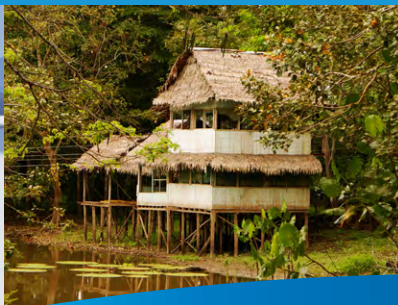




Chimu Adventures Latin America Handbook

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ChimuAdventures

The Latin America and Antarctica Specialists



M.A.D. Project

Travelling to Latin America and Antarctica is a moving and thought provoking experience. At Chimu Adventures we have talked to many, many travellers who have returned wanting to give back to the wonderful destinations that gave so much and have asked how?

For a number of years we have been working with separate projects in and around Latin America and Antarctica and over and above the work we do directly, we have been advising our travellers individually about these wonderful initiatives. Now we have pulled these all together under the banner of the MAD (Make a Difference) Project, a place where we can directly work and promote humanitarian programs who, otherwise, would not have a voice.

Here we are working with ecological, cultural, social and historical preservation. If you would like to contribute or learn more about one of these formidable projects, to make a donation, join an event or get involved then visit our project here: <http://www.madproject.org/>

Doubt breeds Inactivity, Hope breeds Movement
- we hope you join our M.A.D. world.

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1. GENERAL LATIN AMERICA INFORMATION

Please note Chimu Adventures avoids the use of traditional travel vouchers where possible. This is for reasons of sustainability, as well as lack of necessity. These days with computer reservations systems, hotels simply need you to check in with your passport or photo ID. In some countries/regions vouchers may be required, and if this is the case you will be given these on the ground with your welcome documents that you receive in each country on arrival.

Please note that in most cases you will be given your welcome letter (including pickup times) at your check-in at the first hotel in each country you visit. If you are not given this documentation when you check in then please ask the reception staff if they have any documentation for you. Our local offices are on hand if you do have any issues regarding your documentation on arrival.

Please note that Chimu Adventures and our local offices will **not** be held responsible for any tours that clients book directly with local guides. Please contact Chimu Adventures or our local office if you wish to book any additional services whilst travelling.

1.1 Taxes, Entrance Charges & Visas

Please note that in several Latin American countries a reciprocal entrance fee is charged for arriving passengers. This is subject to change at any time. For more information please refer to the specific country information sections in this document for details on reciprocal entrance fees.

Some countries such as Brazil and Cuba require passport holders from Australia, the United States and Canada to have prearranged visas. Please refer to the detailed country information sections in this document for details on visa requirements.

Please note that other countries may charge fees without warning, and these will be payable locally at the airport or land border crossing.

Some airports also charge an airport usage fee or embarkation fee that is not included in your ticket price. Please see the flight section below for details.

All Taxes and Entrance fees are subject to change, and clients accept this as part of travel in Latin America. Chimu Adventures cannot be held responsible for these charges.

Disclaimer: Whilst Chimu Adventures will assist in every possible way to provide you with accommodation and flight details necessary to obtain any necessary visas, we are not a consular service and it is the sole responsibility of the traveller to obtain the necessary visas before departing Australia either through our partner site visalink, or through the consulate. Travelling without a visa may result in the cancellation of part or the whole of your tour without refund as per the terms and conditions which you can view through the link below.

<http://www.chimuadventures.com/content/terms-and-conditions>

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Important Note for passengers travelling via the United States of America:

International travellers who are seeking to travel to or via the United States under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), even if you are only transiting, are now subject to enhanced security requirements and will be required to pay an administrative fee. All eligible travellers who wish to travel to or via the U.S. under the Visa Waiver Program must apply for authorisation and then pay the fee. Please visit the following website for more information: <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta/>

1.2 Flights and Additional Airport Taxes

Please note that many countries in Latin America charge a usage fee or departure tax or embarkation fee for international and domestic flights. This tax has to be paid in cash locally at the airport before boarding the aircraft. Below are the current departure tax rates per person for each country (**subject to change**).

Argentina: Taxes now included in ticket prices

Bolivia: International – \$US25; Domestic – \$US2.50 (excludes flights out of La Paz, Cochabamba & Santa Cruz where taxes included in ticket prices)

Brazil: Taxes now included in ticket prices

Chile: Taxes now included in ticket prices

Colombia: Taxes now included in ticket prices, unless stay exceeds 2 months, then US\$19

Ecuador: Taxes now included in ticket prices

French Guiana: Taxes now included in ticket prices

Guyana: International – \$US20

Peru: Taxes now included in ticket prices

Suriname: Taxes now included in ticket prices

Uruguay: Taxes now included in ticket prices

Venezuela: Taxes now included in ticket prices

Belize: Taxes now included in ticket prices

Costa Rica: International – \$US28

Guatemala: International – \$US3; Domestic – \$US3

Honduras: International – \$US37

Mexico: International – Mostly included in ticket price, but if not it will be \$US20–30

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Nicaragua: International – \$US35

Panama: International – \$US40

Cuba: International – \$US25

We will forward your preferences, requests, and frequent flyer information to the airline, but cannot guarantee they will be honoured or that points will be earned. Free and special meals are not available on many flights. Please confirm your requests directly with the airline before departure, as we are not able to advise you if a request is not met.

1.3 Baggage Allowances on Flights

Please refer to the below table as a **guideline** for Economy class only. Your actual baggage may depend on your ticket conditions and departure airport. Business class baggage allowances as well as specific luggage dimensions and exceptions can be found via each airline's website. Please click on the links below to access further information for each airline.

Airline	Domestic Allowance	International Allowance	Carry-on Luggage
Aerolineas Argentinas	15kg	20kg	5kg – Domestic 10kg – International
LAN Airlines	Maximum 2 pieces, weighing 23kg in total	Maximum 2 pieces, weighing 23kg each	8kg (1 piece of baggage + 1 personal item)
Avianca	Maximum 2 pieces, weighing 23kg in total	Maximum 2 pieces, weighing 23kg in total (S. America) or up to 23kg each (N. America, Europe)	1 piece weighing 10kg
TAM Brazilian Airlines	1 piece weighing 23kg	Maximum 2 pieces weighing up to 23kg each (N. America) or up to 32kg each (Europe)	5kg
GOL	2 pieces weighing 23kg in total	2 pieces weighing 23kg in total	One piece weighing 5kg
Qantas Airways	2 pieces weighing 23kg in total	2 pieces weighing 23kg in total	7kg (number of pieces dependent on route and class)

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TAME	1 piece weighing 23kg	Maximum 2 pieces weighing up to 23kg each	8kg
British Airways	2 pieces weighing 23kg in total	2 pieces weighing 23kg in total	Must be able to lift bag above head un-aided (1 bag and 1 personal item e.g. laptop/handbag allowed)
Iberia	23kg	23kg	7kg (1 bag and 1 personal item e.g. laptop/handbag allowed)
KLM	1 piece weighing 23kg	1 piece weighing 23kg	1 piece weighing 12 kg and 1 personal item
Star Peru	2 pieces weighing 25kg in total	N/A	1 piece weighing 4kg
Aeromexico	1 piece weighing 25kg	Check website for various routes	1 piece weighing 10 kg + 1 handbag, briefcase or laptop
Copa Airlines	20kg	Check website for various routes	International: 1 piece weighing 10kg + 1 personal item. Domestic: maximum 5kg per piece
Nature Air	1 piece weighing 18kg	1 piece weighing 18kg	1 piece weighing 4.5kg
Tropic Air	2 pieces weighing up to 11kg each & measuring no more than 76cm W x 38cm H	2 pieces weighing up to 11kg each & measuring no more than 76cm W x 38cm H	1 small piece weighing 6.8kg that must fit in your lap

Please note that the above information may be subject to change. Please always check with the airline's website.

Important information when flying 'Nature Air' in Costa Rica: Any carry-on luggage exceeding the maximum weight and/or size will be considered and charged as excess luggage. Please note that Nature Air will weigh your hand luggage and if it exceeds the 4.5kg/10 lbs limit it must be added to your checked baggage and an excess fee may be charged.

Important information when flying "Tropic Air": For domestic flights, any carry-on bag larger than the specified requirements must be checked in. Excess baggage will be placed on a space available status and may be subject to cargo rates. Any oversized baggage may not be transported at all and the airline will not be responsible for getting these bags to your final destination.

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For international flights, Tropic Air permits **ONE FREE checked bag only**. Any additional bags are charged at **US\$35 per bag**. Each subsequent or excess bag will be placed on a space available status and may be subject to standard current cargo rates at the time of check-in. Although Tropic Air will endeavour to move all bags, due to cargo hold limitations, oversized baggage may not be able to be transported at all. In such cases the airline will not be responsible for getting these bags to your final destination.

1.4 Hotel Transfers

Please note that Chimu Adventures does not offer transfer services to or from airport hotels. If you are booked into an airport hotel in any city, then it is your responsibility to make your own way between the airport and airport hotel.

1.5 Health Information

We recommend that you visit your doctor or a traveller's medical centre for current information, but as a guide we recommend the following:

- Yellow Fever – Especially for jungle areas
- Hepatitis – Both A and B (twinxix)
- Typhoid
- Diphtheria
- Cholera
- Rabies
- Tetanus

Some of these you may already have due to childhood immunizations – please check with your doctor. When travelling to jungle areas, please exercise caution and carry sufficient insect repellent and malaria protection, either medical or homeopathic remedies.

Altitude Sickness or Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) – On reaching heights above 2000m, shortness of breath and heart pounding are a normal response to the lack of oxygen in the air. These symptoms can sometimes deteriorate into a condition known as altitude sickness or acute mountain sickness (AMS) with resulting headaches, loss of appetite, extreme tiredness, insomnia, dizziness and sometimes nausea. Symptoms usually develop within the first day or two at altitude but generally disappear after 48–72 hours at altitude. We highly recommend acclimatizing at altitude before taking strenuous treks or walks.

As a guide, Cusco is at 3,400m (11,200ft), and the highest point of the Inca trail is 4,200m (13,800ft)

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above sea level.

Please remember that altitude sickness affects everyone differently and usually has nothing to do with your general fitness level. If your conditions persist whilst on tour, consult with the tour guide who will be happy to help you and be able to give you some options in regards to the rest of your trip. If you are really worried about AMS and/or have a history with it then talk to your consultant about putting more rest days into your itinerary. Remember that the majority of our land tours are fully customisable!

Yellow Fever – is a viral illness that is spread by the bite of a mosquito. It is endemic in tropical and sub-tropical regions of Latin America, although cases of tourists contracting the disease are rare. All travellers to the jungle regions of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, the Guianas, Paraguay, Peru, Panama and Venezuela should make sure that they have the relevant up-to-date vaccination. It is also important to carry your vaccination certificate with you on your Latin American travels, as at some airports you may be asked for evidence of vaccination upon arrival or departure.

For some states of Brazil (generally in or around the Amazon rainforest), it is compulsory for all travellers to have a vaccination against Yellow Fever. It is also compulsory for all travellers to have a vaccination against Yellow Fever if entering Brazil through the following countries in South America:

- Bolivia
- Columbia
- Ecuador
- French Guiana
- Guyana
- Peru
- Suriname
- Venezuela

Similarly, travel to Central America from South America also requires all travellers to be vaccinated. If returning to your home country from Latin America you may require to be vaccinated against yellow fever.

Please consult your GP or a travel doctor for more information on vaccinations.

It is every client's responsibility to have the necessary vaccinations for travel. Chimu Adventures will **not** be held responsible for travel delays or refused entry into countries due to customers not having the necessary vaccinations.

The following website gives further health advice and information on travelling to Latin America.

<http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk/destinations.aspx#south-america--antarctica>

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1.6 Packing Essentials

What you take will depend on when and where you are travelling and the types of activities included in your tour.

The following should act as a useful checklist of essential items:

- Passport – Ensure that it is valid, in good condition with empty pages available
- Photocopy of Passport
- Travel Insurance – Ensure that it will be valid for the entire journey
- Passport Photos – Often needed for identification passes and certain overseas visas
- Air tickets and itinerary
- Foreign Currency (US\$) and/or debit/credit cards, traveller's cheques
- Debit/credit card cancellation phone numbers
- Emergency contact numbers
- Money belt – Ensure that it is discrete and comfortable to wear
- Small daypack (for day or overnight trips)
- Basic First Aid kit – Band Aids/Bandages, Anti-diarrhoea remedy, Panadol/Aspirin, Rehydration remedy, Antiseptic cream/powder, Sterile dressing, Personal medication
- Sun block – High UVA protection ideally
- Sunglasses & sunhat
- Mosquito spray & insect repellent
- Comfortable walking shoes (wear these in well before your trip)
- Sandals
- Long sleeve top and trousers – Useful to protect against mosquitoes at dawn and dusk and the sun through the day
- Light-weight clothing
- Warm clothing (depending on itinerary and time of year)
- Camera with spare battery and memory cards
- Security code padlock
- Adaptor
- Small torch

1.7 Additional Spending Money

Latin America can vary greatly in terms of prices in each country. The following should be used as a rough guide for additional spending money whilst on one of our tours and is based on having moderately-priced lunches and dinners, as well as picking up a few souvenirs at local markets.

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Keep in mind all of our tours will provide breakfast every day (excluding arrival day) and many other meals may be included as well, as is stated in your itinerary:

Argentina: Approximately 35–45 USD per day

Bolivia: Approximately 25–30 USD per day

Brazil: Approximately 40–50 USD per day

Chile: Approximately 60–70 USD per day

Colombia: Approximately 20–30 USD per day

Ecuador: Approximately 40–50 USD per day

Peru: Approximately 20–30 USD per day

The Guianas: Approximately 30–50 USD per day

Uruguay: Approximately 45–55 USD per day

Venezuela: Approximately 25–35 USD per day

Belize: Approximately 20–30 USD per day

Costa Rica: Approximately 50–60 USD per day

Guatemala: Approximately 25–35 USD per day

Honduras: Approximately 20–30 USD per day

Mexico: Approximately 40–50 USD per day

Nicaragua: Approximately 10–20 USD per day

Panama: Approximately 20–30 USD per day

Cuba: Approximately 30–40 USD per day

Note: These should only be used as a guide and your actual travel costs will depend on your travel style, tastes and personal budget.

1.8 Shopping and Bargaining Tips

Haggling is a way of life in Latin America and is expected in markets and small shops. Please ask your guide for a few tips! Anything from local handicrafts to designer clothing can be bought in Latin America and is generally at a lower cost than your home country (especially in Peru, Bolivia, Guatemala and Ecuador). Gold and silver is also very affordable, particularly in Peru. Please beware when returning home (particularly Australia) as some handicrafts are made of wood and may

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contain seeds!

As a rule, when haggling go for half of what you're offered and work your way up! You may need to haggle for anything ... from a souvenir to a taxi fare!

On many of our tours, we try to take customers to local markets rather than the expensive tourist orientated bazaars. These markets have a higher level of locally-made products and allow you to give something back to the local community, rather than a middle man.

We encourage you to haggle a little over prices. Be aware, however, that a few simple dollars for you could mean feeding a family for the artisan, and many of these people earn the minimum wage of around US\$150 per month or less.

1.9 Tipping Guidelines

A tip in Latin America is generally given to reward good service but it is not mandatory as it is in the United States. Usual practices may vary from country to country, even within regions in a country, but the normal guidelines apply.

If you feel a particular tour guide, waiter or host has done a good job then they will greatly appreciate a little something extra. As a guide we recommend 10% of the bill for restaurants and US\$5-15 per day for a tour guide.

In some places like Brazil, Ecuador and Mexico a service charge will be added to the bill. However, this generally will not go to the waiters themselves.

A tip is a *propina* in Spanish, *gorjeta* in Portuguese.

1.10 Sustainable Tourism

At Chimu Adventures we try to encourage sustainable touring from all our customers. Remember that in a lot of the places you visit, the infrastructure may not be the same as you are used to in your home country and accordingly locals generally use lower levels of water and electricity. As tourism increases, it places a large strain on the local water reticulation, power supply and other resources. Take short showers in your hotel, turn out the lights when you leave your hotel room, minimize your waste generally and if on a trek, make sure you bag your rubbish while you are hiking. Also remember all ecosystems in Latin America such as the Andes, the Amazon, Patagonia and the Pantanal are extremely delicate. When in these rural areas please stay on the trails and don't damage or take any plants or flowers.

Latin American people are proud of their culture and ancestry. Although they are now accustomed to international tourists, each area continues to maintain their identity and culture. Generally most Latin Americans dress conservatively (although Brazilians are exempt from this generalisation!).

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Consider wearing trousers and long sleeve shirts to minimise any potential offence.

Chimu Adventures employs local guides and uses hotels that employ people from the local community. Please be aware that our tour guides are always on hand to help our clients and are very knowledgeable. However, everything they explain should be taken with a grain of salt as local teaching methods may differ from those you're used to. We also ensure that the majority of the food supplied on our tours is locally sourced. We do this to maximize economic benefit to the community and to ensure we minimize the carbon footprint of our tours (i.e. the food does not need to be transported long distances).

1.11 Electrical Outlets in Latin America

Most countries in Latin America use the European style outlet which contains 110v. Visit the below link for more information on each country: <http://electricaloutlet.org/>

1.12 Safety in Latin America

Most Latin American countries have now recognized that tourism plays an important part in their economies and governments have taken great steps in the last few years to change Latin America's poor security image. You'll find a lot more police, especially plain-clothed officers, in the towns and cities most frequently visited by tourists.

Here are some helpful tips to help you minimise any security risks:

- When taking taxis from an airport to your hotel, travel in the more expensive airport taxis and ensure that the drivers have official identification. Never take a taxi waiting outside the airport grounds.
- Travel in a group if possible.
- Learn the basics in Spanish before you arrive in Latin America. Don't expect that people will speak English.
- Keep your valuables hidden and watch your pockets especially around busy tourist areas such as Florida St. in Buenos Aires and La Mariscal in Quito.
- Avoid going on your own to remote areas/ruins where tourists would not be expected to go.
- Seek local advice or take a guide.
- Read the guide books and talk with other tourists to find out which areas are best avoided.
- When leaving nightclubs/bars/discos late at night take a taxi home no matter how close your hostel or hotel is.

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- When arriving in a new town, keep to your original plan and stay in the hotel that you have decided on. Don't let the taxi driver persuade you that your hostel is fully booked and that he knows a cheaper and better one. He'll be working on commission and the hotel may not be in a safe part of town.
- Although assaults are rare, theft can be prevalent. Latin American thieves are experts at making the most of a good opportunity – a moment's lapse in a tourist's concentration is their business. Long bus trips, crowded streets and packed trains are all their territory. We don't recommend that you avoid these places because you can't, but again common-sense precautions should be taken.
- Don't wear expensive looking jewellery.
- On public transport, have your day pack close to you at all times, preferably with the straps around your legs or padlocked to the luggage rack. On buses, your backpack will normally go outside, either on top of the roof or in the external luggage compartments. On long distance buses, ask for a receipt for your bags. On short rides, just keep a careful eye out each time the bus stops to off-load bags.
- Leave your valuables in your hotel safe when making day trips or longer tours. Obtain a receipt not just for your money belt/wallet etc. but for its contents, with each item listed.
- If planning on going to market areas, crowded streets, fiestas etc. don't go with all your valuables. Leave them in the hotel.
- If you're planning on buying something expensive, keep your money safely in a money belt.
- If the pavements are really crowded, especially in market areas, walk on the road.
- Bag slashing is rare these days, but for added safety you can wear your day pack on your chest. If it's on your back, try to walk without stopping.
- When putting your bag down on the floor, to take a photo or just to sit in a café, remember to put your foot through the strap. This is the most common type of theft in Latin America – tourists forgetting bags in cafes and on returning to ask if anyone has seen it – you've guessed it – it's gone.

