There are now fewer and fewer miners seeking out diminishing reserves of silver in the tunnels dug into Cerro Rico, or ‘Rich Mountain’, overlooking the city. The mines were worked by indigenous and African workers, subjected to appalling conditions which saw them stay underground for up to a week at a time, and in the three centuries that the mine was open an estimated three million people met their deaths there. The mines are now open for tours, guided by former silver miners, who know these labyrinthine tunnels intimately.

### Day 5 - Potosi

This morning we will travel by bus to visit the mines of Potosi. After donning appropriate clothing (helmet, torch etc.) we take a short ride to the Cerro Rico (Rich Mountain). Every day the miners celebrate the ritual of the Challa with offerings to Tio, the demon who is said to own the underground mineral riches. This afternoon we visit the Money Museum with its artefacts of a bygone age including machinery, utensils and coinage. Overnight at Hotel Santa Teresa or similar (B)

### Day 8 – Potosi– Uyuni (205 kms, approx. 5 hours)

This morning we depart for Uyuni, stopping en route in the canyons of Porco, Andean wetlands and the Cacti Forest, and after lunch we travel by road to the town of Uyuni. Overnight at Hotel Casa de Sal or similar (B)



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## Uyuni

Founded in 1889 and standing isolated in a desert-like landscape, Uyuni is in the southwestern corner of Bolivia. Despite the harsh conditions, it is a cheerful town and the gateway to the Salar de Uyuni. Uyuni remains an important military base, and mining plays a significant role with the world's largest lithium reserve – about 100 million tons – lying beneath the nearby salt flat.

### Day 7 – Salt Flat of Uyuni – Quemes (approx. 7 hours driving time)

This morning we take a short journey to visit the “graveyard of trains” a collection of historic steam locomotives and railcars, dating back several hundred years. We continue to the village of Colchani and witness how the locals transform the natural salt to edible salt using rustic ovens and tools. Colchani is the entrance to the fabulous salt flat of Uyuni, and we will take an impressive 3 hour cross country drive across the salt flat, with only track ways as points of reference. We stop en route at Incawasi Island to explore an area of giant volcanic ash rocks accompanied by hundreds of giant cactus rising up all around. Our journey across this remote area is undoubtedly one of the highlights of the trip. We finally move out of the salt flat towards the hamlet of Quemes. Overnight at Tayka Hotel de Piedra or similar (BLD)

### Salar de Uyuni

Covering an area of 10,580 sq. km and situated at over 3000m, Salar de Uyuni is the largest and highest salt flat in the world, its white surface resembling an immense glacier. The scenery here, high in the Andes, is out of this world – vast expanses of white desert that stretch as far as the eye can see, bordered by jagged peaks and littered with conical pyramids of salt. With few settlements and only occasional llama herders to be seen, travelling in this landscape feels like travelling in the very farthest reaches of the earth. The surrounding area contains lakes, hot springs and geysers and is home to good populations of birdlife.

### Day 8 – Desierto Siloli (approx. 7 hours driving time)

Today we pass by the lava flows of Ollague, and a series of colourful lakes (Chiguana, Hedionda, Honda), which are home to great concentrations of Andean birds. On the approach to the Siloli Desert (Ojo de Perdiz) stand huge Aeolian formations of surreal figures, before the shrubby vegetation disappears completely, giving way to dunes. After a journey time of around 6 hours we arrive at a country hotel in the middle of the desert where we will sleep at 4600m. Overnight at Tayka Hotel del Desierto or similar (BLD)

### Day 9 – Mallku

This morning we drive for around an hour and a half until we arrive at Laguna Colorada which is a burnt orange colour as a result of algae in the water. Generous mineral deposits line the shores and sustain a large concentration of flamingos. We continue to the extreme south west of Bolivia passing by the geysers of Sol de Mañana at 4950m, before arriving at the hot springs of Chaviri for a late breakfast, with some time for bathing. Return to Chaviri for lunch and 4 hours to travel to the Canyons of Mallku passing en route by the Valley of rocks and the Neolithic rupestrian paintings of Mallku. Overnight at Hotel Mallku Cueva or similar (BLD)

### Day 10 – Uyuni (approx. 6 hours driving time)

Today we return to Uyuni following a more direct route but passing by the Canyons of Mallu, the Valley of Rocks and the Negra Lagoon and arriving by mid-afternoon where you will have some time at leisure. Overnight at Hotel Casa de Sal or similar (B)

### Day 11 – La Paz and Tiwanaku

This morning we catch a flight to La Paz at 8.30am and transfer to the city and on arrival. we will take the 2 hour drive to the archaeological ruins of Tiwanaku to explore the temples and palaces originating from Pre-Inca times. We will return to La Paz in the late afternoon. Overnight at Hotel Bivouac or similar. (BL)



