

EXPLORE!

Highlights of Bolivia

13 days

Bolivia - Trip code BA



Highlights of Bolivia

This Bolivian adventure takes in some of the richest culture and most startling scenery in South America. Immersing ourselves first on Santa Cruz's UNESCO Jesuit circuit, we then travel into the mountains, visiting the former silver-mining town of Potosi and discovering the colonial architecture of Sucre. Heading onto the Altiplano, we explore the ethereal salt plains, where oddly shaped cacti live on the blinding salt desert, and fly up to the magical Lake Titicaca where we eat local food and watch the sunset over the Inca ruins.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Uyuni** - Experience the dreamlike salt flats
- ★ **Lake Titicaca** - Hike on the Isla del Sol, surrounded by the enormous lake
- ★ **Andes** - Be surrounded by mountains in Potosi and Sucre, and discover the beautifully intricate weavings of the indigenous groups
- ★ **Jesuit Missions** - Visit the perfectly preserved missions around Santa Cruz
- ★ **La Paz** - Get breathless in one of the highest cities in the world

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:**Moderate**

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

GROUP SIZE:**12 - 18**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip in Santa Cruz

We arrive today into Santa Cruz, a large city with a small-town feel. Flights typically arrive in the early hours, and we will have a free day to overcome the jetlag. Use the time to stroll around the narrow streets of the bustling city, listen to music coming from the local cafes around the main square, and check out the wares of the local street vendors. Please note today breakfast is only included if you arrive at the hotel before 10am.



Accommodation: Hotel LP (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - City tour of Santa Cruz by bus and on foot

For most visitors to Bolivia, we expect mountain scenery, rural settings and indigenous culture. Our arrival into Santa Cruz turns these expectations on their head - firstly, set at the foothills of the Andes on the flat plains that extend into Brazil and Paraguay, this city is not at altitude, giving us some much needed acclimatisation time. It is also surprisingly culturally diverse, being home to a Mennonite community, a large Japanese-Bolivian population and immigrants from the altiplano as well as Santa Cruz locals. We explore some of the main monuments before visiting the Historical Museum of Santa Cruz, the Museum of Sacred Art and the Recoba handicraft market. One of the most important stops today is the 400-year old San Lorenzo Cathedral on the city's main square. Those who wish can climb the bell tower for a beautiful panoramic view of the old town. The afternoon is free to explore further, or we have the option to visit the Biocentro Guembe, a huge park and ecological centre that concentrates on education and conservation. The park is enormous, and split into many different ecological zones - from a wetland area home to macaws, toucans and parrots, to an orchid garden and a huge butterfly dome. There are even lagoons where you can kayak and discover the waterways within this man-made paradise.



Accommodation: Hotel LP (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Discover the UNESCO Jesuit church of San Javier

Just a few hours away from Santa Cruz lies the location for one of the most extraordinary episodes in Spanish colonial history. An envoy of Jesuit priests were dispatched by the Spanish crown in the 18th Century with the aim of bringing Christianity to indigenous communities - unlike other missionary orders which expected natives to adopt European practices, the Jesuit order allowed inhabitants to retain many pre-colonial values. Due to the joint indigenous and European cooperation, the eleven Missions founded in the area grew with a fusion of cultural influences, blending agricultural techniques and architectural styles. They became almost autonomous from the Spanish crown, yet after the Jesuit order were expelled from all Spanish territories their indigenous members were exploited and in some cases enslaved by the Spanish Santa Cruz inhabitants. Most Jesuit Missions in South America were abandoned after the expulsion, but around the Santa Cruz area the churches, settlements and associated culture have largely survived, and are now designated UNESCO sites. We visit the impressive Mission in San Javier before continuing to our hotel in Concepcion.



Accommodation: Gran Hotel Concepcion (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 4 - Exploration of the Jesuit site in Concepcion; weaving workshop

Concepcion is home to the largest of the Jesuit missions, and we discover the beautiful baroque church with its amazing hand-carved wooden columns and intricate paintings, not only of the classic stations of the cross, but also modern depictions of local issues like deforestation. This small town has some incredible craftsmen, and there are a couple of wood-carving workshops where locals create intricate furniture. We also visit a weaving workshop and see how the traditional methods of weaving have continued in the production of the many textiles and clothes of the region. We return to Santa Cruz in the afternoon, a roughly 6 hour drive.