If, at the end of the day, you are unfortunate enough to be robbed ... just accept it as a travel experience. Make sure that you have good insurance and that you've read the small print before arriving in Latin America so you know what is required to make a successful claim. Excluding precious photos, most things can be replaced in Latin America. Finally don't let it spoil your holiday and don't suddenly believe that every Latin American is a thief. The overwhelming majority are kind, honest, hardworking people who detest the thieves probably more than you do – when they get robbed, they usually don't have insurance.

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1.13 Insurance

Need travel insurance? We are now partnered with Travel & General Insurance Services Limited, a specialist intermediary focused on the travel industry. Get a free quote and find out more [here](#).

Please note **insurance is mandatory** on all *Chimu Adventures* tours.

You've planned the adventure holiday of a lifetime, so now you should consider getting your travel insurance.

We recommend Travel & General Insurance (T&G), a name synonymous with travel insurance, for your travel insurance needs. Having provided travel insurance to travel organisers in the UK and Irish markets for over 30 years, T&G will deliver you the best medical care, wherever you are around the world.

For international travel, their most popular and best value option is comprehensive cover, which includes substantial cancellation, luggage, medical and repatriation benefits.

Travel insurance can be purchased on line at: www.chimuadventures.com

Go to the "insurance" tab on any of our main destination pages.

Or visit: <http://www.travel-general.com/>

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1.14 Local Contact Information

There are several *Chimu Adventures* offices in South America as detailed below. These offices can assist with any issues that you might have in those countries.

Please ensure that you read your arrival documents and confirmed itinerary for local emergency contact numbers for each country that you are visiting with *Chimu Adventures*.

PERU

Lima Office

Calle San Martín # 895, Casa 4
Miraflores, Lima
Tel: +51 1 4458205

Cusco Office

Calle Garcilazo # 210, Oficina 211
Centro Historico, Cusco
Tel: +51 84 261369

ARGENTINA

Buenos Aires Office

Paraguay 2041 – Office 10B
Buenos Aires
Tel: +54 11 4966 2476

BRAZIL

Rio de Janeiro Office

Avenida Presidente Vargas, 590
Sala 1516, Centro, Rio de Janeiro
Tel: +55 21 3807 5452

Please ensure that if you would like to book any additional services whilst travelling, that you contact *Chimu Adventures* or the local office, as *Chimu Adventures* **will not be held responsible** for any tours or services booked directly with local guides.

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2. SPECIFIC COUNTRY INFORMATION

2.1 Argentina

Argentina is the second largest country in Latin America after Brazil, home to incredibly diverse landscapes, a rich history and stunning scenery. Located in the south of the continent, Argentina shares the inspiring region of Patagonia with Chile. It also encompasses glacial lakes, Pampas grassland (the traditional grazing ground of its renowned beef cattle) and the Argentinian Andes mountain range including Aconcagua, the highest point in South America at 6,960 metres above sea level. Then of course there are the Iguacu Falls, an absolute must-see of the continent! The cosmopolitan capital Buenos Aires, home of the tango, is filled with stunning architecture and world-class cuisine. The city centres around the 16th century Plaza de Mayo that is lined with stately buildings including the Casa Rosada, the balconied and iconic presidential palace.

Did you know?

- The national dance of Argentina is the tango.
- The Perito Moreno Glacier in El Calafate holds the world's 3rd largest reserve of fresh water in the world.
- The Tierra del Fuego National Park stretches across both Argentina and Chile.

Visa

A pre-arranged visa is not required to enter Argentina for citizens of the following countries:

- Australia
- United Kingdom
- The United States
- Ireland
- Canada
- New Zealand
- European Union
- South Africa

For other nationalities please visit the website of the relevant consulate.

Please note that Australian, Canadian and USA citizens must pay a "reciprocity fee" to enter Argentina. This is not a visa, since a visa is not required for visitors from these countries. It is a fee based upon the fees that Argentinean citizens pay for visas to these countries. The fee is subject to change.

The National Immigration Agency (Dirección Nacional de Migraciones) has added a new online form of payment of this reciprocity fee, through the Provincia Payment System. Online payment must now be made **in advance** for arrival at all airports.

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The Reciprocity rates are currently US\$160 for USA citizens, US\$100 for Australian citizens and US\$92 for Canadian citizens. British and European Union passport holders are exempt from Reciprocity Fees.

US Citizens please note: The reciprocity fee of **US\$160** allows multiple entries into Argentina for 10 years in accordance with US visa reciprocity.

Australian Citizens please note: The reciprocity fee of **US\$100** is valid for multiple entries into Argentina within a period of one year from the date of first entry.

How to pay the reciprocity fee online:

1) Go to the following URL:

<http://www.migraciones.gov.ar/accesible/templates/reciprocidad/reciprocidad.htm>

2) Click on 'continue' button and enter all details (Please enter your date of birth using the MM/DD/YYYY format)

3) Complete the form with the corresponding personal and credit card information

4) Print the payment receipt

5) On arrival in Argentina, this printed receipt must be presented at Immigration Control. The receipt will be scanned by the Immigration officials, the information will be checked and the traveller's entry to the country registered. You also need to be able to show the credit card used to make the on-line payment.

Remember that the reciprocity tax also needs to be paid for all Australian, United States and Canadian passport holders who come from Chile, Brazil, Bolivia, Uruguay or Paraguay into Argentina via an overland border. Please print the tax payment receipt and bring it with you so that you can show Argentina Customs at the border crossing. If you do not do this you will not be able to enter Argentina at the border. It should be performed at least 15 days before travelling.

Please note: Written evidence is also always required for all land crossings into Argentina. Please keep written confirmation of payment with you at all times in Argentina.

Additional Forms for ALL passport holders exiting Argentina via overland border crossings.

Please note that there are additional online custom forms to complete when travelling overland between Argentina and adjoining countries. Presuming you are travelling across the border on Chimu services and unless you request otherwise, our Argentina operations office will organize the below overland border documentation to be prepared for you.

The online forms can only be completed in Spanish so please consider this if you wish to complete the forms yourself.

If you have any queries in regards to other passports and/or any questions about the pre-payment, please contact your applicable Argentinean Consulate.

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General Information

Taxis - Warning

Do not pay taxis with high value notes such as 50 or 100 Pesos. Taxi drivers, especially in Buenos Aires are known for their 'fake note' scams. If a tourist pays for a taxi with a high value note the taxi driver very quickly switches it with a fake note when the passenger pays and then tells the passenger it is fake and refuses to accept it. He has therefore managed to offload his fake note on the unsuspecting tourist. Please be aware of this scam and only pay with low value notes or coins when taking taxis.

Antarctic Cruises - Flights out of Ushuaia

If you are flying out of Ushuaia, Argentina the same day as disembarking your Antarctic cruise, please ensure that your flight is after 12PM (NOON).

Time

GMT -3

Money

The unit of currency in Argentina is the Argentinian Peso (ARS).

Please check websites such as www.oanda.com or www.xe.com for up to date exchange rates prior to your departure.

It is easy to change foreign currency in Argentina and there are many foreign exchange bureaux (*casas de cambio*) throughout the country. You are advised not to change money at the Money Changers located just after immigration at Eziza Airport in Buenos Aires as the exchange rates are very low. If you have to change foreign cash at the airport then you are better off going to the Banco de la Nacion. Better rates of exchange are given for larger bills (USD50 or 100 and similarly with Euros). US dollars are widely accepted in large hotels, top-end restaurants, supermarkets and major stores but please note that you will always receive change in pesos, even when you pay with US dollars.

ATMs (*cajeros automaticos*) are widespread in Buenos Aires and other large cities and are found not only in banks but also in shopping centres and in some supermarkets. Smaller towns generally have at least one ATM. Many banks have daily withdrawal limits of 2,000 pesos or less, but sometimes there are lower limits on international cards.

Banks are generally open from 10.00am to 3.00pm but closed on Saturdays and Sundays.

Visa is the most widely accepted credit card, followed closely by MasterCard. Most large hotels and restaurants accept credit cards.

Please note that you are advised to carry some cash with you in Argentina as ATMs do not always accept foreign cards.

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LDD, Emergency Numbers, Internet

Country code: + 54

Ambulance: 107

Police: 101

Internet cafes with reasonably priced internet access are widespread throughout Argentina although internet speeds may vary. Wi-Fi is becoming increasingly common in many hotels as well as in cafes and restaurants and it is generally free.

Climate

Argentina stretches across many different latitudes and as such there are great variations in climate within Argentina. The climate ranges from subtropical along the north-eastern border with Brazil to sub-polar in the Tierra del Fuego region in the far south. Patagonia has dry, almost desert like conditions since it is sheltered from the persistent westerly winds by the southern Andes.

In the north of Argentina the weather is sunny and dry for most of the year reaching temperatures of 35°C (95°F) and above. There is also a wet season here from December to March when it can be uncomfortably humid.

In the centre, Buenos Aires has a temperate climate year round although it can get quite hot and humid in the main summer months of January and February and cooler and damper in the winter. Average annual temperatures range from 24°C (75°F) to 11°C (51°F) in Buenos Aires.

Further south in Patagonia however, the weather is extremely cold for most of the year, except for the summer months (November – March) when it can be surprisingly pleasant. The average temperature in Ushuaia in winter is zero.

Cuisine

The cuisine of Argentina is distinctive in South America because of its strong resemblance to Italian, Spanish, French and other European cuisines. Indigenous gastronomies derived from groups such as the Quechua, Mapuche and Guarani have also played a role. Grilled meats and pasta are common with extensive use of local ingredients. Lamb is one of the traditional meats of Argentina. It is lean and grass-fed on the Patagonian Steppe. Typically it is stretched across a metal frame and slowly grilled for several hours over an open fire.

Another determining factor in Argentine cuisine is that Argentina is one of the world's major food producers. It is a major producer of meat (especially beef), and so red meat is an extremely common part of the Argentine diet.

Certain foods can be found in all corners of the country. These include *asado* (barbecued meat), *dulce de leche* (similar to caramel made from sugar and milk) and *empanadas* (similar to Cornish Pasties).

The pristine waters of Patagonia are home to an abundance of trout and salmon. In the area around

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Bariloche, Alpine cuisine is more the norm with chocolate bars and fondue restaurants. Tea rooms are a feature of the Welsh communities in Gaiman and Trevelin.

Recommended Argentinian dishes include:

Empanadas – Pastry filled with meat, cheese or mussels.

Asado – Barbecue of beef, pork or chicken.

Pastel de Choclo – Corn casserole with meat stuffing.

Cazuela – Homemade stew with beef, chicken, corn, rice and potatoes.

Mate is a bitter tea that is drunk very frequently in Argentina. It is a bitter infusion of the leaves of a South American shrub, prepared by steeping dried leaves of yerba mate in hot water. It is drunk through a metal straw from a shared hollow calabash gourd.

Argentina is also well known for its wines. The most important wine regions of the country are located in the provinces of Mendoza, San Juan and La Rioja. Malbec is one of the country's best known varieties and its signature red grape variety. Pinot Noir is Patagonia's iconic grape variety.

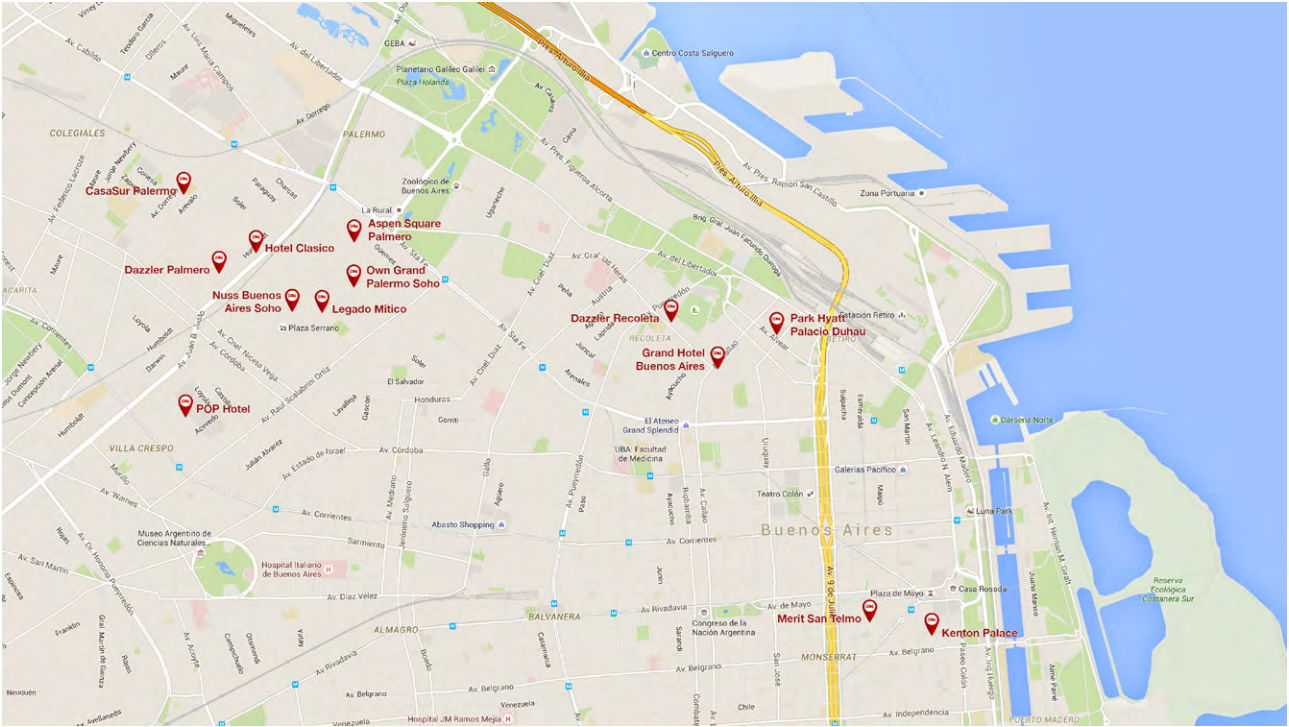
Language

Argentina's official language is Spanish, but Argentinian Spanish differs from Spanish spoken in other countries, mainly due to the Italian sounding intonations. Indigenous languages spoken today include Tehuelche, Guarani and Quechua. Many immigrant groups have continued to speak their own language and so you will also find many other languages in Argentina including Italian, German, English, French and even Welsh.

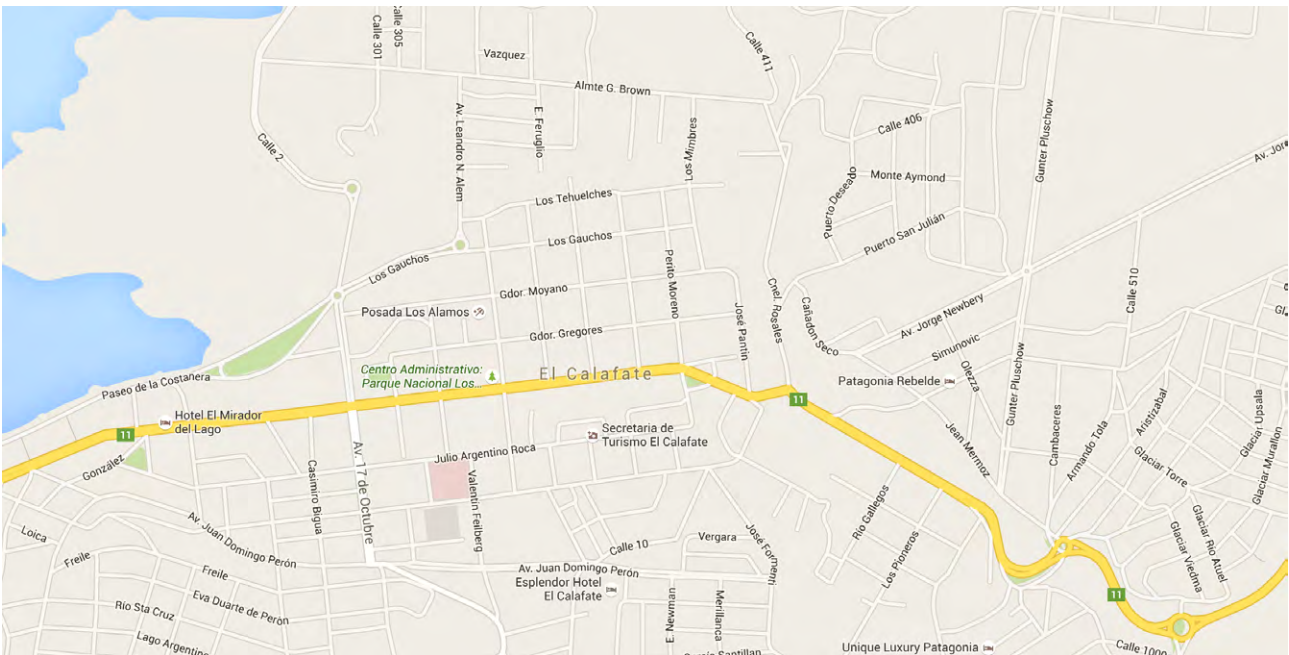
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City Map- Buenos Aires