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### **Tiwanaku**

In its heyday, Tiwanaku was the centre of an empire that stretched across the region, and was home to 50,000 people. Founded around 1000BC, it expanded to include the whole of the area surrounding Lake Titicaca within its domain, but mysteriously fell into decline and disappeared before the first Europeans came to the area, leaving behind a mystery that has not been definitively solved. The main town is thought to have covered some 11 sq. km, but most of the houses were built of mud so collapsed with time, leaving only the temples and palaces that were built with stones. These include the Kalasasaya temple with its ornamental stonework believed to have been the sacred heart of the city, as well as the semi-subterranean temple, sunk into the ground with its representations of gods and idols. Tiwanaku still holds immense significance for the local Aymara people who come here to perform religious rituals.

### **Day 12 – La Paz**

Today will be spent discovering the sights of La Paz starting with main square Plaza Murillo and the streets around it where we can still find colonial architecture from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. We will visit the Museum of Magic Instruments and the Indian market. We will also take in the Witches Market known for the potions and magic amulets. We will drive to the cable car for a journey across the city from north to south, and drive to Moon Valley which is actually a maze of canyons and pinnacles formed by erosion. Overnight at Hotel Bivouac or similar (B)

### **La Paz**

At 3636m in altitude, La Paz, formally known as La Ciudad de Nuestra Senora de La Paz, claims to be the highest capital city in the world, despite the fact that Bolivia's 'official' capital is actually the city of Sucre. Founded in 1548 by Spanish colonialists, it became a centre of colonial power for the Spanish Empire in Latin America and quickly established itself as a major centre of commerce within the region, growing rich from trade in minerals and coca. With a population of over a million people it is Bolivia's largest city attracting immigrants from around the country, and visitors here will notice the melange of age old indigenous traditions and ever encroaching European influence. Overlooked by the snow-capped Mount Illimani, La Paz is a set against a backdrop of spectacular scenery, and is within easy striking distance of some of Bolivia's most enigmatic sites including Lake Titicaca and Tiwanaku. The city's streets are often thronged with market stalls, with the indigenous Aymara population selling food and clothing as well as some intriguing and unrecognisable items used in traditional religions.

### **Day 13 – La Paz – Copacabana & Lake Titicaca (Overall driving time is approx. 4 hours)**

Today we head towards the Titicaca, stopping on the way to visit the museum of Paulino Esteban, the Bolivian Indian that built the boat RA II which crossed successfully the Atlantic Ocean. Enjoy the fascinating history and learn about how to do this kind of reed boats using the totora reed, endemic to the Andes. Later, at about midday we arrive in Copacabana (3825m / 12546 ft) on the shores of Lake Titicaca. This is a beautiful town and a popular resort and pilgrimage area, with lots to see and several nearby hills, which offer commanding views over the lake and towards the Cordillera Real. At the beach of Copacabana embark on a motor boat and continue the journey for another hour as far as the extreme southern side of the Sun Island (Isla del Sol) where we land near an Inca temple called Pilkokaina to have lunch in a typical restaurant with superb view over the lake to enjoy a traditional late lunch. Then, visit the Pilkokaina temple and walk about one hour to the Lodge Pallakasa. In the late afternoon, depart to walk up to the highest point of the island (4070 m/13350 ft) in time for a colourful sunset over the lake. Return to the lodge for the diner and overnight. Overnight Lodge Pallakasa or similar (BLD)

### **Day 14 – Copacabana – La Paz**

In the morning walk approx. 1 hour to descend to an idyllic Garden with an Inca spring considered by the locals a fountain of youth. We then take a boat to the Moon Island (about 45 minutes driving). Visit the Temple of the Sun virgins Aclla Huasi where the girls were educated to be sacrificed. Walk for another hour to the hamlet Coati to catch our boat and travel to the replicas of floating islands of the Urus people to stop and



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catch some trout for our lunch. Finally return to Copacabana for a short visit to the Indian markets and the famous Church of Copacabana that shelters to the famous Virgin of La Candelaria before returning to La Paz. Overnight at Hotel Bivouac or similar (BL)

### Day 15 – La Paz Departure

At your convenience we transfer to the airport for your onward flight. (B)

## Tour Inclusions / Exclusions

### Inclusions:

Arrival and departure transfers  
Transport throughout  
Domestic flights  
All accommodation  
Services of English-speaking guides  
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)  
Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

### Excluded:

International flights  
Any airport taxes  
Travel Insurance  
Visas  
Drinks

## Important Information

### Foreign Office Travel Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At present the advice is against **all but essential travel** to Bolivia. We will continue to monitor the situation closely.

It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

### Accommodation and Meals

#### Hotel Check-in Times

As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival. This is particularly relevant on the first day of the tour and for early morning arrivals. One option is to pre-book and pay for an extra night at the beginning of your tour which will guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.