Accommodation: Hotel LP (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 5 - Fly to Sucre; Walking tour of the city

Flying to Sucre this morning we get our first taste of altitude, and at a reasonably low 2800m it is a good place to adjust. Arguably Bolivia's most beautiful, and certainly most charming, city, this gloriously whitewashed town is a UNESCO heritage site, and is perfect for wandering amid the tranquil streets and plazas. The colonial buildings with their wrought-iron balconies are reminiscent of a Spanish town, but there is a large indigenous population here in Sucre and we are sure to see indigenous ladies walking the streets, often carrying babies or food purchases slung across their backs, swaddled tight in a brightly woven scarf. We discover the main sights, including the Casa de la Libertad on the main square, where the Act of Independence was signed. We visit the lovely Bolivar Park, which is a nod to the city's aristocratic aspirations in its French-style tree-lined paths. There are even replicas of the Arc de Triomphe and the Eiffel Tower, the latter designed by Gustav Eiffel himself especially for the city. The park is a good place to get food from the nearby street vendors, such as 'papas rellenas' (stuffed potatoes), a tasty snack of boiled egg encased in potato and fried. A final important stop on our tour is the museum of Indian Textiles, where weaving demonstrations are often given among the exhibitions of past and present work. Indigenous handicrafts have been historically viewed as 'second-class', and this museum aims to promote the importance of this work as a testament to Bolivia's ethnic and cultural heritage.



Accommodation: Hostal de Su Merced (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Visit to local community of La Candelaria and hacienda

From Sucre it is a two hour drive to La Candelaria, on a bumpy road travelling up through the rolling hills and tiny villages of rural Bolivia. Today's trip is a journey into the past, as we visit the 200 year-old hacienda in the indigenous community of La Candelaria. This hacienda is a fading beauty, lacking hot water and electricity, and full of rich history. We discover the old farm buildings and visit the chapel, with its artefacts dating back to the 1700s. The kitchen of the hacienda is a thing to behold, original central wood-fired stove still intact, ceilings black with years of accumulated soot. After visiting the hacienda we also have the opportunity to visit the weavers of the adjacent La Candelaria village. Their homes are simple, but to see how the textiles being sold in Sucre and other cities are made is a privileged experience. The designs, incredibly, are not created from patterns but from the imaginations of the individual weaver, and often contain everyday scenes such as bread-making, or the making of chicha, a local fermented corn drink common to the Andean region. We return to Sucre this evening in time for dinner and a relaxed drink in one of the city's many bars and restaurants.



Accommodation: Hostal de Su Merced (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 7 - Travel to Uyuni via silver-mining town of Potosi

Setting off from Sucre this morning, we take a public bus to nearby Potosi, a UNESCO site that is integral to the history of Bolivia and indeed the entire Spanish empire. Although the conquistadors never found the fabled 'El Dorado', the legendary city of gold, they did manage to get their hands on Potosi, a town in the shadow of the nearby mountains that the Inca population were already exploiting for its silver. The most famous mountain of all, 'Cerro Rico' (Rich Hill), would effectively bankroll the Spanish empire, and during Potosi's most lucrative years it became the largest and wealthiest city of the Americas, which is something to be said for a small town at over 4000m altitude. However, once the silver had almost dried up, the city went into decline. Nowadays, the ore is still mined, along with tin and lead, in appalling conditions. Our Explore Leader will talk to us about the importance of the mining heritage as we explore the city's grand churches and ornate colonial architecture, including the Mint and the Casa de la Moneda, with the Cerro Rico looming over us at all times. We drive on to Uyuni this afternoon, continuing our journey into the Andes mountain range.



Accommodation: Hotel Jardines de Uyuni (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Discover the salt-flats and the cacti-covered Incahuasi Island

Exploring Bolivia's immense, other-worldly salt-flats is an unforgettable and surreal experience. Heading into this natural wonder the sky seems to almost disappear into the land through the reflections of the blinding-white plains. Flamingos inhabit the shoreline, whilst the snow-capped peak of Volcan Tunupa (5400m) looms far in the distance. Before we arrive at the salt-flats we pass through the train graveyard on the deserted outskirts of Uyuni, a collection of early 20th century train carriages rusted by the salt and left for dead after a major transportation project failed. Crossing the salt flats we head for Incahuasi Island, where we find an expanse of huge cacti occupying an isolated island in the heart of the flats. The cacti have been here for millennia, and the tallest towers 9 metres above the floor of the plains, no mean feat given that it is estimated that they only grow one centimetre a year! We move on to Colchani, driving across the desert pans to visit a salt works, where villagers have sent piles of salt to be ground and iodised before being sold. We head back to Uyuni this evening.