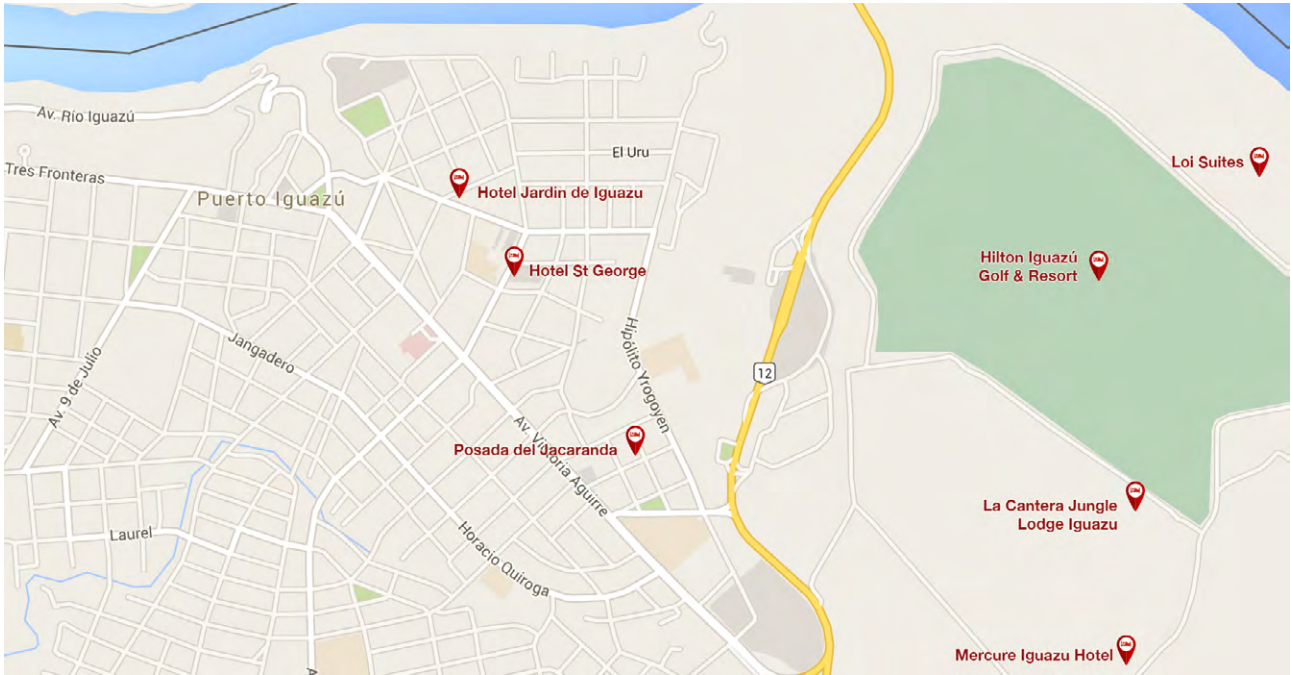
City Map- El Calafate



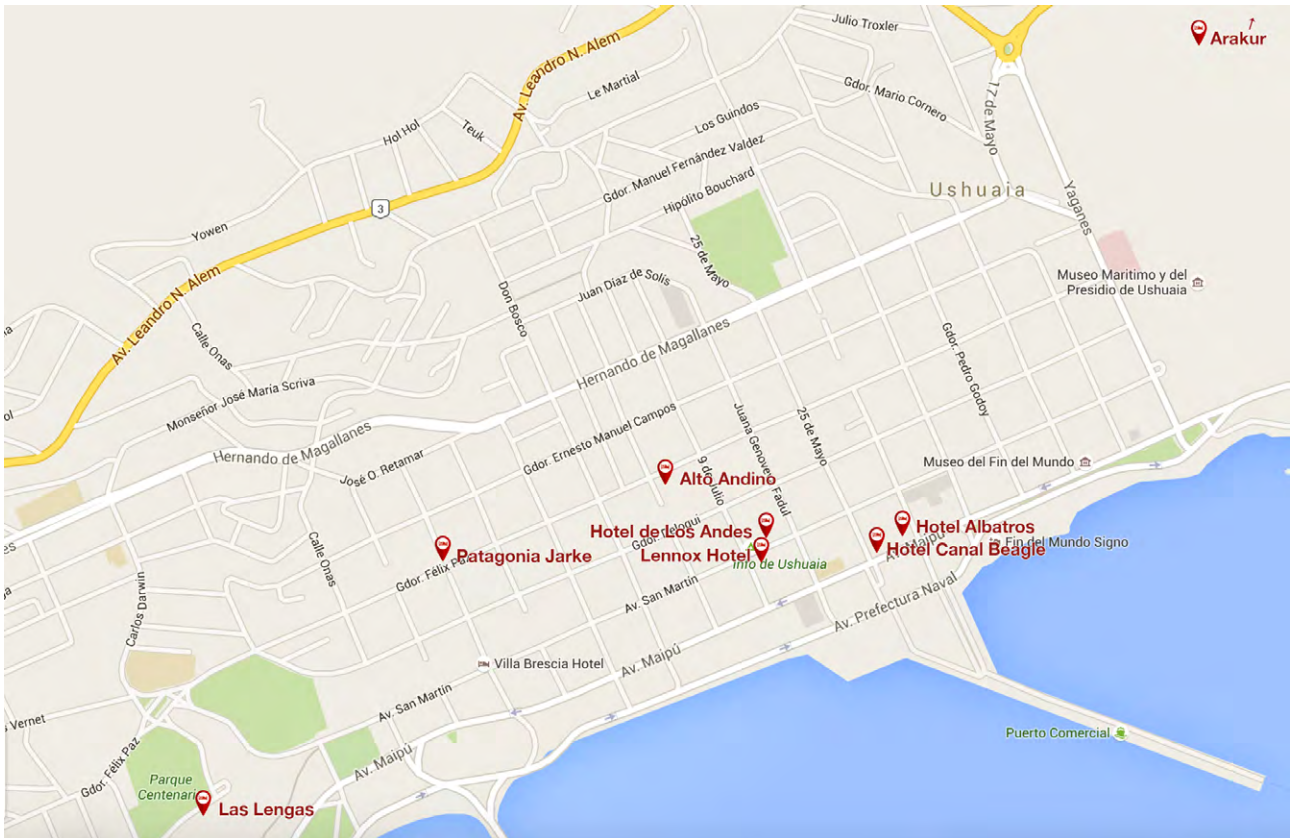
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City Map- Puerto Iguazú



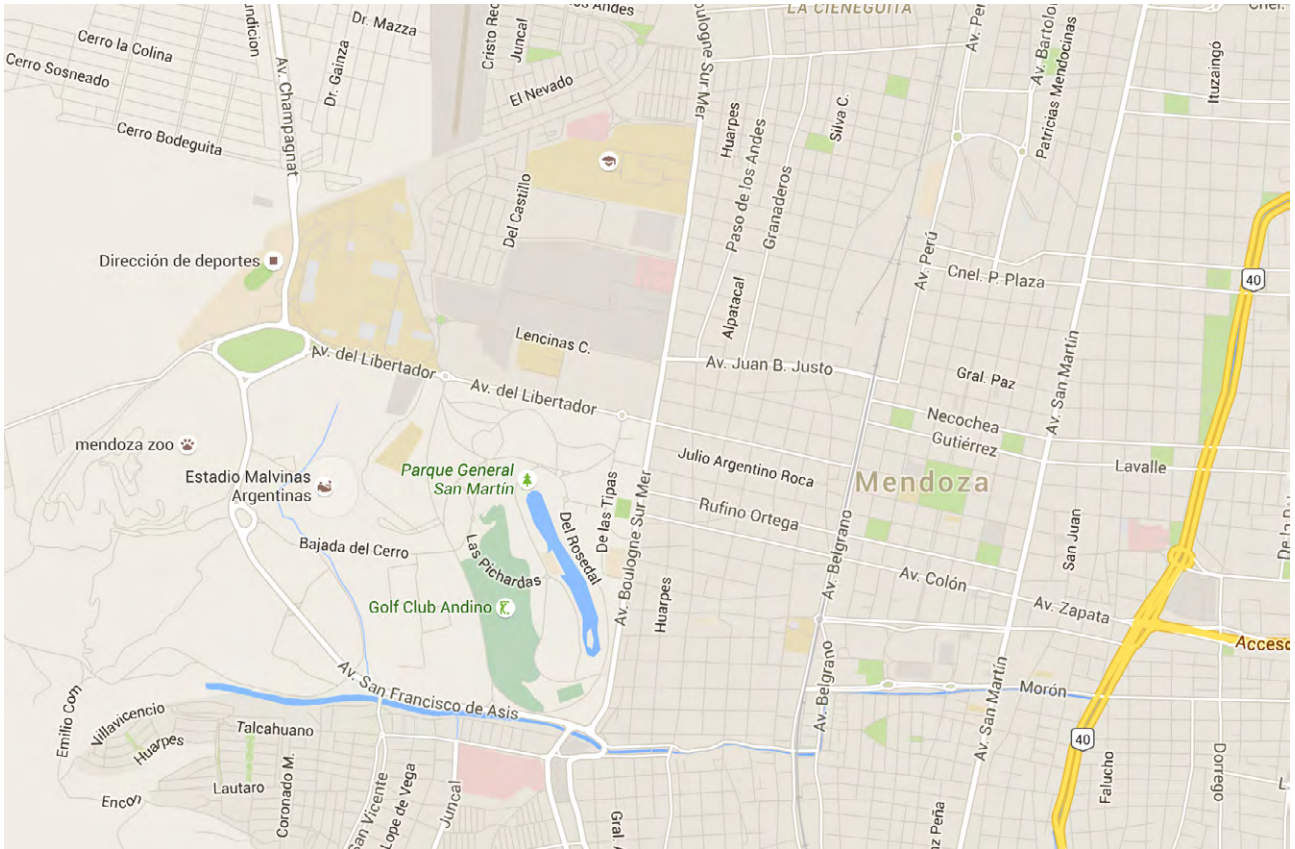
City Map- Ushuaia



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City Map- Mendoza



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2.2 Bolivia

Bolivia is the highest, most rugged and most isolated country in the southern hemisphere, a destination not to be left unexplored. This landlocked country bordering Lake Titicaca, has unparalleled scenery ranging from rainforests to mountains, deserts, lagoons and volcanoes. It boasts amazing geological phenomena such as the Salar de Uyuni, the world's largest salt lake, the Valley of the Moon as well as thousands of square miles of virgin Amazon rainforest and towering Andean peaks.

Bolivia has a long, eventful history, from Inca conquest to Spanish conquest to troubled Independence. This has inevitably left its cultural mark, with pre-Inca ruins such as Tiwanaku, Inca remnants such as the Temple of the Moon on Lake Titicaca, colonial architecture in Sucre and La Paz and bustling modern cities such as Santa Cruz.

Did you know?

- Bolivia has the highest percentage of indigenous people in South America.
- Bolivia and Peru border and share control of Lake Titicaca, the highest navigable lake in the world.
- Bolivia produces around 70% of the world's Brazil nuts.

Visa

A pre-arranged visa is not required to enter Bolivia for citizens of the following countries:

- Australia
- United Kingdom
- The United States
- Ireland
- Canada
- New Zealand
- European Union
- South Africa

For other nationalities please visit the website of the relevant consulate.

Bolivia charges a reciprocity fee to citizens of the USA, currently valued at US\$135. The visa restrictions in Bolivia are a bit more specific depending on the citizenship.

Citizens of the United States pay for the visa which is valid for 5 years and permits visiting the country for 90 days in a year. This visa cannot be extended.

Canadians may visit for 30 days in a year without being charged, but to stay longer a US\$35 visa is required.

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Citizens from the United Kingdom and Australia may visit for 90 days without a fee. This can be extended by leaving the country and returning for a new entry stamp.

General Information

Bolivia is a relatively poor country and tourism service standards are generally inferior to most other South American countries.

Time

GMT -4

Money

Bolivia's unit of currency is the Boliviano (BOB).

Please check websites such as www.oanda.com or www.xe.com for up to date exchange rates prior to your departure.

We recommend that you travel with a supply of US dollars, as well as small amounts of local currency, as the US dollar is readily accepted across the continent in major department stores, hotels and tourist areas. Use local currency for small purchases. Dollars can be changed in foreign exchange offices (*casas de cambio*), hotels and tourist offices or on the street. Street vendors usually give a better rate, however proceed with caution! Banks are closed on Saturdays and Sundays.

Please ensure that the US dollar notes you take with you to Bolivia are crisp, new notes. It is almost impossible to change US dollar bills that have even the slightest tear or marking on them, even at the airport. Although banks supposedly have to accept them, there are reports that some banks discount the exchange rate by 20% for dollar notes that are not in pristine condition.

LDD, Emergency Numbers, Internet

Country code: + 591

Ambulance: 118

Police: 110

Internet cafes are widespread throughout Bolivia and Wi-Fi is becoming increasingly common in many hotels – certainly in the mid to high range hotels.

Climate

Bolivia has a temperate climate but temperatures can differ dramatically between day and night. The climate also varies significantly across Bolivia depending on altitude and from one climatic zone to another. It ranges from tropical, humid to cold, semi-arid.

The wettest period is November to March and these are the summer months. Winter is perhaps the best time to visit (May–October), especially in the hot and humid lowlands, as it is cooler and drier.

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In the highlands, it rains much less and remains sunny throughout the day but it gets noticeably colder at night. The mountain areas can become very cold at night.

The *Altiplano* experiences desert-polar climates, with strong and cold winds. The average temperature ranges from 15 to 20°C but at night, temperatures fall significantly to around 0°C. Frosts and snow are frequent.

In the *Salar de Uyuni* (salt flats), the weather conditions can be extreme, from hot fierce sun during the day, to freezing temperatures at night. The temperatures typically average 20°C during the day, but during the night can dip well below freezing with the wind chill adding to the cold. It is not uncommon for temperatures in the *Salar de Uyuni* to reach 30°C (86°F) during the day and fall to -25°C (-13°F) at night.

Cuisine

Corn, potatoes and beans are the three traditional staples of Bolivia and these have been combined with a number of staples brought by the Spanish, such as rice, wheat, and meat including beef, pork and chicken. In rural areas guinea pig (*cuy*) and rabbits are also eaten.

Almuerzo (lunch) is the most important meal of the Bolivian day with daily life revolving around it. Deep frying is a common cooking method of most meats, fried chicken being a very popular fast dish. A common accompaniment served with Bolivian meals is *llajhua*, a spicy sauce that is similar to Mexican salsa.

Some notable Bolivian dishes include the following:

Pique a lo macho – Grilled chunks of meat in a slightly spicy sauce with tomatoes and onion, served on potatoes.

Silpancho or *Milanesa* – Beef pounded to a thin, plate-sized patty, served on a bed of rice and potatoes with a fried egg on top.

We recommend our clients drink bottled water and avoid tap water at all times. Please note that many fruit juices may be mixed with unboiled water and some fruit may be washed in it.

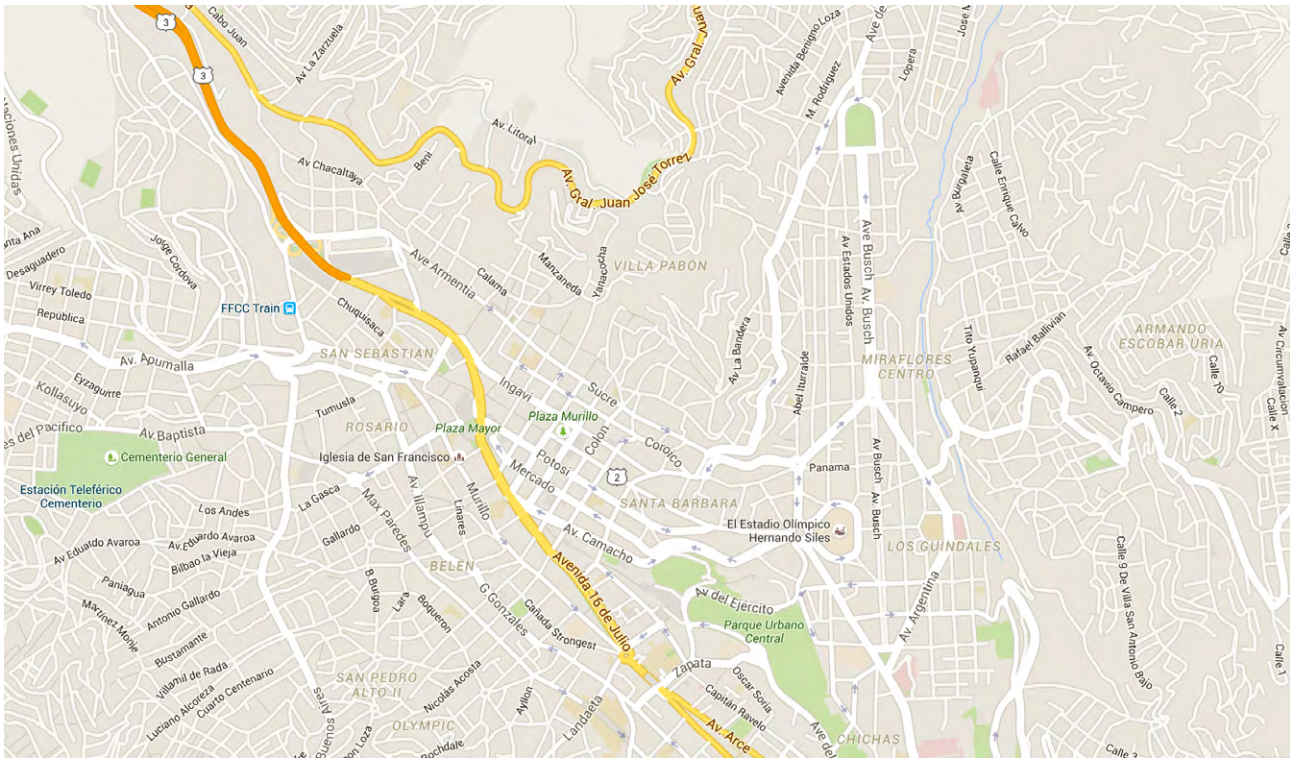
Language

The languages of Bolivia include Spanish and a range of indigenous languages. Spanish and Quechua are spoken primarily in the Andes region, Aymara is mainly spoken in the *Altiplano* region around Lake Titicaca with Guaraní being spoken in the southeast on the border with Paraguay.

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City Map- La Paz



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2.3 Brazil

Brazil is universally known as the land of sun, sea and samba. The local people love life and this is reflected in their friendly nature and how they welcome foreigners to their land.

Rio de Janeiro is a vibrant, pulsating and inspiringly-beautiful city, famed for its breath-taking setting and home to the world famous *Carnivale!* The views from Sugar Loaf Mountain and Corcovado Mountain, where the statue of Christ the Redeemer stands proudly, arms outstretched and watching over the city are spectacular. Then of course there are the famous beaches of Copacabana and Ipanema, where you can observe the fascinating beach culture and sip on a *caipirinha*, the national cocktail, at one of the many beach-side bars.

To escape the hustle and bustle of Rio, there is the wonderful sea-side town of Buzios, just north of Rio. Here you will find several pristine white sandy beaches and delicious seafood restaurants. Or there is the tropical island paradise of Ilha Grande with some 92 beaches and islands to explore by boat or on foot.

Of course Brazil is not just about beaches, with the Pantanal and Amazon jungle providing some of the best wildlife viewing in the whole continent.

Did you know?

- The famous carnival is celebrated in February or March across the country.
- Brazil is the 5th largest country in the world.
- The national cocktail is the *caipirinha* made from *Cachaça*, a sugar cane spirit.

Visa

A pre-arranged visa is not required to enter Brazil for citizens of the United Kingdom, Ireland, New Zealand, European Union and South Africa.

However, for citizens of Australia, the United States and Canada a pre-arranged visa is required and can be applied for within 90 days of entering the country. The first arrival in Brazil must take place within 90 days from the date the visa was issued. Contact your local Brazilian embassy for details on how to apply for a visa.

The visa fees are currently US\$160 for USA citizens, US\$45 for Australian citizens and US\$75 for Canadian citizens. Please note that these fees are subject to change.

IMPORTANT: Please allow a minimum of 6 weeks for the visa to be processed by the Brazilian consulate.

For other nationalities please visit the website of the relevant consulate.

For Australian residents only: For assistance in applying for your visa for Brazil, please visit our partner site *visalink* below:

<http://visalink.com.au/frontpage.aspx?from=chimuss>

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By using this link you are entitled for a 10% discount off their normal rates!

(**Please note** that a visa is required for the Iguazu Falls tour in order to visit the Brazilian side of the falls. Previously a day visa was granted to those visiting the falls, but this is no longer the case and citizens of Australia, the USA and Canada need to apply for a full visa before departure.)

Disclaimer: Whilst Chimu Adventures will assist in every possible way to provide you with accommodation and flight details necessary to obtain your visa, we are not a consular service and it is the sole responsibility of the traveller to obtain the necessary visas before departing Australia either through our partner site visalink, or through the consulate. Travelling without a visa may result in the cancellation of part or the whole of your tour without refund as per terms and conditions which you can view through the link below.

<http://www.chimuadventures.com/content/terms-and-conditions>

General Information

Arrival Transfers

Please do not be alarmed if public and private vehicles (transfers, taxis, buses) do not stop at red lights between the hours of 10pm and 6am. It is not a legal requirement for vehicles to stop at red lights in Brazil during these hours and is in the interests of passenger safety.

Wi-Fi and safety Deposit Box Charges

Please note that some hotels in Brazil, particularly in Rio de Janeiro, **charge a small fee for the use of in-room safety deposit boxes and Wi-Fi**. Please enquire when you check-in to avoid unexpected charges upon check-out.

