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meaning of travel

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 - Bolivia - From the Lowlands to the High Andes



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

Bolivia is South America's highest and most remote country, bordered by Peru, Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Paraguay, with no access to the ocean. It's also a country characterised by indigenous people, who make up almost two-thirds of the population, more than any other South American state. Bolivia today is a rich country; it has the continent's second largest natural gas reserves. However, the exploitation of this gas by foreign enterprises is highly contentious, and the distribution of the country's wealth remains starkly inequitable. A 2019 constitutional crisis and widespread protests saw the resignation of the country's first indigenous president, Left-leaning, Evo Morales, after a disputed election. Currently Morales is in exile in Mexico and his political supporters, a majority in the Bolivian parliament, refuse to recognise the self-declared interim president, Jeanine Áñez. Interesting times indeed. This tour explores Bolivia's lowlands and Andean highlands, visiting many of its major natural sights, and also its cultural sights, from pre-history, through Inca civilisation, European colonisation, to the present day. If you're looking for microcosm of South America, be it on country-size scale, Bolivia fits the brief very well.

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 and transfer to hotel accommodation. In the afternoon there's walking tour of the city, taking in the busy main square of 24 de Septiembre, 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, Nuño de Chávez, 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 – Jesuit Churches- Santa Cruz de la Sierra -San Javier - Concepcion

(Approximate driving time: five hours)

After breakfast we explore the Chiquitania region of eastern Bolivia, known for its picturesque hamlets and unique Jesuit churches. At San Javier the village is home several historic churches and a number of traditional 'ateliers' skilled in the manufacture musical instruments. Later we continue village of Concepcion and visit workshops involved in restoration efforts. Overnight Hotel Chiquitos or similar. (BLD)



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Day 3 – Santa Cruz de la Sierra

This morning we take the opportunity to admire the eye-catching Cathedral of Concepcion before returning to San Javier for lunch. Afterwards we return to Santa Cruz de la Sierra where the rest of the day will be free to relax or explore independently. Overnight Hotel Americana or similar. (BL)

Day 4 – Sucre

This morning we head to the airport and board a short flight south to 'The White City' of Sucre. On arrival we drive to the Recoleta viewpoint for panoramic vistas across the city. Afterwards we visit Museo Asur to learn something of the development of the region's textile industry. Later we continue on foot to see the city's colonial buildings and churches, stopping at the Convent of Santa Clara and the church of San Felipe Neri where an ascent of the bell tower offers great views across. Overnight Hotel Monasterio 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 Potosi. 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 5 – Sucre- Dinosaur Footprints

Today we gain an insight into the history of Bolivia by visiting the museum of Casa de la Libertad, the site of Bolivia's declaration of independence. Afterwards a short drive leads to the impressive paleontological site of Cal Orck'o where the rock face preserves thousands of dinosaur tracks. Later we return to Sucre for lunch. After some free time to relax we head into town and visit a busy market, then take a stroll through Bolivar Park to see its bizarre smaller replica of the Eiffel Tower. Overnight Hotel Monasterio or similar. (B)

Day 6 – Sucre – Potosi (Approximate driving time: three-hours)

This morning is free to relax or explore independently. Later we depart for Potosi City, driving through beautiful countryside and stopping at Lajasmayu to examine ancient Neolithic rock paintings. We should arrive in Potosi by early evening. Overnight Hostel Colonial 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 7 – Potosi

Today we travel by bus to visit the mines of Potosi. After donning appropriate clothing, including a helmet and torch, we take a short ride to the Cerro Rico (Rich Mountain). Every day miners celebrate the pre-Christian ritual of the Challa, with offerings to Tio, the demon said to own underground mineral riches. In the afternoon we visit the Money Museum where artefacts of a bygone age, including machinery, utensils and coinage are displayed. Overnight Hotel Santa Teresa or similar. (B)



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Day 8 – Potosi– Uyuni (*Approximate driving time: four-hours*)

Today the morning is free to relax or explore the city independently. After lunch we drive to the town of Uyuni. Overnight Hotel Tambo Aymara Hotel or similar. (B)

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 9 – Salt Flat of Uyuni – Quemes (*Approximate driving time: seven-hours*)

This morning we take a short journey to visit the 'graveyard of trains', a collection of historic steam locomotives and railcars dating back over a hundred years. Afterwards we continue to the village of Colchani and witness how natural salt is processed using simple ovens and basic tools. Colchani lies at the entrance to the famous Uyuni salt flat. We travel across the featureless salt for three hours, guided only by wheel tracks in the surface crust. At Incawasi Island we stop to explore an area of giant volcanic rocks and hundreds of giant cacti. The journey across this remote area is undoubtedly one of the highlights of the trip. Later we leave the salt flat and head towards the hamlet of Quemes. Overnight 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 10 – Desierto Siloli (*Approximate driving time: seven-hours*)

Today we pass the lava flows of Ollague and the colourful lakes of Chiguana, Hedionda and Honda, home to great concentrations of Andean birds. The approach to Ojo de Perdíz is marked by huge rock formations sculpted by the wind, before shrubby vegetation disappears completely and gives way to dunes. In the middle of the desert, at 4,600m, we arrive at a country hotel. Overnight Tayka Hotel del Desierto or similar. (BLD)

Day 11 – Desierto Siloli - Laguna Verde

After breakfast we drive to Laguna Colorada, resplendent in a burnt orange hue as a result of algae in the water. Mineral deposits line the shores, along with large populations of flamingos. Afterwards we continue to the extreme southwest of Bolivia, passing by the geysers of Sol de Mañana at 4,950m, and arriving at the hot springs of Chalviri for a late breakfast, and some time for bathing. Later, we pass through the Salvador Dali desert en route to Laguna Verde, stopping at the lake for lunch before returning to Ojo de Perdíz for a second night. Overnight Tayka Hotel del Desierto or similar. (BLD)

Day 12 – Uyuni (*Approximate driving time: six-hours*)

Today we return to Uyuni following a more direct route, passing by the Canyons of Mallu, the Valley of Rocks and the Negra Lagoon. We arrive by mid-afternoon, in time for a late lunch, leaving the rest of the day free to relax. Overnight Hotel Tambo Aymara or similar. (BL)

Day 13 – La Paz and Tiwanaku

This morning we catch a flight to La Paz and head to Tiwanaku to explore the archaeological site's pre-Inca temples and palaces. We return to La Paz in the late afternoon. Overnight Hostal Naira or similar. (B)



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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 14 – La Paz

Today we explore the sights of La Paz, including the main square Plaza Murillo, its surrounding streets and 16th century colonial architecture. Afterwards we visit the Museum of Magic Instruments, the Indian market, and also the Witches Market, known for mysterious potions and magical amulets. Later we drive to the Mi Teleférico cable car station for a journey across the city, from north to south, and then head to Moon Valley, a maze of canyons and pinnacles formed by wind and water erosion. Overnight Hostal Naira 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 15 – Depart

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



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Travel Insurance
Visas
Drinks

Important Information

Foreign Office Travel Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). 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 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.



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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

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



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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

Visas are not required by most nationalities, including UK, EU and US citizens for 30 days. However we recommend that you check with your nearest embassy for the most up to date details.

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.

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

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.

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in your home country can be different in other countries. If you're travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on [best practice when travelling with medicines](#). For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you're travelling to.

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.



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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.

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 13/11/2019.