Accommodation: Hotel Jardines de Uyuni (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 9 - Fly to La Paz; city tour and cable car

Leaving Uyuni we fly this morning to the lofty heights of La Paz. Standing at 3636m above sea level, La Paz is cupped in the palm of two magnificent mountains and surrounded by the high altiplano. Its poetic nickname of 'the city that touches the sky' is well earned. We enjoy a walking tour of the city's many sites, including the fascinating witch market with its rows of bottled llama foetuses and other gruesome items, as well as handicrafts and weavings. The gold museum, San Francisco Church and Murillo Square are also highlights of the old colonial town, as well as the outdoor replica of the Tiahuanaco temple. We take the new cable car down to the southern part of the city before heading 10km out of the centre to the surreal landscape of the 'Valley of the Moon'. We walk the narrow trails around the giant clay spires and deep canyons of this geological wonder, which rise out of the ground in bizarre formations.



Accommodation: Hostal Naira (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 10 - Free day; optional trip to Tiahuanaco archaeological site

Today is free to explore the city. You may wish to visit the Tiahuanaco ruins, one of the most important pre-Inca civilisations and considered to be one of the most developed in its time. The Kalasaya temple, the Gate of the Sun, the Akapana pyramid are amongst some of the buildings to explore and this can be followed by visiting the nearby pottery and stoneware museum. Alternatively La Paz is a great city to wander around, revisiting the witches market for some souvenirs or heading down the charming cobbled street of Calle Jaen, home to some of the city's bars, restaurants and museums. There is the opportunity this evening to visit a traditional pena show and dinner, a celebration of local folk dancing and Andean culture using traditional dancesteps and handmade instruments such as the zampona (bamboo flute) and charango (a small guitar often made of armadillo skin).



Accommodation: Hostal Naira (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 11 - Drive to Copacabana; boat to Isla del Sol

From La Paz we head towards the deep blue waters of Lake Titicaca. At 3810m it is the highest navigable lake in the world and its sacred waters have long been a site of religious ritual and devotion for the Aymara and Quechua populations that make the lake their home. Our journey takes us to the town of Copacabana, a place of mystic reverence since the times of the Tiahuanaco, and now a pilgrimage site for many Christians. We explore the Virgen Morena and its church before boarding our boat to the Island of the Sun, landing in Huacani port. Here we are treated to a typical 'aptapi' - a traditional indigenous lunch usually involving potatoes, corn, lima beans, trout or chicken, cooked up and served on a communal table. After lunch we jump back onto the boat where we land at the Pilkokaina Ruins and walk up to our eco-lodge (approx. 200m ascent and 1-1.5hrs of walking at high altitude), where we will be spending the night. You will be carrying an overnight bag with you on this walk and we will have the assistance of mules or donkeys. In order to not overload the animals, we will bring only what is necessary for one night and leave any extra luggage in Copacabana.



Accommodation: Ecolodge La Estancia (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 12 - Visit Chincana Ruins; drive back to La Paz and fly to Santa Cruz

The Isla del Sol is the largest of the islands that lie dotted around this spectacular lake, lying just off the Copacabana Peninsula, at the southern end of the lake. The island is covered with nearly 200 archaeological ruins that attest to the importance placed on this site by the ancient Incas. This morning we take a boat north, towards the labyrinthine Inca ruins of Chincana. The island has been revered by the Aymara for centuries and most of the ruins on the island date back hundreds of years. At Chincana we find a meandering network of rooms and passageways that link together around a sacred rock, overlooking the sparkling azure waters of the lake below. Then we take to the waters again, taking our boat to the neighbouring Island of the Moon to visit its ruins. We continue by boat back to Copacabana, drive to La Paz Airport and catch our flight back to Santa Cruz. We say goodbye to our Explore Leader here, and we are picked up in Santa Cruz by a local guide, who will transfer us to our final hotel.



Accommodation: Hotel LP (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



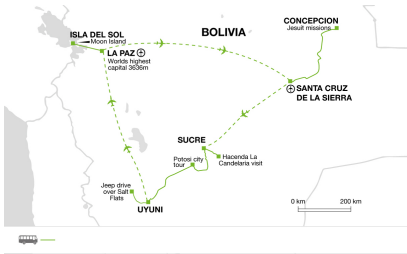
Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 13 - Trip ends Santa Cruz

Our trip ends this morning in Santa Cruz, after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



Why book this trip

Many other trips visit only the salt-flats of Uyuni, and perhaps Sucre or Potosi. Our trip is a comprehensive Bolivian exploration, visiting not only the most well-known highlights but also the country's many hidden gems.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 12
Lunch: 5
Dinner: 2



Transport

Bus
Boat
Cable Car
Flight



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Boat Crew
Driver(s)



Accommodation

12 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

Bolivia Holidays & Tours

Climate

Conditions vary from region to region and with altitude. Bear in mind that at high altitude temperatures can drop dramatically, and conditions can change suddenly. Inland - Hot and humid from October to March (summer). Mild to hot from April to September (winter). Highlands -- All year, sunny days, chilly to cold evenings. Rainy December to March. Mainly dry rest of year best time for mountain travel.