English Speaking Staff

There is a general lack of English-speaking staff in service industries throughout Brazil.

Carnival

Please note that due to heavy traffic and last minute road closures, Rio tour and transfer pick-ups can be subject to delays during Carnival. As a result we schedule pick-up times half an hour to an hour earlier during Carnival.

Time

GMT -2 / -5

Money

The unit of currency in Brazil is the Brazilian Real (BRL).

Please check websites such as www.oanda.com or www.xe.com for up to date exchange rates prior to your departure.

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Brazil has a very extensive banking network and ATMs are widely accessible. Most banks have ATM facilities, some of which accept foreign credit and debit cards. The permitted withdrawal amount per card per day is generally R\$ 1,000 but this is reduced to R\$ 500 after 10pm.

The most popular international credit and debit cards include Visa, MasterCard, Cirrus and Maestro.

Foreign currency and US dollar traveller's cheques can be exchanged in foreign exchange offices, banks and also in some travel agencies and hotels. The exchange rate for cash is usually slightly better but exchange fees in general are quite high. To change money you will need your passport. Please note that it can be very difficult to change money at weekends.

LDD, Emergency Numbers, Internet

Country code: + 55

Ambulance: 192

Police: 190

Internet is readily available in Brazil with high speed internet access available in many hotels. Wi-Fi is also becoming increasingly common in hostels and hotels as well as in some cafes and restaurants but please note that **some hotels will charge for Wi-Fi**. Most of the larger Brazilian cities have Internet Cafes that offer inexpensive, high speed internet access.

Climate

Brazil's climate varies considerably from tropical in the north to the temperate regions south of the Tropic of Capricorn. Summer in Brazil runs from December to March and winter from June to September. The rainy season occurs at the end of the summer months, with the Pantanal and the Amazon having the most pronounced wet seasons between November and May.

Even during the winter months, the climate across most of Brazil is moderate with temperatures in major cities such as Rio de Janeiro, Curitiba and Sao Paulo averaging 13–18°C (55–65°F). In the summer months the weather is hot and extremely humid everywhere south of Rio and along the coastline north of Rio, with temperatures in the high 30's to low 40's (°C).

In the Amazon, temperatures in the high 30's (°C) are common year round. Further south, around São Paulo and parts of Minas Gerais, winter temperatures can fall as low as 5°–8°C. In the southern states of Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul, snowfalls do occur in winter, although the snow is only every light.

Cuisine

Brazilian cuisine varies greatly from region to region but fresh meat and fish play an important role in the diet.

In Rio de Janeiro and the south-east *feijoada* is a typical dish. Originally produced by Brazilian slaves, it has now been turned into a delicacy. The dish is a stew that consists mainly of beans and meat, simmered with herbs and spices. Another important food is *manioc*, the most important

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food in all of Brazil and used in the preparation of many dishes.

The cuisine and cooking methods are notably different in the north and Amazon, reflecting the Amerindian heritage. Fish is very important and is the base for stews and soups. One extremely popular dish is *pato no tucupi* – roasted duck marinated in lemon juice, oil and garlic and topped with a sauce made from manioc juice extracts and jambu leaves.

Other typical dishes include:

- *Coxinha* – A thigh-shaped chicken croquette.
- *Brazilian Empanadas* – Pastry pies, usually with prawns or chicken.
- *Churrasco* – Brazilian barbeque, with grilled chicken, beef and lamb.
- *Moqueca Capixaba* – Tomato and fish stew prepared in a clay pot.
- *Guava Ice Cream*
- *Cuscuz Branco* – Similar to couscous, but prepared with coconut milk and sugar and served as a dessert.

The national alcohol of Brazil is *cachaça* which is distilled from sugar cane and the national cocktail is *Caipirihinia* made from *cachaça*, lime juice, sugar and ice.

Language

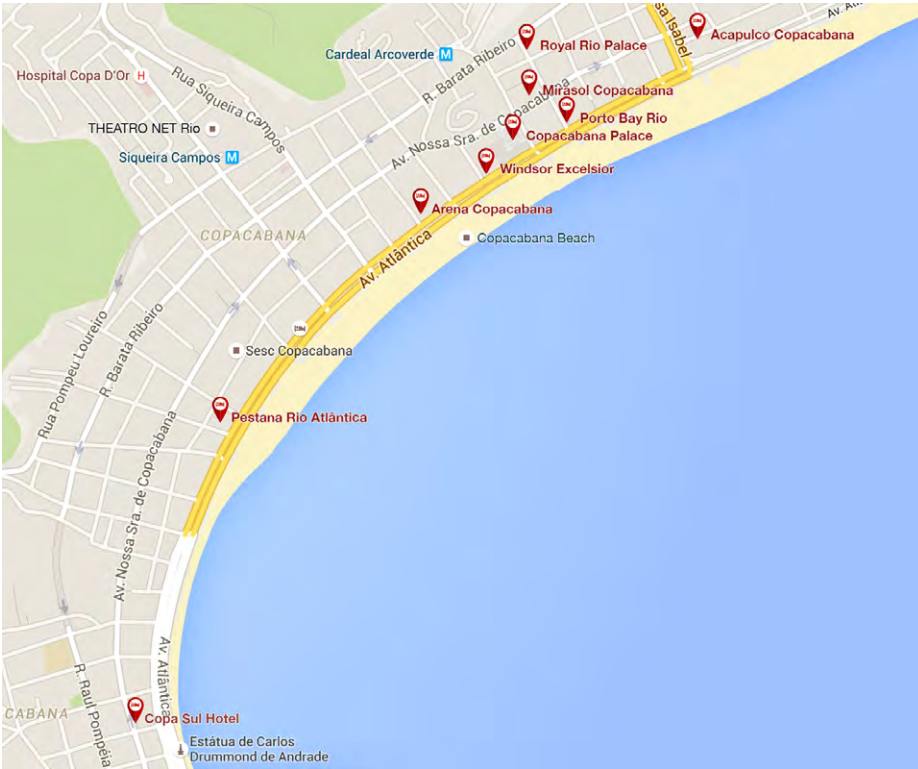
The official language in Brazil is Portuguese but it does differ slightly from the Portuguese spoken in Portugal mainly due to pronunciation differences. Whereas the European Portuguese sounds quite rough, Brazilian Portuguese is very nasal and as a result appears softer.

The number of Brazilians that speak English is very low.

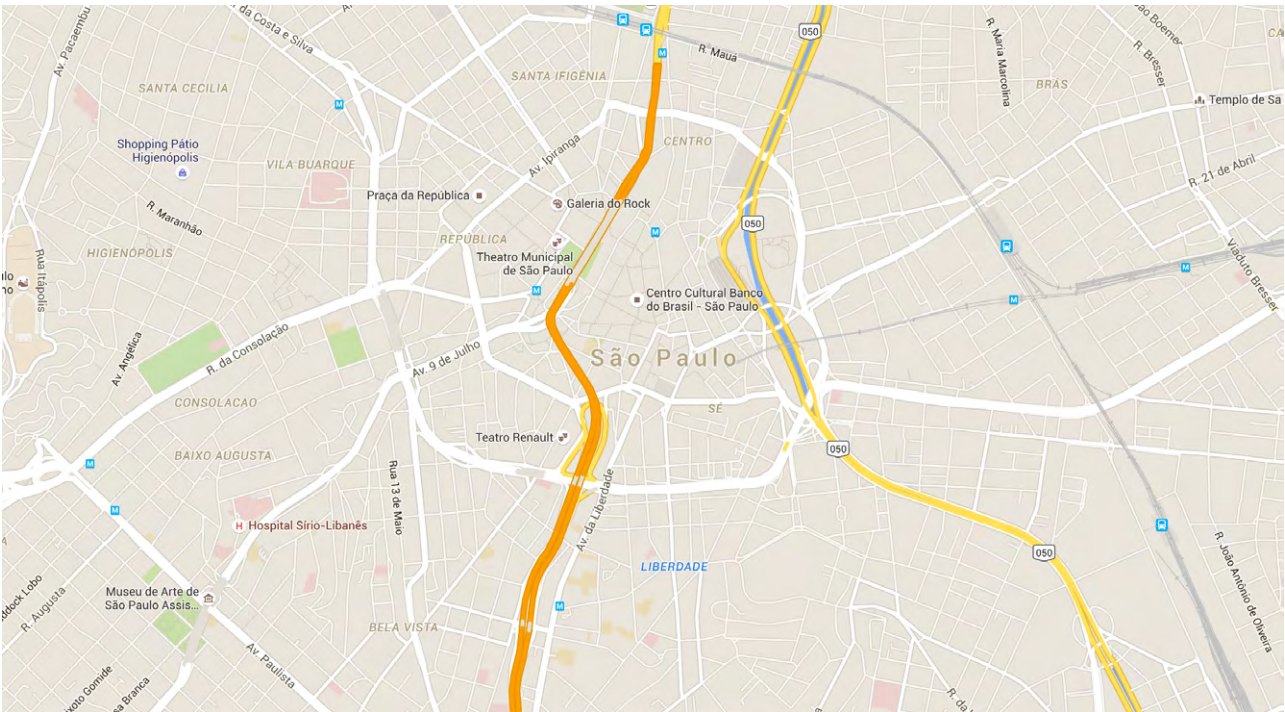
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City Map- Copacabana, Rio De Janeiro



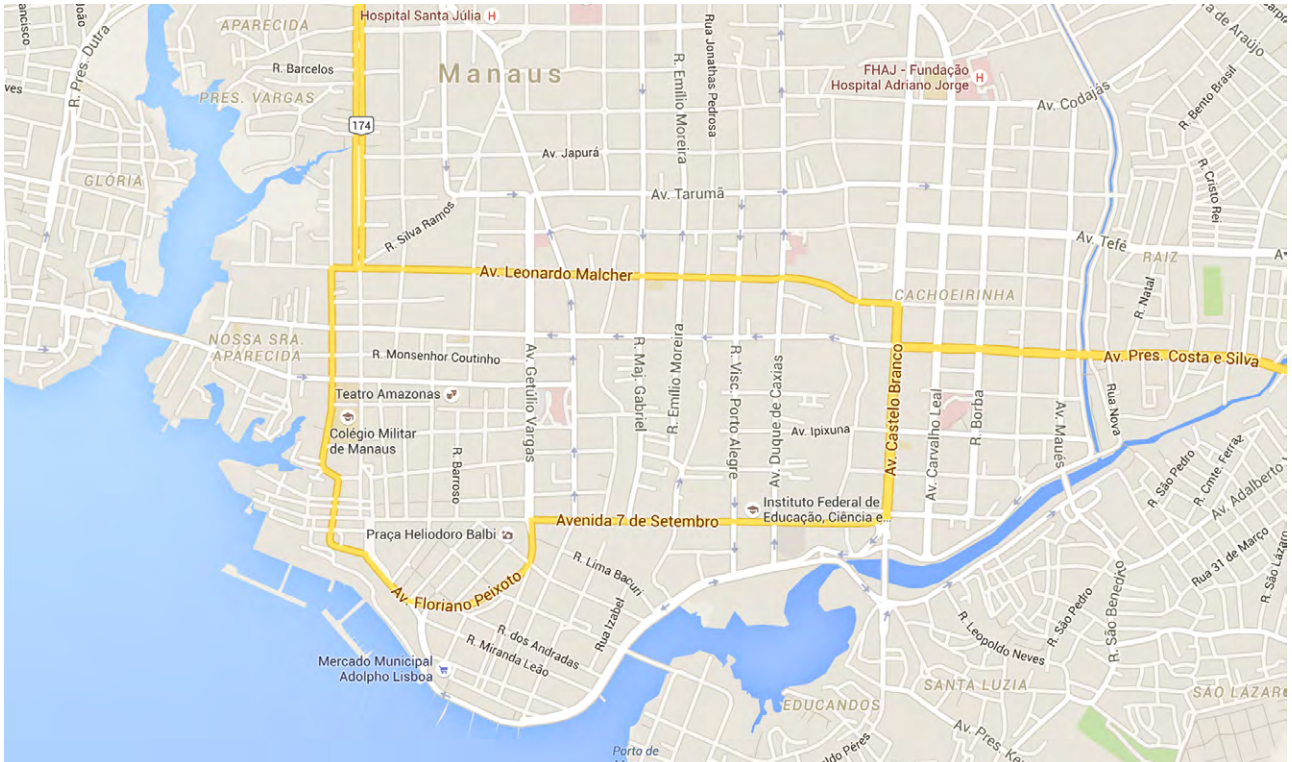
City Map- São Paulo



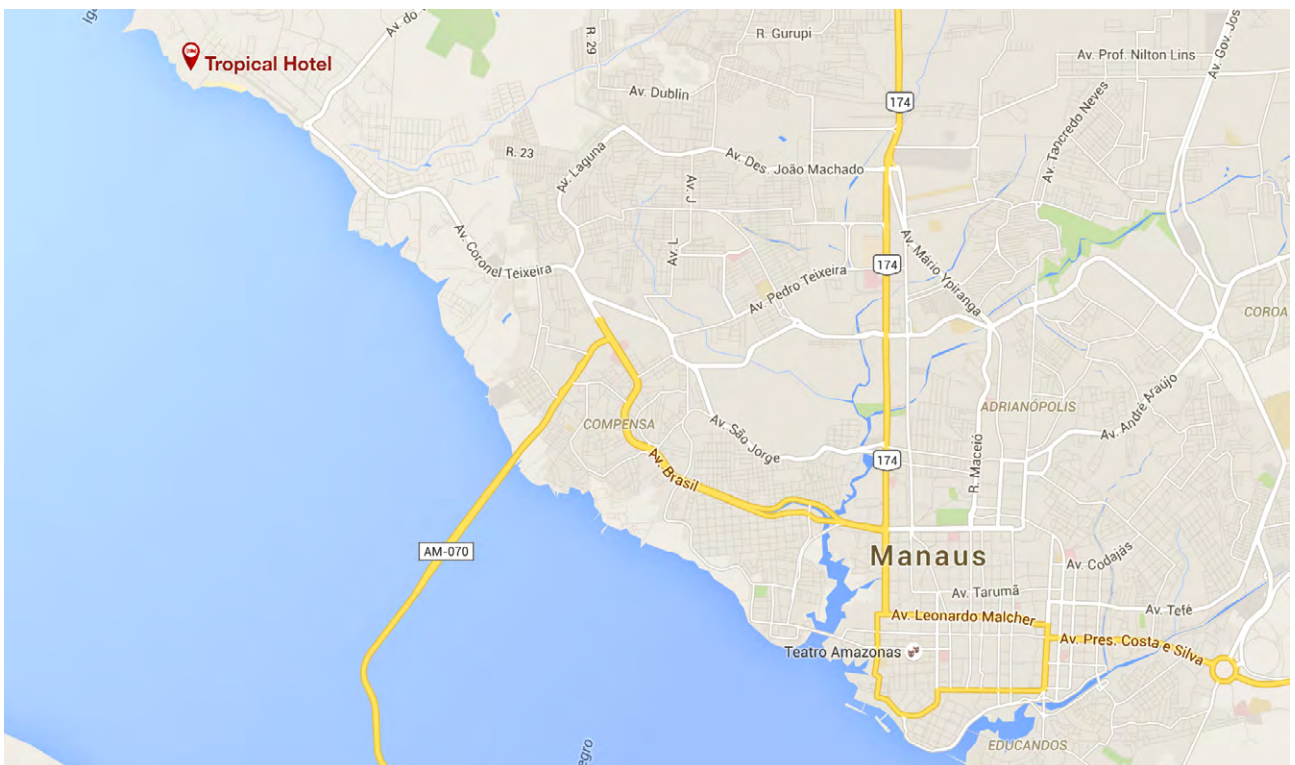
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City Map- Manaus



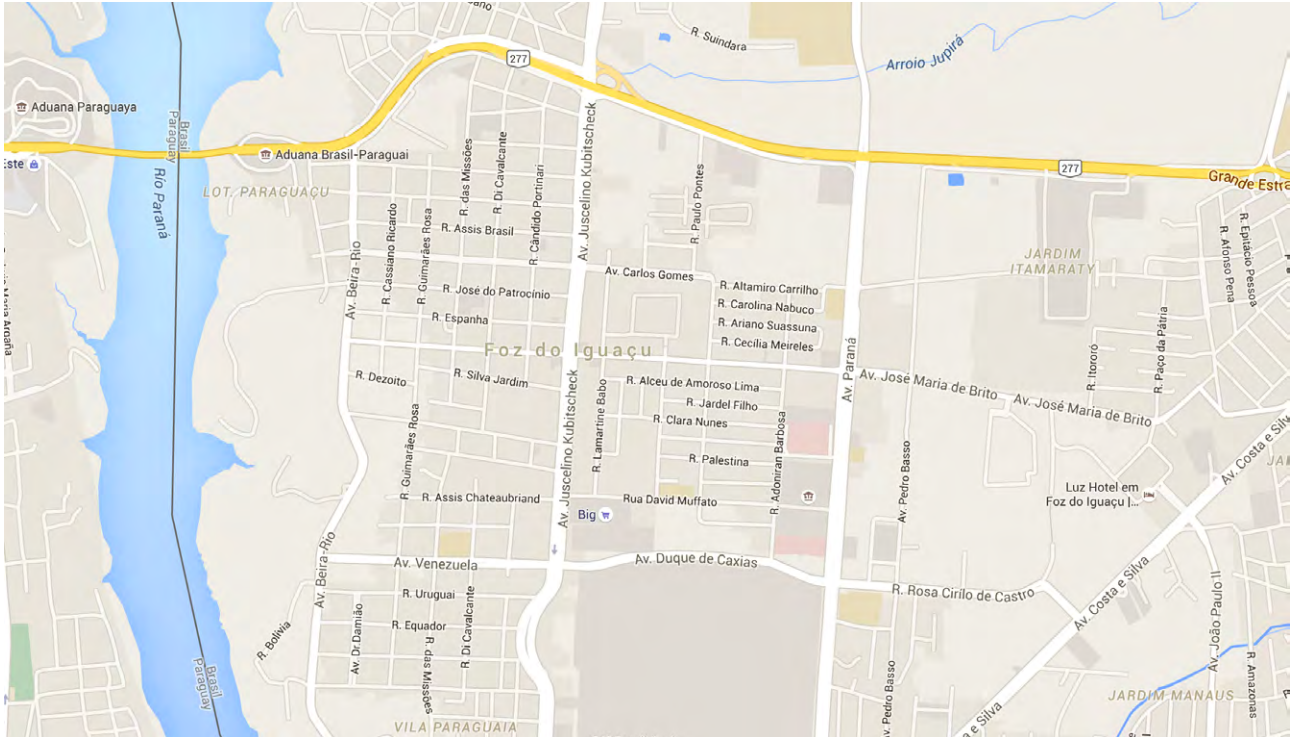
City Map- Greater Manaus



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City Map- Foz do Iguaçu



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2.4 Chile & Easter Island

Chile is one of the longest north-south countries in the world occupying a narrow strip of land between the Pacific Ocean and the Andes. Like Argentina, its landscapes are diverse and its scenery spectacular ranging from the arid Atacama Desert in the north with its geysers and fascinating rock formations, to wild, rugged and breathtakingly beautiful Patagonia in the south with its volcanoes, lakes, glaciers and fjords. Easter Island is also part of Chile and famous for its giant statues carved from volcanic rock.

Then of course there is the capital Santiago, surrounded by snow-capped peaks, and a testament to the emergence of Chile as the modern economy in the region.

Did you know?