On this tour we have set-aside Day 1 of the itinerary as an 'arrival day'. For this reason and because tour participants are likely to be arriving at different times, and often from different countries, guided sightseeing or





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other activities are not included. If you are arriving early or before the start date of the tour and would like to organise some extra arrangements on a private basis please contact us.

### Accommodation Rating

At Undiscovered Destinations we know our travellers prefer to stay in comfortable, mid-range accommodation. On this tour you can expect rooms to be en-suite, with private bathroom and when necessary air-conditioning will be provided. In general you will find your hotel has a restaurant and/or bar.

We welcome solo travellers and single rooms will be allocated subject to the applicable tour supplement. Please note that on occasions you may not always be allocated a double or twin room, as some hotels have designated single rooms. These may be smaller in size. However, the supplement payable takes this into consideration.

### Food & Drinks

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

### Dietary Requirements

If you have any special dietary requirements you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

### Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

### Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch £4

Dinner £8

### Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Bottle of Beer £2

Bottle of Water £1

### Tipping – Guide and Drivers

Tipping is common practise in Latin America. If your local guide has been helpful then you could think about tipping. This amount can obviously be left to you. When tipping a driver, a guide or hotel staff a few dollars will always be gratefully received.

### Foreign Exchange

**ATM Availability:** Bolivia's main towns and cities are well equipped with ATM's

**Credit Card Acceptance:** Credit and debit cards are not widely accepted for payments, even in larger towns and cities

**Local Currency:** Peso Boliviano





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**Recommended Currency for Exchange:** US Dollar

**Where to Exchange:** Your guide will advise you

### Joining your Tour

#### Flight Information

Our advertised prices do not include the cost of international flights. Please contact us if you would like a quotation to book a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

#### Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive a free airport transfer, both on arrival and departure. In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. Please advise the date, time and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.

#### Travel Insurance and Altitude

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

Please note that your tour involves some walking at altitude. Some travel insurance policies may exclude walking and trekking above a certain altitude. Please ensure that your travel insurance is valid for walking at altitude and if you have any doubts please contact your insurance provider.

#### Visa Information

At the time of writing British, US and Australian nationals do not require a visa for a short-term tourist visit to Bolivia.

As it is the travellers' responsibility to ensure that they meet all entry requirements it is essential that you check the rules and any other conditions at the time of booking and again when making your balance payment. In addition, we would strongly advise that you make a final check around two weeks before your arrival. This is important as requirements can change at short notice. Undiscovered Destinations, when possible, will provide guidance about entry rules, but in the first instance please contact the relevant authorities, including the applicable embassy or consulate for assistance. Contact details can be found by visiting the following websites

British Nationals - [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)

US Nationals - <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>

Australian Nationals - [www.smartraveller.gov.au/](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/)

Other nationals should check the latest requirements with the authorities in their home country, or with the destination's nearest embassy or consulate.

#### Passports

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to the UK.



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We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively UK citizens can visit [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)

### **Vaccinations & Protection**

As with travel to most parts of Latin America, we strongly recommend that you contact your doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information, advice and the necessary vaccinations. For a visit of less than one month, almost certainly you will be advised to have immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Meningitis. The use of a DEET-containing insect repellent is highly recommended, and we recommend that you take professional advice about malaria prophylactics. Yellow Fever is recommended for some of the areas visited on this tour.

## *Preparing for your tour*

### **Climate**

With Bolivia's altitude, the weather can vary greatly in terms of temperature from day to night. The best season to visit is generally considered to be the winter – from May to October – when there is little rain and temperatures are pleasant. However at lower altitudes rain can occur at any time. In the summer months (November to April) it is much more humid, especially in the lowlands, and the Amazon experiences significant rainfall, often flooding. At higher altitudes there is less rain.

### **Clothing**

When it comes to clothing it is usually recommended that lighter clothes are worn through the day, and warmer ones at night. A hat is also advised to be worn through the day to protect from the sun, along with at least one piece of waterproof clothing for any days that the weather may be wet or windy. Please be aware that at altitude it can be cool at night in the summer, and quite cold in the winter.

### **Equipment**

The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared and to be adequately immunized with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. Suncream/sunblock is a must – please ensure you bring enough as it may not be available locally. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have. The altitude of Bolivia can often cause headaches – we recommend that you bring some tablets to deal with this.

### **Footwear**

Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Comfortable walking shoes/boots are recommended.

### **Luggage on tour**

Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large suitcase/rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.



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### **Electric Supply & Plugs**

Plugs are generally of the two pronged, round European style. However this can vary from hotel to hotel so we recommend that you bring a multi-adapter.

### **Tour Itinerary Versions**

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These tour notes were updated on 2 December 2020

