

SOUTH AMERICA · MOUNTAINS · ADVENTURE · CULTURE · HISTORY · HIKING · OFF THE BEATEN PATH



Bolivia

Bolivia shows the Andes at their most extreme: the Salar de Uyuni's blinding salt flat, Lake Titicaca's Inca islands, the silver-mining city of Potosí and La Paz, where cable cars glide over a city spilling down a canyon. Prices are among South America's lowest, but altitude sets the pace, so build in time to acclimatise.

**The UK Foreign Office (FCDO) advises against all but essential travel to parts of Bolivia.**

Read the latest FCDO travel advice before planning a trip. Your travel insurance may be invalid if you travel against FCDO advice. FCDO advice last updated 22 September 2026.

 CAPITAL Sucre	 CURRENCY Bolivian boliviano (BOB) £1 ≈ BOB 15.59	 LANGUAGE Spanish, Quechua Aymara, Guaraní	 BEST TIME May–Oct
 DAILY BUDGET £30–£160 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type A, C 230V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 17h via Madrid ~£800–£1,400 return	 TIME ZONE UTC-4 standard time

Bolivia has a larger indigenous share of its population than any other South American country, and La Paz, at around 3,600 metres, is the world's highest seat of government (Sucre remains the constitutional capital). Most first trips trace a loop across the Altiplano: La Paz and Lake Titicaca, south to colonial Sucre and the mining city of Potosí, then the three-day jeep journey across the Salar de Uyuni and the coloured lagoons towards Chile. With more time, fly down into the Amazon at Rurrenabaque or explore the warm eastern lowlands around Santa Cruz.

This is one of the cheapest countries on the continent, with simple guesthouses and set lunches (almuerzos) costing a few pounds, but comfort is basic outside the main cities and long bus rides are part of the deal. The Altiplano is cold at night all year, and dry-season nights on the Salar fall well below freezing. Road blockades by protest groups are a regular feature of Bolivian life, so build slack into any itinerary. It suits flexible travellers who want landscapes on an enormous scale, Aymara and Quechua markets and very little polish.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

NATURE

Salar de Uyuni

The world's largest salt flat, more than 10,000 square kilometres of white hexagons at about 3,650 metres. Three-day jeep tours continue south to red, flamingo-dotted lagoons and steaming geysers; after rain the flat becomes a vast mirror.
- 2

CULTURE

Lake Titicaca and Isla del Sol

Take a boat from the pilgrimage town of Copacabana to Isla del Sol, named in Inca legend as the birthplace of the sun, where ruins and terraced paths look across the deep-blue lake to the snowy Cordillera Real.

3

HISTORY

Potosí

Once one of the richest cities in the world on the silver of Cerro Rico, Potosí keeps a grand colonial centre and the Casa de la Moneda mint; cooperative mine tours reveal the harsh conditions miners still face.

4

ARCHITECTURE

Sucre

Bolivia's whitewashed, UNESCO-listed constitutional capital, where independence was declared in 1825. A mild climate, Spanish schools and the dinosaur footprints at Cal Orck'o make it an easy place to linger for a week.

5

WILDLIFE

Madidi National Park

One of the most biodiverse protected areas on Earth, stretching from Andean glaciers to Amazon rainforest. Fly or take the long road to Rurrenabaque, then head upriver by motorised canoe to community-run lodges for monkeys, macaws and night walks.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Santa Cruz de la Sierra

≈ 2 million people

Bolivia's largest and richest city sits in the hot eastern lowlands, a modern contrast to the Andes and the base for the Jesuit missions of Chiquitos, Samaipata and Amboró National Park.

2ND LARGEST CITY

La Paz

≈ 1.8 million people

The seat of government fills a deep canyon below El Alto; ride the Mi Teleférico cable cars, browse the Witches' Market and use it as a base for Titicaca and cycling the Death Road.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Cochabamba

≈ 1.3 million people

A mild valley city famed within Bolivia for its food, with the vast La Cancha market and the Cristo de la Concordia statue above town; few tourists, but a pleasant stop.

Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

When to go to Bolivia

Best time: **May–Oct.**

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

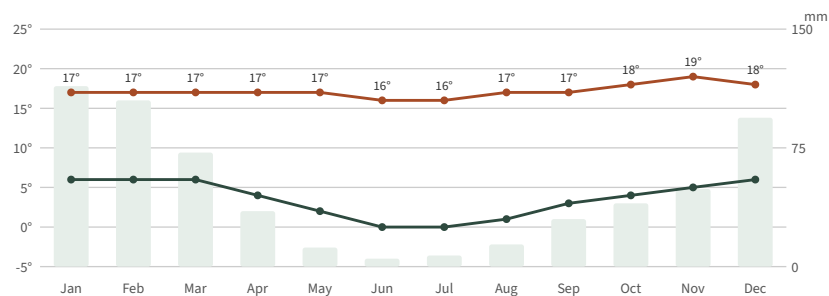
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in La Paz