- Chile's boundary length (including coastline) is 12,606 km (7833 miles).
- Easter Island is the world's most isolated island, 3,600 kms west of the mainland and home to 887 moai - giant figures carved out of volcanic rock.
- The Atacama Desert in the north of Chile is the driest place on earth, with an average rainfall of less than 0.05 mms per year.

Visa

A pre-arranged visa is not required to enter Chile for citizens of the following countries:

- Australia
- United Kingdom
- The United States
- Ireland
- Canada
- New Zealand
- European Union
- South Africa

For other nationalities please visit the website of the relevant consulate.

Please note that Australian citizens must pay a "reciprocity fee" to enter Chile. This is not a visa, since a visa is not required for visitors from Australia. It is a fee based upon the fees that Chilean citizens pay for visas to this country. The fee is subject to change but is currently US\$160. Please check the fee with your local Chilean Embassy prior to travel as it is subject to change. The fee can be paid on arrival in US\$ cash or by credit card.

In regard to local taxes, there is an entrance fee of US\$63 for **ALL** tourists travelling to Easter Island. This must now be paid locally. *Chimu Adventures* is no longer permitted to collect this on behalf of the indigenous people of Easter Island, and all visitors to the island must pay this charge on arrival. Please note that this fee is subject to change.

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General Information

Please note that bribing is **not** acceptable in Chile and if you attempt it you are likely to be arrested.

Time

Mainland Chile: GMT -3

Easter Island: GMT -5

Money

The unit of currency in Chile is the Chilean Peso (CLP).

Please check websites such as www.oanda.com or www.xe.com for up to date exchange rates prior to your departure.

Banking Hours are Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 2:00pm with banks being closed on Saturdays and Sundays.

Currencies other than the Chilean Peso are not widely accepted across Chile, but most cities have foreign exchange bureaux (*casas de cambio*) with reasonable rates on Euros and US dollars. Hotel and airport exchange rates tend to be much lower than those in foreign exchange bureaux.

ATMs are widespread across the country with different banks charging different amounts for extracting cash. The usual fee is 2,500CLP and the maximum withdrawal allowed is 200,000CLP.

Traveller's cheques tend to be difficult to exchange with fairly poor exchange rates.

LDD, Emergency Numbers, Internet

Country code: + 56

Ambulance: 131

Police: 133

Internet cafes are widespread throughout Chile and Wi-Fi is becoming increasingly common in many hotels hostels and cafes – certainly in the mid to high range hotels.

Climate

Chile's climate varies greatly across the country and ranges from a rainy temperate climate in the south to a more Mediterranean climate in the centre through to the arid climate of the Atacama Desert in the north. Summer runs from December to March and winter from June to October.

The north of Chile has sunny, dry conditions for most of the year with temperatures reaching 35°C and above. During the wet season (December to March) it can be very humid.

Santiago and the central valley has a temperate climate which neither becomes unbearably hot or cold. January sees average highs of around 28°C, with average highs of around 10°C in the height of

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the winter (July). The rainy season here is between May and August.

Further south in Patagonia the weather is extremely cold for most of the year, except in the summer months from November/December to March.

Cuisine

Chilean food is fairly simple and features seafood, beef, fruit and vegetables. The cuisine stems from a combination of traditional Spanish cuisine, Chilean Indigenous culture and local ingredients and is influenced by German, Italian and French cuisines.

The country is probably best known for its seafood with an immense array being caught along its vast coastline including abalones, razor clams, mussels, spider crabs, oysters, conger eels, salmon and sole.

Beef now tends to be more common than llama meat, having being brought in by Europeans.

Traditional dishes include:

Pastel de choclo – A layered pie with minced beef stew, chicken, olives and hard-boiled egg topped with corn and basil and then baked.

Empanadas fritas de queso – Empanadas filled with cheese, then deep fried.

Empanada de Pino – Empanada filled with diced meat, onions, olives, raisins and a piece of hard-boiled egg, then baked.

Cazuela marina/pollo – Seafood/chicken stew.

Asado de cordero – Lamb barbecue.

Tomaticán – Thick vegetable stew.

Bistec a lo pobre – Beefsteak topped with a fried egg, served with French fries and onions.

Porotos granados – Bean stew.

Sopaipilla – Flat circular deep fried 'bread' made of pumpkin and flour.

Chile's vineyards are now challenging the more established players in the wine industry and Chilean wines are now recognized as some of the best wines in the world.

Language

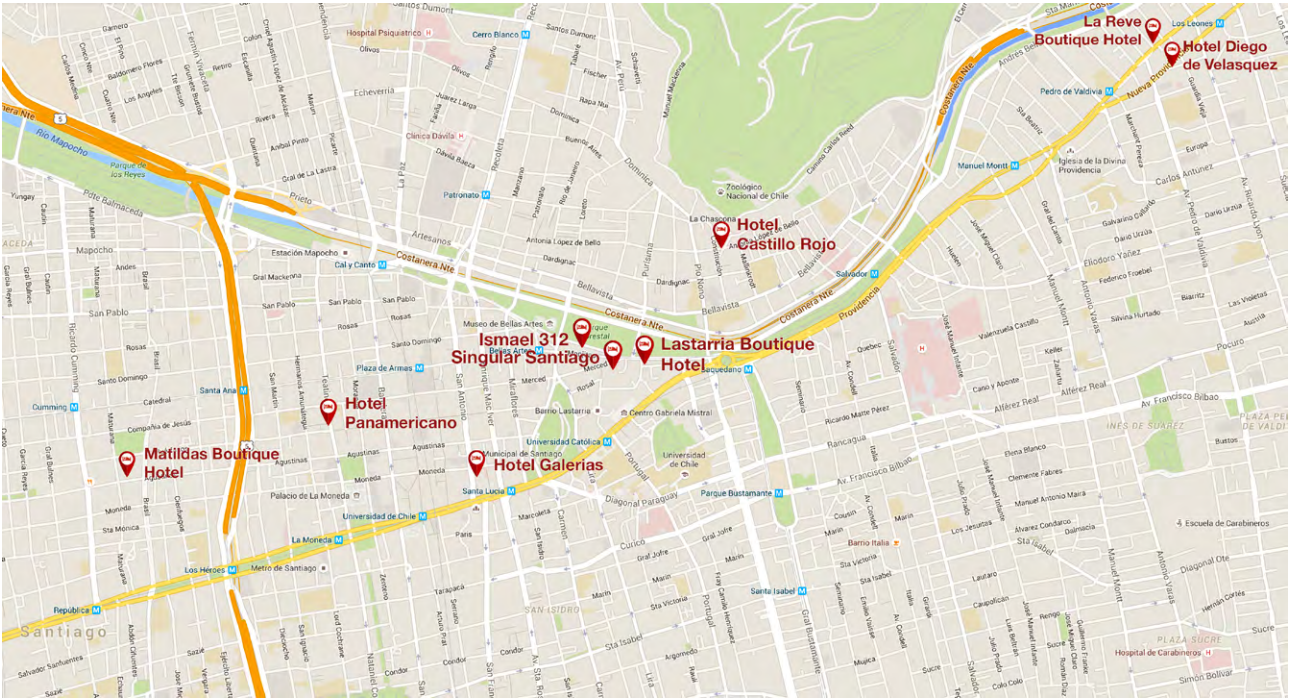
Spanish is the official language of Chile with over 85% of the population speaking Spanish as their first language. The Spanish spoken in Chile does however differ from that in neighbouring countries due to it being distinctively accented with the use of local slang. There is very little differentiation between the accent in the north and south of the country.

Several indigenous languages are spoken in Chile including Mapudungun, Quechua, Aymara, Huilliche and Rapa Nui.

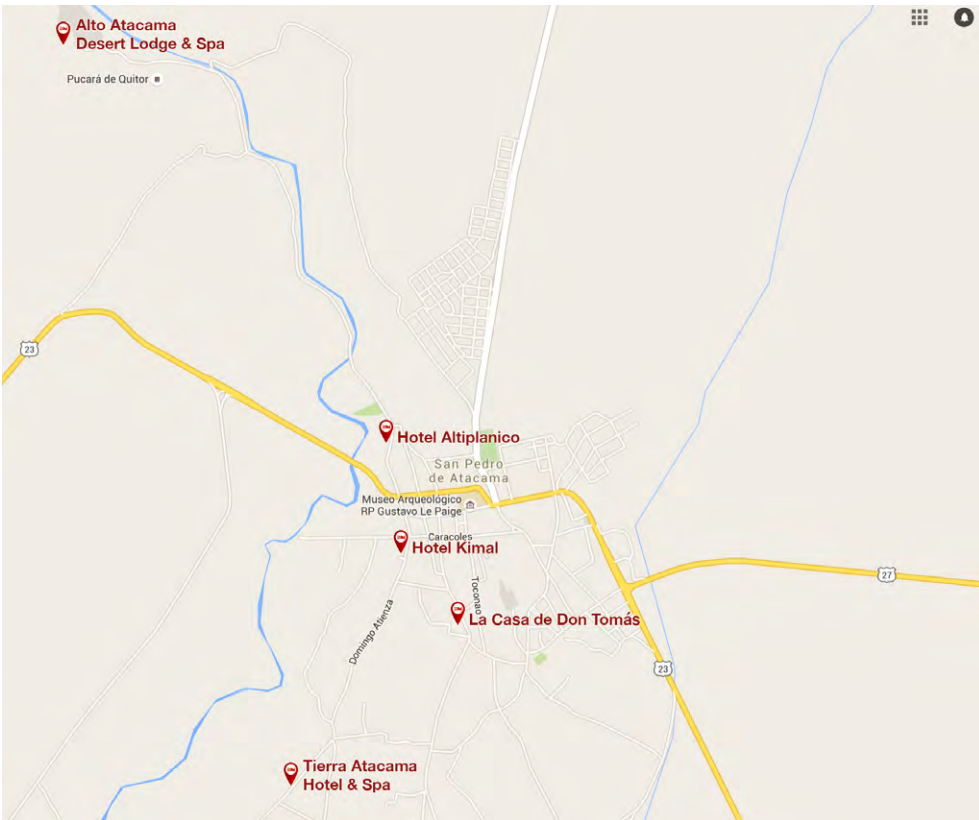
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City Map- Santiago



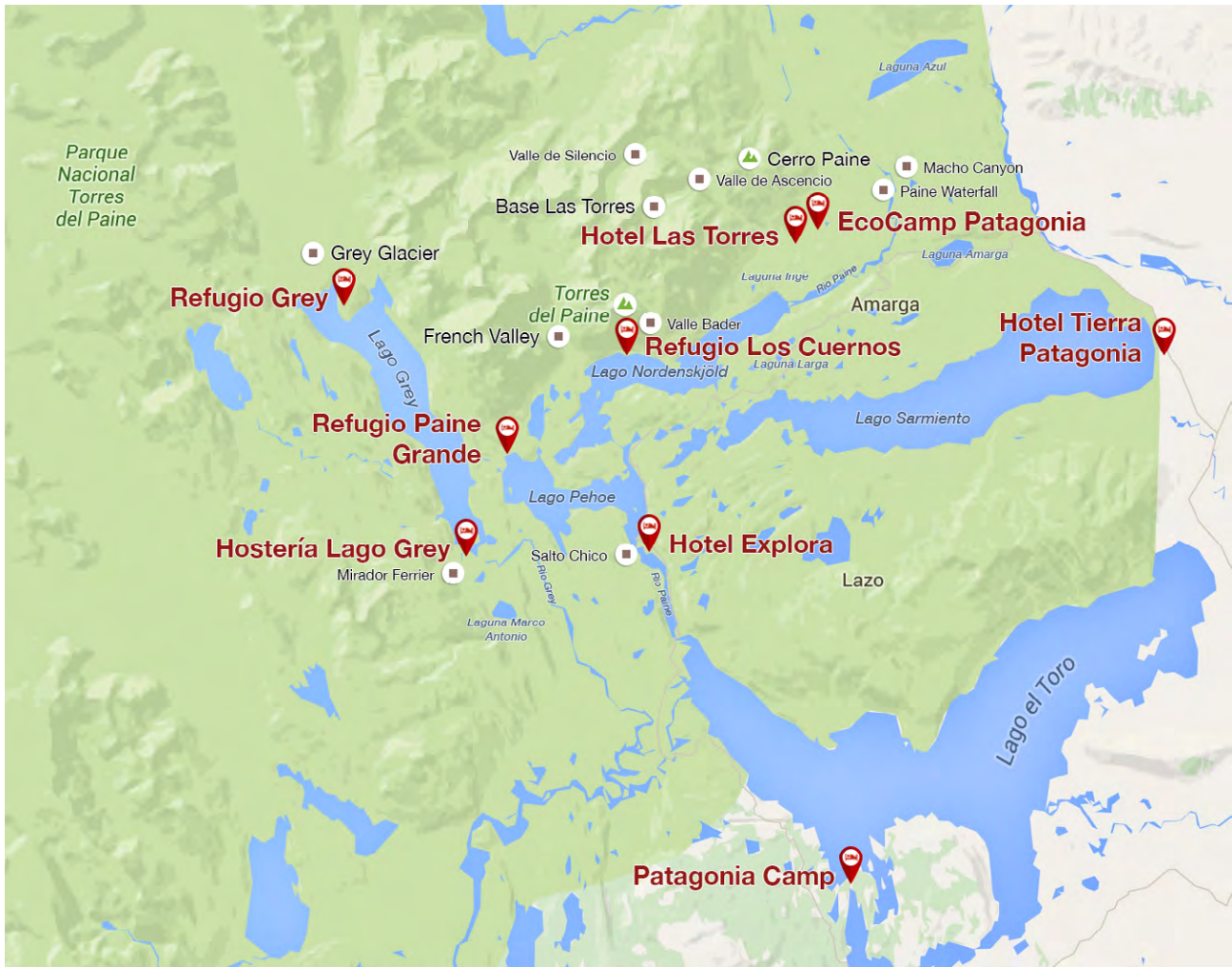
City Map- San Pedro de Atacama



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Map- Torres del Paine National Park



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Map- Easter Island



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2.5 Colombia

Colombia, fast becoming South America's hottest travel destination, not only offers beautiful colonial architecture and Caribbean resorts, but is a country with a rich and fascinating history.

From the beautiful town of Cartagena on the Caribbean coast to Salt Cathedrals and archaeological parks, not forgetting the country's vibrant capital, Bogota, cradled by the Andean mountains, Colombia will not disappoint.

Did you know?

- Colombia was named after the great explorer Christopher Columbus.
- Colombia is the only country in South America with a coastline on the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean.
- Colombia is part of the Ring of Fire, a region of the world subject to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

Visa

A pre-arranged visa is not required to enter Colombia for citizens of the following countries:

- Australia
- United Kingdom
- The United States
- Ireland
- Canada
- New Zealand
- European Union
- South Africa

For other nationalities please visit the website of the relevant consulate.

General Information

Please be careful when withdrawing money from ATMs as muggings do occur. Only take money out during the day and if possible be accompanied by someone you know. Where possible use the ATMs within banks. Be aware of any suspicious looking people nearby and check the ATM for possible criminal interference as card cloning is a problem in Colombia.

Time

GMT -5

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Money

The unit of currency in Colombia is the Colombian Peso (COP).

Please check websites such as www.oanda.com or www.xe.com for up to date exchange rates prior to your departure.

ATMs are widely available in the main cities, but you are advised to only take out money during the day and where possible use the ATMs located within the banks. Most banks make a charge for overseas ATM withdrawals. The maximum withdrawal amount seems to vary between different banks. You should also be aware that ATMs often run out of money at the weekends.

Foreign currency bureaux (*casas de cambio*) are generally the best places to change foreign currency. US dollars and Euros attract more favourable exchange rates than Pounds sterling. Traveller's cheques are accepted in Colombia, the most commonly used being American Express and Citicorp, but most Colombian banks will only change US dollar traveller's cheques. Many hotels will also change foreign cash and traveller's cheques but at lower exchange rates.

Credit cards are accepted in all major shops, hotels and restaurants in major cities but you may be asked to provide some kind of ID (such as a photocopy of your passport) to allow a credit card transaction to go through.

We recommend that you travel with a supply of US dollars, as well as small amounts of local currency as the US dollar is readily accepted across the continent in major department stores, hotels and tourist areas. Use local currency for small purchases.

LDD, Emergency Numbers, Internet

Country code: + 57

National Emergency No. (24 hour general line): 123

Ambulance: 132

Police: 112

Internet cafes are widespread in all major cities in Colombia and smaller towns tend to have at least one internet cafe. Connections tend to be fast and cheap. Wi-Fi is also becoming increasingly common not only in hotels but also in shopping centres, restaurants and cafes with Wi-Fi zones in major cities.

Climate

Colombia, being equatorial, has no real seasons other than wet and dry. The temperature varies little throughout the year due to Colombia's proximity to the Equator, but it does vary with altitude. It is cooler in the upland areas and cold in the mountains and snow is not unknown. Along the coast and in the north, the climate is warm and tropical, with a wet season from May to November.

Bogotá has a spring-like climate, with cool days and crisp nights, and the city has been known to reach temperatures below 0°C, but when the sun is shining it can get quite hot. Coastal cities such

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as Cartagena, Santa Marta and Barranquilla are hot and humid. Mid-altitude cities in the Andes such as Medellín have year round spring weather.

Cuisine

Colombia's cuisine is diverse and dishes and ingredients vary according to the region. Common ingredients include rice, maize and tubers such as cassava. Meat is popular but in coastal areas there is a good variety of fish and seafood often cooked with sauces made with coconut milk. Fresh tropical fruit is also plentiful.

Popular dishes include:

Ajiaco – This is a type of soup made with chicken, potatoes, corn, sour cream, capers and guasca. Guasca is a locally grown herb that gives the soup its distinct flavour.

Arroz con Coco – This is a common side dish of the Caribbean coast of Colombia and is white rice cooked in coconut milk with water, salt and sugar.

Buñuelos – These are ball-shaped fritters made with a dough of white cheese curd, fried until golden brown.

Bandeja Paisa – This is a traditional dish consisting of white rice, red beans, ground beef, plantain, chorizo, morcilla, chicharron, arepa, avocado and a fried egg.

Patacones – Fried green plantains.

For drinks, don't forget to try some famous Colombian coffee, renowned for its high quality. There are also many delicious fruit juices and smoothies on offer.

Language

Spanish is the first language of Colombia and is spoken by over 99% of the population. Other languages include 2 Creole languages, 65 Amerindian languages and the Romani language. In San Andres, Providential and Santa Catalina Islands, English is also stated as an official language.

Colombia does have some local dialects which have different meanings for the same words. There are three main dialects, each one having local dialects within it. For example, the second person plural (you) is 'ustedes' but on the Caribbean coast, 'tú' is used for colloquial situations and 'usted' is more formal. Inland, 'usted/ustedes' is not only used in formal situations, but also between members of the same family and friends. In some other places, 'voseo' is used.

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2.6 Ecuador & the Galapagos

The Galapagos Islands are located west of Ecuador and are renowned for being the home to many fascinating species of wildlife, including lava lizards, red and blue-footed boobies and the giant tortoise. They are one of the world's foremost destinations for wildlife viewing, many of the plant and animal species being found nowhere else in the world.

The urban jewel of mainland Ecuador is Quito, with its wonderful colonial architecture and set amidst the Andean Mountains. Often a stopover point on the way to visit the Galapagos Islands, Quito is worth taking the time to explore.

Beyond Quito, the culture and scenery of the highlands is captivating, where Quichua-speaking communities retain many of their traditional customs in the shadow of snow-capped volcanoes.

The eastern part of Ecuador has some of the highest bio-diversity on the planet contained in the Amazon jungle region.

Did you know?