Time difference to GMT

-4

Plugs

3 Pin Flat

Religion

Roman Catholic

Language

Spanish

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

Santa Cruz - visit Biocentro Guembe - U\$D 74.00 (2 pers min), US\$54 (15 pers +); Kayak rental - free La Paz - Visit Tiahuanaco US\$90 (min 3 pers) US\$66 (9 pers+); Full day Los Yungas visiting La Senda Verde and Café Munaipata - US\$ 168- 70 (depending on numbers)

Clothing

Temperatures at altitude can drop considerably, particularly at night, and you will certainly need warm clothing for the evenings, including thermal underwear, a well-insulated fleece/jacket and a thick sweater. Bring something warm to sleep in. Lightweight clothing is necessary for the low altitudes of Santa Cruz, and even the highlands enjoy dry sunny days that may necessitate lighter items. Lightweight raingear is essential at any time of the year.

Footwear

Comfortable lightweight trail or walking boots, trainers and sandals.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of luggage, a good sized daysack which should be large enough to carry warm and waterproof clothing as weather can be quite changeable. The altiplano is dry on the whole, but rain could happen particularly in Santa Cruz, which is lower down. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

A sunhat and sunglasses are advisable as is high factor sunscreen and lipsalve with sun protection, due to the thinness of the atmosphere. A torch is also useful in case of power cuts or emergencies. Don't forget your camera and a towel. You may wish to bring a walking pole for our hike to the eco lodge on the Isla del Sol, if you have one.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour. Accordingly, you should allow US\$ 35 for tipping

Country Information

Bolivia Holidays & Tours

Food and drink

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 price

£5

Dinner price

£8

Beer price

£1.47

Water price

£0.6

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Boliviano.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Carry all your funds in US cash NOT Sterling or Travellers Cheques which are more difficult to exchange. We recommend to take a minimum of US\$400-\$500 of your total spending money in cash for your tour, in mixed denominations. Notes should be in good condition otherwise they might be difficult to exchange.

Where To Exchange

Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability

Available in Major towns. Always have some cash as back-up as they are not always reliable

Credit Card Acceptance

Credit cards are useful and can be used in many places, but may be subject to a 10% service charge

Travellers Cheques

Travellers Cheques can be awkward or expensive to change

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Boat, Cable Car, Flight

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click here.

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click here

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

Bolivia: Visas are not required for UK, New Zealand, Australian, and Canadian citizens. However, US citizens will require a visa. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate. USA: (including those in transit) Citizens of the UK, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and passport holders from several EU countries can enter the United States without a visa under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) - where you apply for an ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorisation), which applies if you enter the country by sea or by air. This must be done on line - <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> no later than 72 hours prior to travel. Travellers who have not registered before their trip are likely to be refused boarding. You must have an electronic passport with a digital chip containing biometric information about the passport owner. UK passports which are biometric feature a small gold symbol (camera) at the bottom of the front cover. If you have visited Iraq, Syria, Iran or Sudan since 2011 or are dual nationals of these countries, you cannot travel with an ESTA and instead you will need to apply for a visa from the nearest US Embassy or Consulate. If you are unable to provide a valid visa before boarding flights to the US, or entering via another method, you may not be permitted to travel. Please note for your ESTA application you will be required to supply Point of Contact information. Explore's USA contact information will be listed on your final documentation which you will receive approximately 3-4 weeks before departure. If you are leaving for the USA before this, please call the Explore team to get this information. (Not necessary if in transit) For further information please check out the US embassy website. Visa applications - <http://london.usembassy.gov/niv/apply.html>

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the

UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore 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. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Bolivia Holidays & Tours

Vaccinations

A yellow fever certificate is necessary for passengers visiting the lowlands Bolivia (BA trip). We also recommend protection against typhoid, polio, infectious hepatitis and tetanus. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. Please note many countries in Central America, South America and the Caribbean require a yellow fever vaccination certificates if travelling from infected areas. A detailed list of these countries can be found on the NaTHNaC website - <http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>. Also on the NaTHNaC site there is a list of Countries (and specific areas within a country) which are at risk of infection and a vaccination is therefore recommended.. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