■ High °C ■ Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Jan–Feb	Alasitas La Paz's fair of miniatures opens on 24 January: buy tiny houses, cars, banknotes or passports and have them blessed at noon to win the favour of Ekeko, god of abundance.
Feb–Mar	Carnaval de Oruro A UNESCO-recognised carnival in which tens of thousands of dancers in devil masks and sequinned costumes process through Oruro in honour of the Virgen del Socavón; book rooms months ahead.
May–Jun	Gran Poder La Paz's biggest street festival fills the city with tens of thousands of dancers, brass bands and elaborate costumes on a Saturday in late May or June.

How much does Bolivia cost?

SHOESTRING £30 per person / day ≈ BOB 468 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £70 per person / day ≈ BOB 1,091 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £160 per person / day ≈ BOB 2,494 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Salteñas Baked mid-morning pasties filled with a juicy, slightly sweet stew of beef or chicken, potato, olive and egg; bite carefully to keep the broth in.	Pique a lo macho A sharing heap of beef, sausage, chips, onion, tomato and locoto chillies topped with egg, born in Cochabamba and best after a long day.	Sopa de maní Creamy peanut soup with beef broth, pasta or potato and crisp chips scattered on top, often the starter of a set almuerzo.
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Getting around

Long-distance buses link every major city, with overnight cama services on routes such as La Paz–Uyuni and La Paz–Sucre; pay extra for reputable companies. Domestic flights save whole days: BoA links the main cities and Uyuni, while smaller carriers serve Rurrenabaque. A slow train runs between Oruro and Uyuni. In La Paz the Mi Teleférico cable cars are quick and cheap; radio taxis, Uber and inDrive work in the big cities.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE  A C 230V — bring a UK-to-A/C adapter	EMERGENCY NUMBERS Ambulance: 118 Police: 110 Fire: 119 Source: FCDO “Getting help”
DIALLING CODE +591	TIME ZONE UTC-4 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Not safe — drink bottled or treated water

DRIVING

On the right

TIPPING

Round up in local caf  s and leave around 10% in tourist restaurants. Tip Salar drivers and cooks at the end of a tour, and guides on treks or jungle trips.

ETIQUETTE

Ask before photographing people, especially cholitas in markets, who may expect a small payment. Greet with buenos d  as or buenas tardes before asking anything, and dress modestly in churches.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Viru Viru International Airport (VVI), Santa Cruz de la Sierra; El Alto International Airport (LPB), La Paz; Jorge Wilstermann International Airport (CBB), Cochabamba

Visas & entry for Bolivia

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can visit Bolivia for up to 90 days without a visa. Border officials issue 30-day stamps, but you can stay for 90 days without any new stamp.

As a tourist, you get 90 days of visa-free travel in a one-year period. If you want to stay longer, check with the Bolivian Embassy in the UK (in Spanish) or the Department of Immigration (in Spanish).

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A

Tetanus

Typhoid

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Chikungunya

Dengue

Hepatitis B

Rabies

Tuberculosis

Yellow fever

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter. There is a risk of yellow fever in parts of the country — vaccination may be advised.

MALARIA

Low risk of malaria

- There is a low risk of malaria in the Amazon basin of Bolivia: awareness of risk and bite avoidance recommended.
- There is a low risk of malaria in other rural areas below 2,500m: awareness of risk and bite avoidance recommended.

Public holidays in Bolivia

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Mon 2 Nov 2026	All Souls' Day
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Fri 22 Jan 2027	Plurinational State Foundation Day
Mon 8 Feb 2027	Carnival
Tue 9 Feb 2027	Carnival
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Thu 27 May 2027	Corpus Christi
Mon 21 Jun 2027	Aymara New Year
Fri 6 Aug 2027	Independence Day
Sun 17 Oct 2027	National Dignity Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Spanish

ENGLISH	SPANISH	SAY IT
Hello	Hola	OH-lah
Thank you	Gracias	GRAH-see-ahs
Please	Por favor	por fah-VOR
Excuse me	Disculpe	dees-KOOL-peh
How much is this?	¿Cuánto cuesta?	KWAN-toh KWES-tah

Know before you go

- Flying straight into La Paz means landing above 4,000 metres at El Alto; if you can, start lower in Sucre or Cochabamba, rest for two days and see a travel clinic about altitude medication.
- Bring crisp US dollar notes as a back-up: exchange rates have been volatile, ATMs may limit withdrawals, and cards are often refused outside the main cities.
- Choose Uyuni tour operators on recent reviews rather than price, and ask about the vehicle, sleeping bags and how many people share each jeep.