- Ecuador is the home of the famous Panama hat. These hats were originally made in Ecuador and shipped to the Panama Canal for worldwide distribution, hence the name.
- Volcan Wolf on Isabela is the highest point of the Galapagos at 1,707m above sea level.
- Quito, along with Krakow, were the first World Cultural Heritage Sites declared by UNESCO, in 1978.

Visa

A pre-arranged visa is not required to enter Ecuador or the Galapagos for the following countries:

- Australia
- United Kingdom
- The United States
- Ireland
- Canada
- New Zealand
- European Union
- South Africa

For other nationalities please visit the website of the relevant consulate.

In regard to local taxes, a charge of US\$120 is currently in place for **ALL** tourists travelling to the Galapagos Islands. This is payable in cash on arrival. *Chimu Adventures* is not permitted to collect this on behalf of the authorities and all passengers arriving on the islands must pay this charge.

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General Information

Galapagos Information

Please refer to your Galapagos Islands Fact Sheet for more detailed information on the Galapagos.

Time

Ecuador Mainland: GMT -5

Galapagos Islands: GMT -6

Money

The unit of currency in Ecuador and on the Galapagos Islands is the United States Dollar (USD).

Please check websites such as www.oanda.com or www.xe.com for up to date exchange rates prior to your departure.

Since Ecuador began to use the US dollar as the official currency, foreign exchange bureaux (casas de cambio) have become few and far between. The remaining ones generally open from 9.00am to 6.00pm Monday to Friday and until midday on Saturdays. The only foreign currencies that are easy to change within the country are Euros, Peruvian soles and Colombian nuevos soles.

Banks only open from 9.00am until 1 or 1.30pm Monday to Friday and are closed at weekends.

ATMs are plentiful in major cities such as Quito or Guayaquil and in large towns such as Otavalo, Baños and Cuenca. They are less common in smaller towns and more remote parts of the country. The ATMs generally only recognise four digit pins. Cards that are most widely accepted are Visa and MasterCard with a daily withdrawal limit of US\$200 per day.

LDD, Emergency Numbers, Internet

Country code: + 593

Ambulance: 131

Police: 101

Police (Quito): 911

Police (Guayaquil, Cuenca, Loja): 112

Internet cafes are still to be found throughout Ecuador although they are not as common as they used to be. Wi-Fi is becoming increasingly common in many hotels and guesthouses, shopping malls, airports and some restaurants. Please be aware that Wi-Fi is not always free.

Climate

Ecuador has two main seasons – the rainy season and the dry season – but this varies greatly due to factors such as altitude and proximity to the coast. Even during the rainy season, most days are sunny until the afternoon.

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In the highlands, the dry season runs from June until the end of September. In the Amazon basin, it rains during most months, but August and December to March are usually the driest.

On the coast, the wet season (January to May) sees sunny days with showers everyday – usually in the afternoon. This is in fact the best beach weather as during the dry season (June to December) the weather is cooler and usually overcast.

The Galapagos Islands have a subtropical and dry climate with comfortable temperatures year-round. The warmest months are usually from December to June (high season) and this is the most recommended time to visit. It is generally warmer and sunnier during this time with higher ocean temperatures (of up to 24°C). It can be hot and humid from January to March. From July to November (low season) it is generally not as warm and you can expect cool winds that occasionally bring with them a light misty drizzle called "garúa". From June, ocean temperatures can dip to as low as 15°C. The average year-round temperature is 24°C (76°F).

Cuisine

Ecuadorian cuisine is diverse and regional. The potato plays an important role in many Ecuadorian dishes, especially in the Andes and there are over 200 varieties of potato found in Ecuador. In the mountainous areas meat (beef, pork, chicken and guinea pig) is served with rice, corn and potatoes. In the southern mountainous regions, a typical dish is a soup prepared from green bananas and roasted pork. In the Amazon the dietary staple is the yucca or cassava, a starchy root vegetable that is peeled and then boiled or fried and used in a variety of dishes. In coastal regions shellfish, shrimp and various types of fish are important ingredients for many dishes.

Pan de yucca (a light bread filled with cheese) is found throughout Ecuador and freshly squeezed fruit juices are also common.

A typical lunch (almuerzo) consists of soup and then chunks of grilled meat served on rice and accompanied by a pulse-based sauce and fried plantain.

Some typical Ecuadorian dishes include:

Patacones – Green plantains sliced and fried twice.

Llapingachos – Potato cakes stuffed with cheese, fried and served with a peanut sauce.

Seco de chivo– Goat stew generally served with rice and fried plantain.

The most popular national alcohol is *aguardiente*, a spirit made from sugar cane. *Canelazo* is a drink made from *aguardiente*.

Language

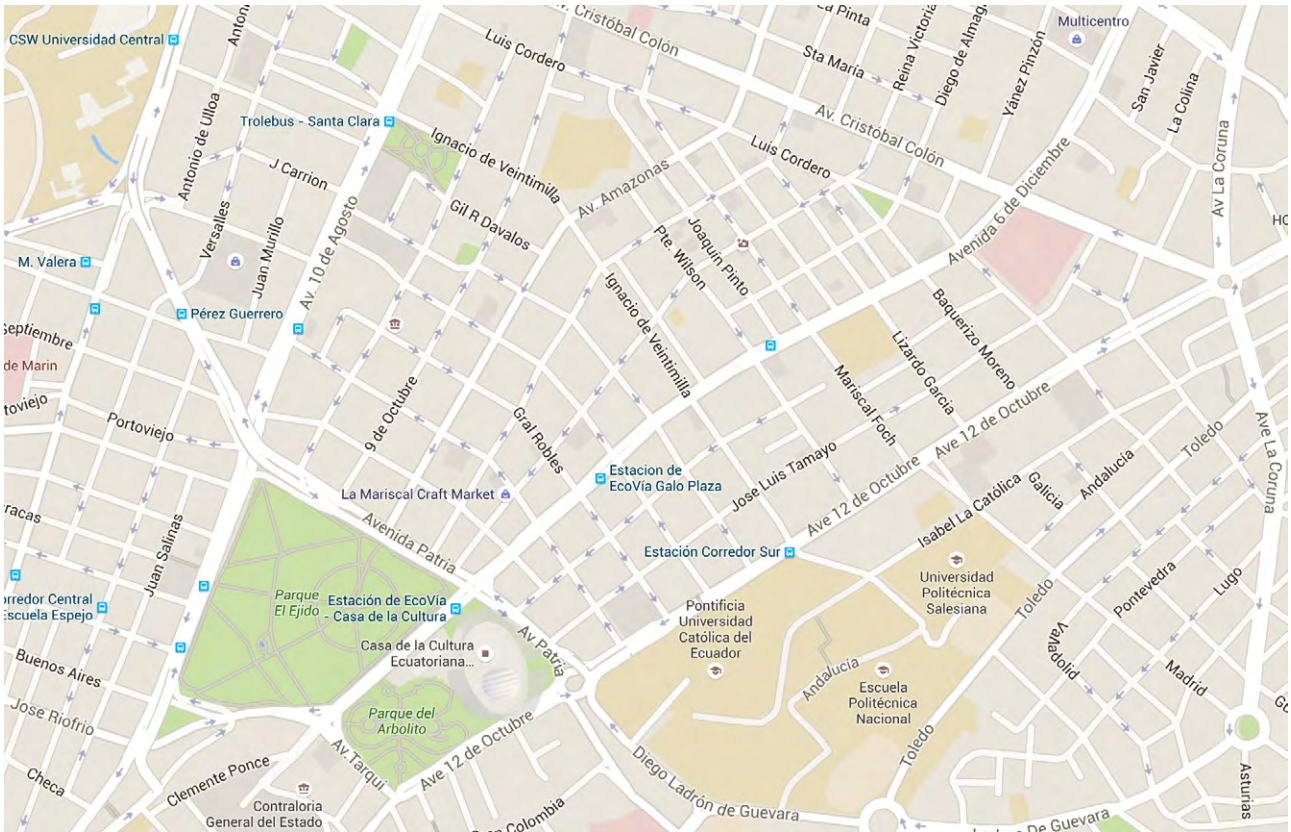
Spanish is the most widely spoken language in Ecuador and is in fact the official language but there are three regional variations – Equatorial Pacific Spanish, Andean Spanish and Amazonian Spanish. They are, however, all very similar. The Indian population speaks Quechua.

Ecuador is in fact one of the best places in Latin America to learn Spanish as Ecuadorian Spanish is spoken slowly and clearly.

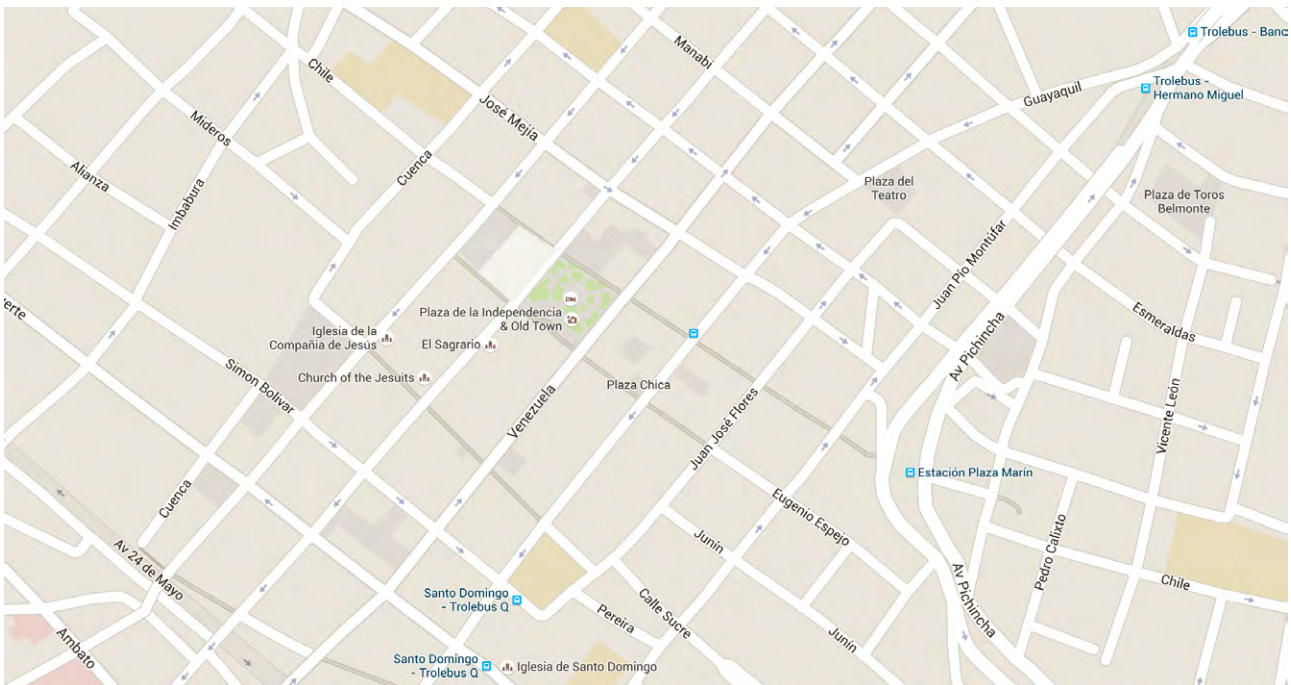
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City Map- Quito



City Map- Quito Old City



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2.7 Peru

Scenically awe-inspiring, Peru is undoubtedly one of the highlights of South America. It is known as the "Egypt of South America" due to the large number of historical sites and ruins from ancient cultures that span from the Norte Chico to the Inca Empire. Most famous of all is of course Machu Picchu, the Lost City of the Incas. Then there is the vast ancient city of Chan Chan, the largest pre-Columbian ruins in the Americas. Also fascinating and still an unsolved mystery are the Nazca lines etched into the desert. There are colourful markets such as Pisac to explore and of course Lake Titicaca, the highest navigable lake in the world and the largest lake in South America. The lake is home to the Uros people who have lived on the lake for centuries, making their homes out of the totora reeds that grow in the lake. For wildlife viewing there is the Amazon rainforest, the Ballestas Islands and the Colca Canyon where the majestic Andean condors soar.

Did you know?

- The ultimate source of the Amazon River is in Peru at 5,316 metres above sea level.
- Lima is the 2nd largest capital to be located in the desert (after Cairo).
- Peru is famous for the spirit Pisco and the cocktail Pisco Sour.

Visa

A pre-arranged visa is not required to enter Peru for citizens of the following countries:

- Australia
- United Kingdom
- The United States
- Ireland
- Canada
- New Zealand
- European Union
- South Africa

For other nationalities please visit the website of the relevant consulate.

General Information

Vehicle Access in Cusco

Please note that large buses are not allowed into the centre of Cusco which may result in vehicle changes being necessary on your tour.

Visiting Machu Picchu

Machu Picchu is one of South America's major tourist attractions and in 2007 it was given the title of one of the new Seven Wonders of the World. It was the American explorer and politician, Hiram Bingham who rediscovered Machu Picchu, the Lost City of the Incas in 1911 and brought its attention to the rest of the world.

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Before visiting Machu Picchu you are advised to spend a few days acclimatising in Cusco, the legendary capital of the Inca Empire at 3,400m. You then have the option to trek all or part of the way to Machu Picchu, or alternatively take a train. There are several options for trekking to the ruins. The Inca trail is the most popular option as it is the only trek in the area that enters the ruins through the famous "Sun Gate". This trek has options for a 4-day or shorter 2-day hike and must be booked far in advance to guarantee availability. There are 500 permits issued per day for the trek and once these have been sold out, they do not come back on sale. Other alternative treks include the 4-day 'Lares Trek' or the 5-day 'Salkantay Trek' and although they do not arrive into Machu Picchu via the Sun Gate they are still great options for trekking in the area. For both of these alternative treks you would catch the train for the final part of the journey to the ruins.

On a day trip visiting Machu Picchu from Cusco, you will be met early in the morning and transferred from your hotel to Poroy railway station to board the train towards Machu Picchu. After an impressive train ride through mountain valleys, cloud forest and high rainforest (approx. 3-4 hours) you reach the town of Aguas Calientes from where it is a short bus ride to this wonder of the world. You will have a guided tour of the site, as well as some free time to appreciate this amazing place.

For the energetic, there is the chance to climb the emblematic Huayna Picchu (Little Mountain) at an additional charge. This must also be booked in advance – see notes below.

At the end of the day you descend by bus to the small town of Aguas Calientes to take the train back to Cusco or you have the option to overnight there.

Please note: Machu Picchu is **open daily** from **7.00am to 5.30pm**. There are no time limits for your visit to the ruins but if you are going back to Cusco the same day you will need to leave in time to pick up your train. Usually the train departure from Aguas Calientes to Cusco is at 6.45pm and it is necessary to get down to Aguas Calientes at least one hour before the train leaves. Also be aware that toilets (small charge) and food stalls are outside the check point. You can re-enter the sanctuary the same day but bringing food and drinks with you inside the sanctuary is also permitted and recommended by us.

Also note: There is now an entry fee for everyone wanting to trek up **Huayna Picchu - \$25** when booked at same time as the entrance to Machu Picchu on a day trip, Lares or Salkantay Trek (if booked after the initial booking it increases to **\$70**). If trekking the classic Inca Trail the additional cost is **\$83** if not booked in conjunction with the Inca Trail. Please let us know at the time of booking if you would like to hike this mountain. Spaces are extremely limited and first come - first served applies!

Please refer to your Inca Trail, Lares Trek or Salkantay Trek information sheet for more detailed information.

Luggage Restrictions on Trains to Machu Picchu

Please note: If you are taking the train to Machu Picchu, you are only allowed to take one carry-on bag with you. Your bag must weigh no more than 5 kgs and must measure no more than 157 linear cms (height + length + width)

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Excess luggage can be stored at your hotel in Cusco. If you are transferring directly to the Sacred Valley from Cusco Airport, there are 2 options for excess luggage.

1. After checking into your hotel in the Sacred Valley, the driver will transfer your excess luggage to Cusco for safe storage either at your Cusco hotel or at Chimu's office.
2. Excess luggage may be stored at your hotel in the Sacred Valley. The driver will make a stop to collect the luggage on the way back from Ollantaytambo to Cusco.

Additional costs will apply for either option – please check with your travel consultant.

Time

GMT -5

Money

The unit of currency in Peru is the Peruvian Nuevo Sol (PEN).

Please check websites such as www.oanda.com or www.xe.com for up to date exchange rates prior to your departure.

ATMs are abundant in all major cities and so withdrawing money is not a problem within the country. ATMs generally allow you to withdraw cash in either Peruvian Soles or US dollars and instructions can be accessed in Spanish as well as in English. The US dollar is widely accepted in many stores throughout the country and prices are often given in both US dollars and Soles.

Major currencies can be exchanged in a variety of places such as banks, foreign exchange bureaux (casas de cambio) and hotels, although the rate in hotels is generally lower. The rate depends on the amount of money to be exchanged and can often be higher mid-week rather than at weekends. Foreign exchange bureaux tend to have longer opening hours than banks and are generally faster. Most banks are closed on Saturday afternoons from 1.00pm and on Sundays.

Do not accept torn money as it is likely not be accepted by Peruvians. You are advised not to change money on the street as counterfeits are a problem.

Debit and credit cards are also widely accepted in Peru and can often be used in major hotels, restaurants and shops.

LDD, Emergency Numbers, Internet

Country code: + 51

Ambulance: 117

Police: 105

Most regions of Peru have excellent internet connections and internet cafes are common, even in smaller rural villages and charge reasonable prices. Many hotels and hostels now offer Wi-Fi as do many cafes and restaurants.

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Climate

The weather and climate in Peru varies greatly depending on the region. Along the Pacific coast, including Lima, there is a very temperate climate. The average temperature is around 24°C (75°F), but can get as high as 30°C (86°F) but generally no lower than 15°C (59°F) in the summer.

In the high Andean climates of the areas around Cusco and Lake Titicaca the climate is colder with rainy summers and dry winters. Here the average temperature is around 12°C and although it can get quite warm during the day, the temperature at night drops to below freezing regularly.

Cuisine

Peruvian cuisine is very diverse with regions and some cities even having their own specialities depending on geography and climate that in turn dictates available ingredients. Today Peruvian cuisine combines pre-Inca and Inca staples and food with the cuisines that the immigrants from Europe, Africa and Asia brought with them. This has resulted in a unique fusion of foods and flavours.

The four traditional staples of Peruvian cuisine are corn, potatoes and other tubers, Amaranthaceae (quinoa, kañiwa and kiwicha) and legumes (beans and lupins). The Spanish introduced rice, wheat and meats (beef, pork and chicken).

Over recent years, some traditional foods such as quinoa, kiwicha and chilli peppers have increased in popularity leading to a revival of interest in native Peruvian foods and culinary techniques. Gastronomists around the world now rate Peruvian cuisine as the best cuisine in Latin America.

If you have the opportunity, we recommend that you sample some Peruvian food prior to departure so you have a better idea of some of the native dishes when you arrive in Peru. In Sydney we recommend "La Cocina Peruana" and in London we recommend "La Fina Estampa" or "Titos" at London Bridge.

The Peruvian diet is mainly based on chicken, beef and seafood and can sometimes be quite spicy. Regional dishes vary, and aji (chilli) is often used.

Typical dishes include:

Lomo Saltado (Saltadito) – Stir fried sliced beef, tomatoes, onion, garlic and cumin, fried French cut potatoes and accompanied with rice.

Aji de Gallina – Chicken strips in a yellow chilli sauce served with rice.

Empanadas – Pastry cases filled with chicken, beef or cheese.

Pollo a la Brasa – Roasted marinated chicken.

Ceviche – Raw fish marinated in lime juice with chilli and onion.

Cuy – Guinea pig, a highland dish – usually roasted or barbecued.

Papa a la huancaína (Huancayo-style potatoes) – Sliced boiled potatoes, served on a bed of lettuce with a slightly spicy cheese sauce with olives.

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Avoid drinking tap water at all times. Please note that many fruit juices may be mixed with unboiled water and some fruit may be washed in it.

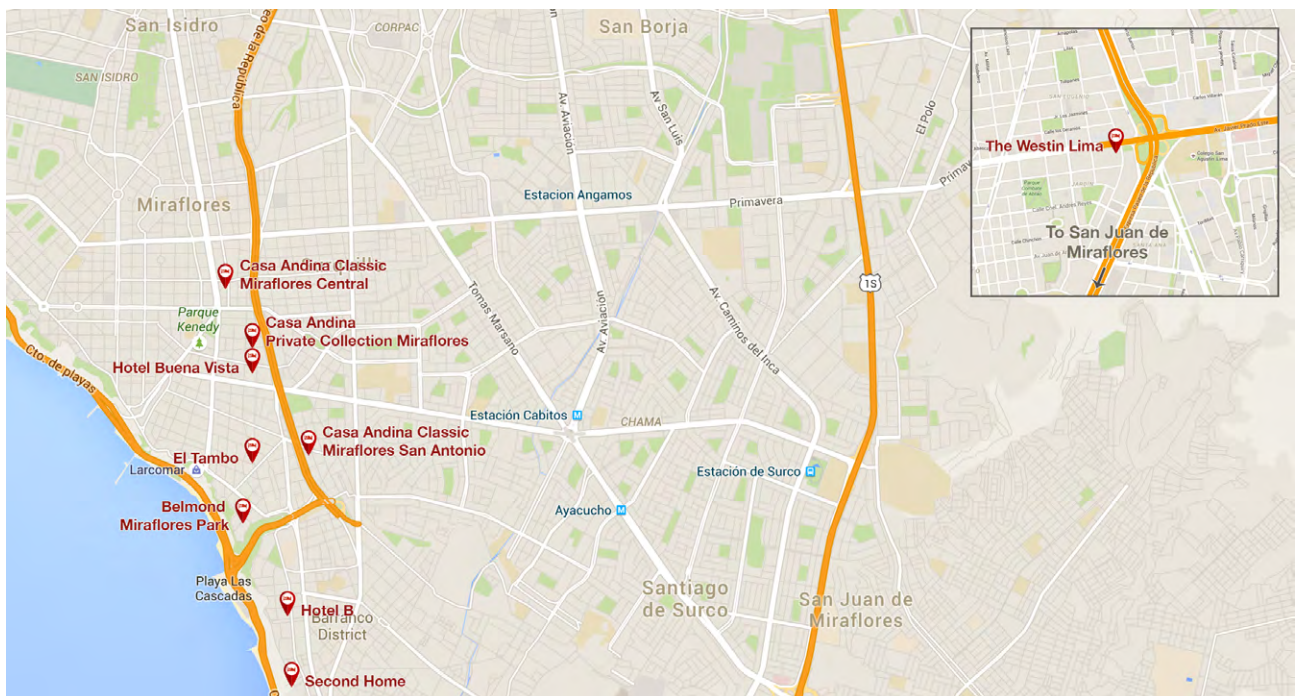
For alcoholic beverages, the traditional spirit of Peru is *Pisco*, a grape brandy. The famous *Pisco Sour* cocktail is made from *Pisco*, egg white, bitters and lime juice. Some regional beers are also worth trying, including *Cusqueña* and *Pilsen Callao*.

Language

Spanish is the official language of Peru but there are many indigenous languages as well including Quechua and Aymara.

The Spanish spoken in Peru has some regional variations in pronunciation, accent and in some expressions. The variations correspond with the geographical regions of coast, rainforest and mountains.

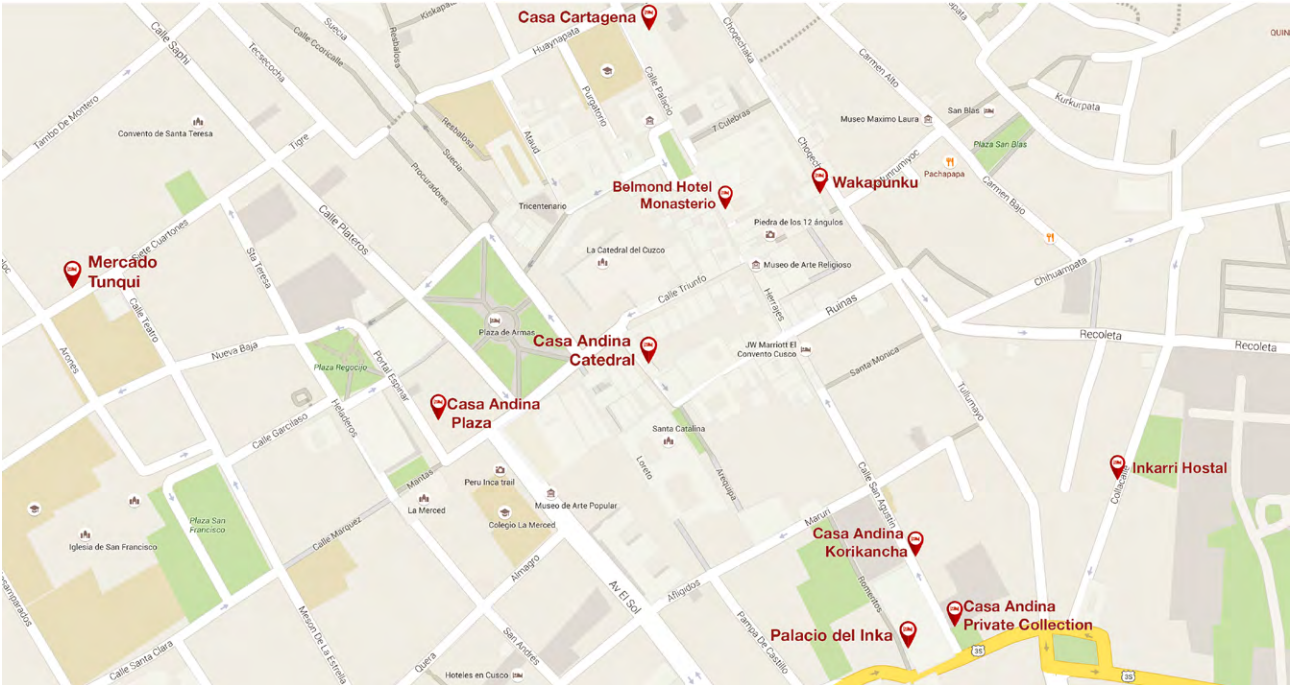
City Map- Lima



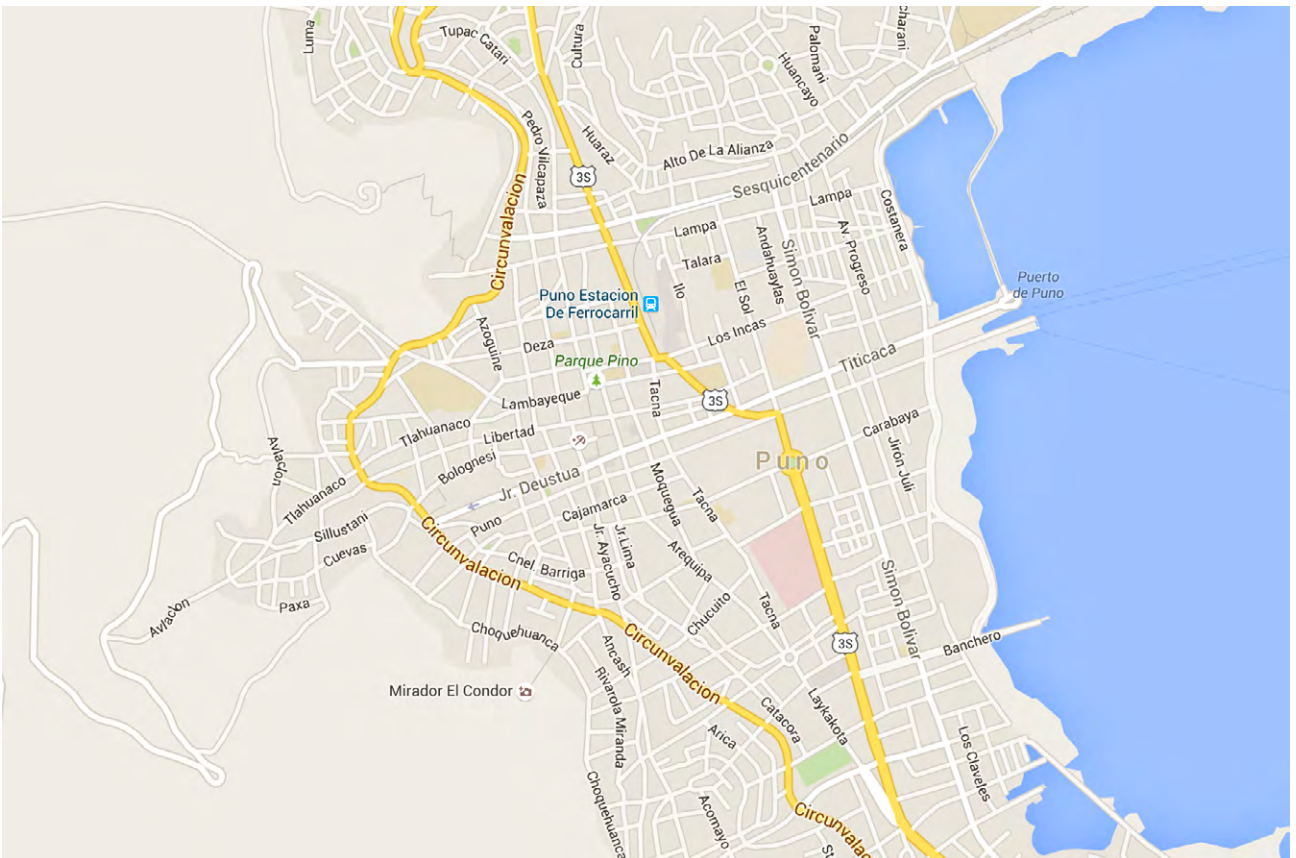
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City Map- Cusco



City Map- Puno



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2.8 The Guianas

The Guianas are rich in cultural heritage with a deep indigenous culture fused with influences from around the world. Add to that their biodiversity and unparalleled wildlife-viewing opportunities and you have three exciting destinations to explore.

Guyana offers the lively capital of Georgetown, Kaieteur Falls (the largest single-drop waterfall in the world) and Iwokrama Rainforest Reserve with its canopy walkway and opportunities to see giant river otters, turtles, anteaters, the hoatzin (national bird) and maybe even the elusive jaguar.

French Guiana offers its colourful capital Cayenne rich in French colonial architecture, the Space Centre at Kourou, the vibrant Sunday market in the Laos Hmong village of Cacao and of course the infamous prison islands of Îles du Salut.

In **Suriname**, the capital Paramaribo is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and not to be missed. Also worthwhile visiting is the Jewish settlement of Jodensavanne, the former plantations taking you back to colonial times and of course the UNESCO Central Suriname Nature Reserve home to a vast array of flora and fauna.

Did you know?

- Cayenne Pepper is named after Cayenne, the capital of French Guiana.
- Kaieteur Falls in Guyana is the largest single-drop waterfall by volume in the world.
- Suriname is the only country in South America where Dutch is the official language.

Visa

Guyana

A pre-arranged visa is not required to enter Guyana for citizens of the following countries.

- Australia
- United Kingdom
- The United States
- Ireland
- Canada
- New Zealand
- European Union
- South Africa

A 90-day visa is issued on arrival.

For other nationalities please visit the website of the relevant consulate.

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French Guiana

A pre-arranged visa is not required to enter French Guiana for citizens of the following countries.

- Australia
- United Kingdom
- The United States
- Ireland
- Canada
- New Zealand
- European Union

For other nationalities please visit the website of the relevant consulate.

Suriname

A pre-arranged visa is not required to enter Suriname for citizens of the following countries.

- United Kingdom
- The United States
- Ireland
- Canada
- European Union

Visas can be obtained at the point of entry at a cost of US\$ 25 or Euro 20.

A pre-arranged visa is required to enter Suriname for citizens of the following countries:

- Australia
- New Zealand
- South Africa

Please check with your local embassy or consulate for visa regulations and requirements.

For other nationalities please visit the website of the relevant consulate.

Time

French Guiana: GMT -3

Guyana: GMT -3

Suriname: GMT -3

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Money

The unit of currency in Guyana is the Guyana Dollar (GYD); in French Guiana is the Euro (EUR) and in Suriname is the Suriname Dollar (SRD).

Please check websites such as www.oanda.com or www.xe.com for up to date exchange rates prior to your departure.

Guyana: The Guyana dollar is a stable currency linked to the US dollar, which is also widely accepted. Some places will also accept Euros and British pounds. Some higher-end hotels and restaurants will accept credit cards but there is usually a 5% service fee. Some ATMs will accept foreign cards but these are not widespread and mainly limited to Georgetown. Foreign currency can be exchanged at banks and foreign exchange bureaux as well as at some hotels for a small commission.

French Guiana: French Guiana is one of the most expensive countries in South America, partly because it uses the Euro and partly because many goods are imported from France. The only foreign exchange bureaux for currency exchange are in Cayenne but there are ATMs in most mid-sized and large towns where you can get cash advances using Visa or MasterCard. Credit cards are widely accepted.

Suriname: Although the official unit of currency is the Suriname dollar some businesses quote prices in Euros and/or US dollars. Most banks will exchange major foreign currencies but there are also ATMs that accept foreign cards. Generally only large hotels and travel agencies accept credit cards and a service fee will be charged.

LDD, Emergency Numbers, Internet

Country codes: French Guiana: + 594

Guyana: + 592

Suriname: + 597

Emergency Numbers: French Guiana: Police 112 or 17, Medical 112 or 15

Guyana: Police 911, Medical 913

Suriname: Police 115, Medical 113

In Guyana, there are internet cafes in Georgetown and free Wi-Fi is widely available.

In French Guiana there are internet cafes in Cayenne, Kourou and Saint Laurent with libraries and some hotels also providing internet access.

In Suriname there are affordable internet cafes in the main cities, but many guesthouses and hotels and some cafes offer free Wi-Fi.

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Climate

Guyana has a tropical climate and is hot and humid throughout the year. Average daytime temperatures are 28°C with temperatures seldom rising above 34°C during the day or falling below 25°C at night. There are two wet and two dry seasons. The first wet season, from mid-November to mid-January is typified by long heavy showers. The second wet season from May until mid-August has less intense regular downfalls. September and October are usually the driest months.

French Guiana is also tropical with a wet and a dry season and a constant equatorial climate. The average temperature hovers around 27°C throughout the year. The rainy season starts in late November/early December and runs through to July, with May having the highest monthly rainfall and March usually the lowest.

Suriname has a tropical climate and is warm and humid year round. There are two wet and two dry seasons, but there is often rain during the dry season and there may be little or no rain in the wet season! The average annual temperature is 27°C and maximum temperatures rarely rise above 32°C.

Cuisine

Guyana: The food in Guyana is varied and includes curries and roti, Guyanese style chow mein, Peppercot (an Amerindian meat stew) and cassava bread. The national dish is the one pot meal and the most popular drink is dark rum.

French Guiana: The cuisine of French Guiana is again diverse and can be quite spicy. A traditional dish is *bouillon d'ourou* prepared with smoked fish and flavoured with aurora fruit. *Pimentade* is fish with a tomato sauce, spiced and seasoned with lemon.

Suriname: Surinamese cuisine includes roti, nasi goreng, the casserole pom and chicken masala.

Language

Guyana is the only English speaking country in South America. Although English is the official language, most of the population speak Guyanese Creole.

French Guiana has French as the official language although a number of other languages are spoken including Creole, Amerindian languages, Maroon dialects and Hmong Njua.

Suriname uses Dutch as the official language and it is spoken by the majority of the population. Sranang Tongo, a local Creole language was suppressed by the Dutch for many years but is now also widely used.

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2.9 Uruguay

Uruguay offers cosmopolitan city life, coastal surf and beaches, colonial towns, traditional *estancias* (ranches), national parks, wetlands and hot thermal springs. The UNESCO town of Colonia del Sacramento is a highlight of Uruguay – one of the oldest cities in the country and full of colonial charm. The capital Montevideo is historic yet cosmopolitan.

Did you know?

- Montevideo is the southernmost capital city in the Americas.
- Cows outnumber people in Uruguay by 3 to 1.
- The first Football World Cup took place in Uruguay in 1930.

Visa

A pre-arranged visa is not required to enter Uruguay for citizens of the following countries.

- Australia
- United Kingdom
- The United States
- Ireland
- Canada
- New Zealand
- European Union
- South Africa

For other nationalities please visit the website of the relevant consulate.

Time

GMT -3

Money

The unit of currency in Uruguay is the Uruguayan Peso (UYU).

Please check websites such as www.oanda.com or www.xe.com for up to date exchange rates prior to your departure.

US dollars are commonly accepted in major tourist areas but the exchange rates can sometimes be low and you are better off paying in pesos. In more rural areas US dollars are of limited use. Unlike Argentina, Uruguay has no black or 'blue' market offering higher exchange rates for US and European banknotes.

Foreign currencies can be exchanged at banks or at foreign exchange bureaux (*casas de cambio*)

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that are widespread in Montevideo, Colonia and coastal tourist resorts. Some hotels will also provide money exchange services, but the rates are very much lower than at banks and foreign exchange bureaux.

ATMs (*cajero automático*) are plentiful in cities and some smaller towns and accept foreign issued cards such as Visa, MasterCard and Maestro. Debit cards can be used for money withdrawal and credit cards for cash advances.

Credit cards are widely accepted in major cities and tourist destinations including Montevideo, Punta del Este and Colonia del Sacramento. The most commonly accepted credit cards are Visa and MasterCard.

Banks only open in the afternoon, generally from 1.00pm to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

LDD, Emergency Numbers, Internet

Country code: + 598

Ambulance: 105

Police: 911

Wi-Fi zones and internet cafes are common in cities and larger towns and Wi-Fi is becoming increasingly available in many hotels.

Climate

Montevideo and Colonia have pleasant year round temperate climates with no wet season, the annual rainfall being spread throughout the year. The climate in coastal areas such as Punta del Este is relatively mild with summer temperatures ranging from 25 to 32°C, and winter temperatures never falling below zero. Along the Rio Uruguay, the summer climate is generally hot and humid, with temperatures reaching as high as 36°C. The interior hill country tends to be slightly cooler with average temperatures of 17°C and summer temperatures averaging a maximum of 21 to 26°C.

Cuisine

The cuisine of Uruguay has mainly Spanish but also Italian influences. Beef is fundamental to the cuisine with *asado*, a type of barbecued beef being the national dish. The "chivito" is the most popular food item - a thick steak sandwich with ham, bacon, hard-boiled egg, cheese and tomatoes or olives for seasoning. The national drink is mate, a herbal tea.

Other typical dishes include:

Choripán - Grilled chorizo inside a small baguette-style bread.

Empanada - Pastry commonly filled with ground beef (mince) or cheese.

Milanesa Rellena - Beef or chicken filled with cheese and ham, crumbed and fried.

Pancho - The Uruguayan "hot dog" in a bun (called *Pan de Viena*), covered in ketchup, mayonnaise or sometimes mustard.

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Pastel de Carne –Ground beef (mince), green peppers and eggs covered in mashed potatoes.

Language

Spanish is the first language of Uruguay with Portunal or Brasifero, a mixture of Portuguese and Spanish being used on the Brazil border. Uruguayan Spanish differs slightly to Spanish in other Latin American countries and has a few modifications due to the high numbers of Italian immigrants.

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2.10 Venezuela

Venezuela is a country of immense variety. It offers a vast stretch of Caribbean coastline, Andean peaks, wetlands teeming with wildlife, the Amazon, table-top mountains known as tepuis and the world's highest waterfall, the Angel Falls, set in the beautiful Canaima National Park. The Gran Sabana offers beautiful waterfalls and tepuis, the most famous of which is Mt Roraima. The Orinoco Delta with its wetlands and waterways is an ideal place for wildlife spotting as is Los Llanos, a vast seasonally flooded savannah that rivals the Pantanal of Brazil for biodiversity. For a Caribbean experience there is Los Roques National Park, a chain of islands and coral reefs.

Did you know?

- Venezuela is home to the world's highest waterfall, Angel Falls.
- Venezuela is the fifth largest exporter of oil in the world.
- Venezuela is home to the second longest river in South America, the Orinoco.

Visa

A pre-arranged visa is not required to enter Venezuela for citizens of the following countries:

- Australia
- United Kingdom
- The United States
- Ireland
- Canada
- New Zealand
- European Union
- South Africa

For other nationalities please visit the website of the relevant consulate.

General Information

Identification

Always carry a copy of your passport and Venezuela entry stamp with you, wherever you go.

Cash withdrawals from ATMs

Be careful when withdrawing money from ATMs as muggings do occur. Only take money out during the day and if possible be accompanied by someone you know. Where possible use the machines within banks. Be aware of any suspicious looking people nearby and check the ATM for possible criminal interference as card cloning is a problem in Venezuela.

Public Toilets

There are no self-contained public toilets in Venezuela, so you are advised to use the toilets of

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establishments such as restaurants, hotels, museums, shopping malls and bus terminals. Always carry your own toilet paper with you and always throw used toilet paper into the wastebasket provided. Some public restrooms charge a small fee and this generally includes an allotment of paper.

Time

GMT -4

Money

The unit of currency in Venezuela is the Bolivar (VEF).

Please check websites such as www.oanda.com or www.xe.com for up to date exchange rates prior to your departure.

There are now strict currency controls in place in Venezuela. Foreign exchange bureaux will exchange US dollars and US dollar traveller's cheques for Bolivars. Please ensure that you only use official currency exchange bureaux. Do not use the black market as you are at risk of being given counterfeit local currency. You cannot exchange Bolivars to any other currency outside of Venezuela.

Credit cards are accepted in most towns and all major cities. ATMs are also plentiful in main towns and cities but please take care when using debit or credit cards as there is a serious problem with credit card fraud and card cloning.

We recommend that you travel with a supply of US dollars, as well as small amounts of local currency as the US dollar is readily accepted in major hotels and tourist areas. Use local currency for small purchases.

LDD, Emergency Numbers, Internet

Country code: + 58

Medical: 171

Police: 171

Internet cafes are widespread throughout Venezuela being found in most towns and all cities. Wi-Fi is becoming increasingly common in many hotels – certainly larger hotels and posadas.

Climate

Venezuela is an equatorial country, so there are no real seasons other than wet and dry. The dry season runs from November to April and the wet from May to October. The Caribbean Coast is generally dry all of the year and the capital, Caracas has an 'everlasting spring' climate.

Cuisine

Venezuela's cuisine varies greatly from one region to another. It is tropical and Andean with

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European influences. Staple foods include corn, rice, plantain, yams, beans and several meats with seafood along the coast.

Typical dishes include:

Arepa – The most famous Venezuelan dish, a cornmeal cake that is grilled, baked or fried, split open and filled with cheese and meats.

Cachapa – A thick pancake made from a puree of corn, sugar, salt and oil, folded over and filled with soft white cheese.

Cachitos de Jamon – Similar to a croissant filled with chopped ham and/or cheese.

Pabellon Criollo – The national dish consisting of shredded beef and black beans served on a bed of white rice, accompanied by a fried egg or fried plantain slices.

We recommend that you drink bottled water and avoid tap water at all times.

Language

Spanish is the first language of Venezuela but there are also numerous indigenous dialects including Wayuu, Warao and Pemón.

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2.11 Central America and Mexico

The Central America and Mexico region is a fascinating area full of vibrant cities, charming colonial towns, historic ruins and amazing scenery. There is so much to see and do here and the locals are well known for welcoming visitors with open arms.

Mexico is the largest of these countries and contains the busy metropolis of Mexico City with its stunning architecture and rich Spanish history. It is home to many historic Mayan and Aztec sites including Uxmal, Palenque, Teotihuacan and Chichen Itza. Mexico's stunning coastline runs along both the Caribbean and Pacific Oceans, with Playa del Carmen and Tulum being two of the real gems.

Of course, the rest of Central America isn't to be forgotten, with many wonderful attractions such as Tikal and Antigua in Guatemala, spectacular volcanoes in Nicaragua, the rainforest of Tortuguera National Park in Costa Rica, the tropical paradise of the San Blas islands in Panama and much, much more!

Did you know?

- Mexico introduced chocolate to the world thanks to the ancient civilization of the Mayans.
- More than 25% of Costa Rica's land is dedicated to national parks, reserves and wildlife refuges.
- The Panama Canal in Panama is the largest man-made waterway in the world and allows ships to pass from the West Coast of the USA to the East Coast.

Visa

A pre-arranged visa is not required to enter Mexico or any country in Central America for citizens of the following countries:

- Australia
- United Kingdom
- The United States
- Ireland
- Canada
- New Zealand
- European Union
- South Africa

For other nationalities, please visit the website of the relevant consulate.

Nicaragua – On arrival into Nicaragua you will be issued with a Tourist card, the cost of which is US\$10.

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General Information

Cash Withdrawals from ATMs

Be aware of your surroundings when withdrawing cash from ATMs in Mexico. In Mexico City assaults on people who have just used an ATM are not unknown, so try only to withdraw money during the day. Most ATMs in Mexico are in a small lobby that you can only access with your card but there may be someone waiting for you once you leave the lobby.

Time

	GMT
Mexico	-6 / -5
Belize	-6
Guatemala	-6
Honduras	-6
Nicaragua	-6
Costa Rica	-6
Panama	-5

Money

The units of currency are as follows:

	Currency	Abbreviation
Mexico	Pesos	MXP
Belize	Belize Dollar	BZD
Guatemala	Quetzal	GTQ
Honduras	Lempira	HNL
Nicaragua	Cordoba Oro	NIO
Costa Rica	Colon	CRC
Panama	US\$/Balboa	PAB

Please check websites such as www.oanda.com or www.xe.com for up to date exchange rates prior to your departure.

Mexico

Debit and credit cards are widespread in Mexico and are accepted at most larger hotels, shops and restaurants. Visa, MasterCard and American Express are the most widely accepted. ATMs (cajero automático) are also widespread but it is also a good idea to carry some cash as a backup. Foreign currencies can be exchanged at banks and foreign exchange bureaux (casas de cambio) and many

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hotels. US dollars cash is the most easily exchanged but Euros, Pounds sterling and Canadian dollars are readily exchangeable as well. Traveller's cheques can generally also be exchanged at banks and cambios but the process can be more time-consuming than changing cash.

Belize

US dollars are widely accepted throughout Belize and if you carry these there is really no need to exchange them for the local currency. Change will be given in either US dollars or Belize dollars. Banking hours vary, but are typically Monday to Thursday 8.00am to 2.00pm and Friday 8.00am to 4.00pm. All the banks have ATMs across the country and most accept foreign cards. Visa and MasterCard are the most widely accepted credit cards.

Guatemala

ATMs (cajero automático) are easy to find in Guatemalan cities with screens on most offering you a choice of Spanish or English instructions. Try to withdraw cash midweek as ATMs are often empty by the weekend. Most Guatemalan ATMs only accept 4 digit PINs. As in most Latin American countries it is best to use ATMs in daylight hours and where possible choose an ATM inside a bank.

It is very hard to find Quetzals, the local currency, outside of Guatemala and if you do the exchange rate will be unfavourable. Money-changers are plentiful in Guatemala but you are safer changing foreign currency at a bank to avoid any scams. US dollars are also accepted as payment by many hotels, restaurants and shops, but the exchange rate may be lower than at the bank.

Visa is the most widely accepted credit card in Guatemala, followed by MasterCard and American Express with credit cards being accepted in high-end restaurants, hotels and stores, although stores sometimes charge a small surcharge for using credit cards.

Honduras

Apart from on the Bay Islands, US dollars are not generally accepted and so you will need a supply of the local currency, lempiras, Although informal money changers operate in the main tourist destinations, scams are not unknown and so you are advised to use banks or ATMs.

ATMs (cajero automático) are plentiful in the larger cities such as Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, La Ceiba, Comayagua and Santa Rosa de Copán as well as in the main important tourist destinations such as Copán Ruinas and Roatan. ATMs can be found at banks, large shopping malls, international airports and fuel stations.

Visa and MasterCard are the most widely accepted credit cards but can generally only be used in larger hotels and restaurants.

Nicaragua

US dollars are accepted almost everywhere in Nicaragua, but they must be in pristine condition without even the slightest mark or tear. The local currency of córdobas is usually easier to use, particularly at smaller businesses and in more remote areas and it is best to have a supply of smaller bills.

Foreign currency can be exchanged in hotels, foreign exchange bureaux (casas de cambio) and at

some banks as well as at Managua International Airport. It is difficult to change traveller's cheques outside Managua.

ATMs (*cajero automático*) are becoming increasingly available and are already common in the main cities such as Managua, Granada, León and Rivas. Generally ATMs are connected to Cirrus or PLUS networks but many ATMs also accept Visa and MasterCard.

Visa, American Express and MasterCard are the common cards, accepted at many hotels and restaurants.

Costa Rica

The local currency in Costa Rica is the colón. Some hotels and businesses will accept US dollars, but the exchange rate is not very favourable. There are foreign exchange bureaux at the international airports as well as in cities and towns. ATMs (*cajero automático*) are also widespread and are linked to the Cirrus and PLUS networks. Most machines only accept 4 digit PINs.

Credit cards are accepted by many businesses but there is generally a surcharge and often a minimum purchase amount.

Panama

Panama uses the US dollar as its currency. The official name for it is the balboa, but it is exactly the same bill. Panamanian coins are of the same value, size and metal as US coins and both are frequently used. It is very hard to use high denomination bills (US\$50 or \$100 notes) as counterfeiting is a serious problem. Many businesses will not accept any note higher than \$20.

ATMs (*cajero automático*) are very common in Panama and again the main networks are Cirrus and PLUS. Credit cards, mainly Visa and MasterCard are also widely accepted in urban areas.

LDD, Emergency Numbers, Internet

	Country Code	Medical	Police
Mexico	+52	065	066
Belize	+501	90	911
Guatemala	+502	1500 or 125	1500 or 120
Honduras	+504	195	199
Nicaragua	+505	128	118
Costa Rica	+506	1128	911 or 1117
Panama	+507	911 or 103	104

Internet cafes are widespread throughout Mexico and Central America, being found in most towns and all cities. Wi-Fi is becoming increasingly common especially in larger hotels as well as some restaurants and cafes.

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Climate

In general, Central America has a distinct wet and dry season. Temperatures are relatively similar year round, but rainfall varies considerably from nearly none at all to 30cm or more in a single month. Temperatures remain relatively high all year, especially on the Caribbean coast and high humidity is often a feature. The wet season runs from June to October and the dry season from mid-November to May. Despite these predictable patterns, it is not unheard of to have a sudden flood in the dry season or to have extended periods of dry weather in the middle of the wet season. Most activities and tours are available all year.

Mexico, owing to its size, has a very diverse climate depending on the region. On the Caribbean coast the weather is very similar to that of Central America with its wet and dry seasons and unpredictability. However, the weather in Mexico City, which is situated at an altitude of 2,300m (7,550ft) above sea level, is far more moderate. Mexico City has pleasant summers and mild winters, with an annual average temperature of 18°C (64°F). Seasonal variations in temperature are small, but May is the warmest month of the year, and January the coldest, when night frosts are possible.

Cuisine

Mexican food has some of the most well-known and loved dishes in the world. The rest of Central America is lesser known for the culinary expertise, but there are still some excellent meat, rice and bean dishes. Seafood dominates the menu along the Caribbean coast and in the Bay Islands.

Mexico: Mexican cuisine varies by region due to local climate, geography and ethnic differences among the indigenous inhabitants. The north of Mexico is known for its beef, goat and ostrich production and meat dishes. In contrast, the Oaxaca region is known for its savoury tamales and celebratory moles. The mountainous regions of the west are known for goat birria (goat in a spicy tomato-based sauce). The three staples in Mexican dishes are corn, beans and chillies (hot peppers), ingredients that were already present before the Spanish arrived. Corn is consumed in all possible forms, but most importantly as a tortilla (a thin, round pancake made from corn dough). Tortillas are also used to make tacos and quesadillas, popular throughout the country. Drinks include tepache (made from pineapple), tuba (fermented juice from the coconut tree and pulque (ferment made from the maguey plant). Tequila, of course, is also offered and is usually served as a major ingredient in margaritas, with salt-rimmed glasses and lime juice. Mezcal is a rougher version of tequila.

Belize: Belizean cuisine is influenced by all the various ethnic groups and is similar in many ways to Mexican and Caribbean cuisine. Beans, rice and chicken feature heavily and in rural areas the dishes tend to be simpler than in the cities. Barbecued chicken served with rice, beans and coleslaw is a standard Belize dish. Belizeans also make use of their abundant seafood in a variety of recipes, using conch, lobster, snapper and shrimp. Chinese food restaurants can also be found in almost every Belize town due to the influx of Chinese immigrants. Belizean rum is world-famous.

Guatemala: The traditional foods are based on Mayan cuisine with corn, chillies and beans as the main ingredients. Guatemalan food tends to be less spicy than Mexican food, with the chillies being served separately to be added as desired. Many dishes are also similar to those of Mexico including

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nachos, tamales and enchiladas. Cheese and tortillas also feature quite heavily. Meat stews (*caldos*) and soups (*sopas*) are popular dishes.

Honduras: The cuisine of Honduras also takes its influences from the various cultures of the country. A typical meal usually includes rice, beans, tortillas, grilled meat such as chicken or beef and a salad and may be served with *chismol*, a fresh, mild salsa made from tomatoes, green peppers, onions, cilantro and lime juice. *Baleadas* is another typical Honduran dish, a thick flour tortilla filled with refried beans, cheese, cream and sometimes also avocado or meat. Tacos, unlike those in Mexico, are deep-fried meat filled corn tortillas. Enchiladas are flat fried corn tortillas topped with ground beef, cheese and salsa. On the Caribbean coast and in the Bay Islands, seafood dominates Honduran cuisine.

Nicaragua: The cuisine of Nicaragua is a blend of criollo food and dishes of pre-Columbian origin and changes from the Pacific to the Caribbean coast. The majority of Nicaraguan meals are based on traditional Nicaragua foods such as corn, beans, rice, plantains, yucca and peppers. *Gallo pinto* is Nicaragua's national dish and is made from white rice and red beans cooked together and then fried. Coconut milk or shredded coconut may be added and it may be served with meat, salad or plantains. *Nactamales* is another common dish – dumplings boiled in plantain leaves and stuffed with vegetables.

Costa Rica: Costa Rican cuisine is a blend of various cuisines including Spanish, Native American, African and Caribbean. A traditional dish is *casado*, a mix of black beans, rice, fried plantains, cheese, salad, and either fish, beef or chicken. *Tamale* is a traditional dish made from corn and representative of the indigenous population. *Gallo pinto* is a mixture of rice, beans and onion and can be served at breakfast, lunch or dinner. *Salsa Lizano*, a mild vegetable sauce with a hint of curry is the ketchup of Costa Rica!

Panama: Cuisine is varied and in the larger cities you can find many styles of restaurant serving everything from French cuisine to sushi, as well as Arabic, Mexican, Chinese, Indian and Italian. In more rural areas the cuisine is Panamanian featuring seafood and beef and taking on the influences of Afro-Caribbean, French and Spanish. Most dishes are served with coconut rice and native vegetables. A typical Panama meal usually includes meat, coconut rice and beans accompanied by local fruits and vegetables like yucca, squash and plantains. On Panama's islands and along the coast, fresh seafood features heavily with mango and coconut.

Typical Mexican and Central American dishes include:

Tamales – Boiled pockets of corn dough stuffed with meat and served in banana leaves. Available in all of Central America, each country has slightly different versions.

Pozole – Broth from chicken or pork, with corn, lettuce, oregano, onions, dried ground chilli, lemon juice and radish. *Pozole* is a traditional pre-Columbian soup or stew from Mexico.

Mole – A spicy sauce that is poured over meat. Chocolate may even be added to this rich sauce.

Chilera – A spicy dressing made with pickled onions, peppers and other vegetables, typical of Costa Rica.

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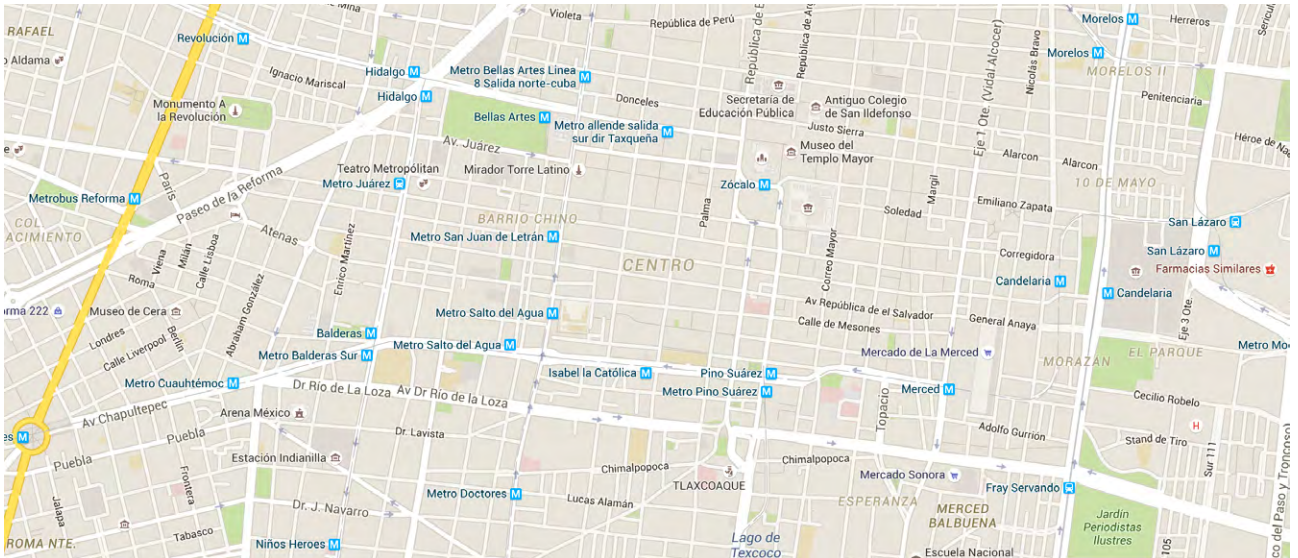
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Carimanola – This is a fried yucca roll stuffed with meat and boiled eggs found in Panama.

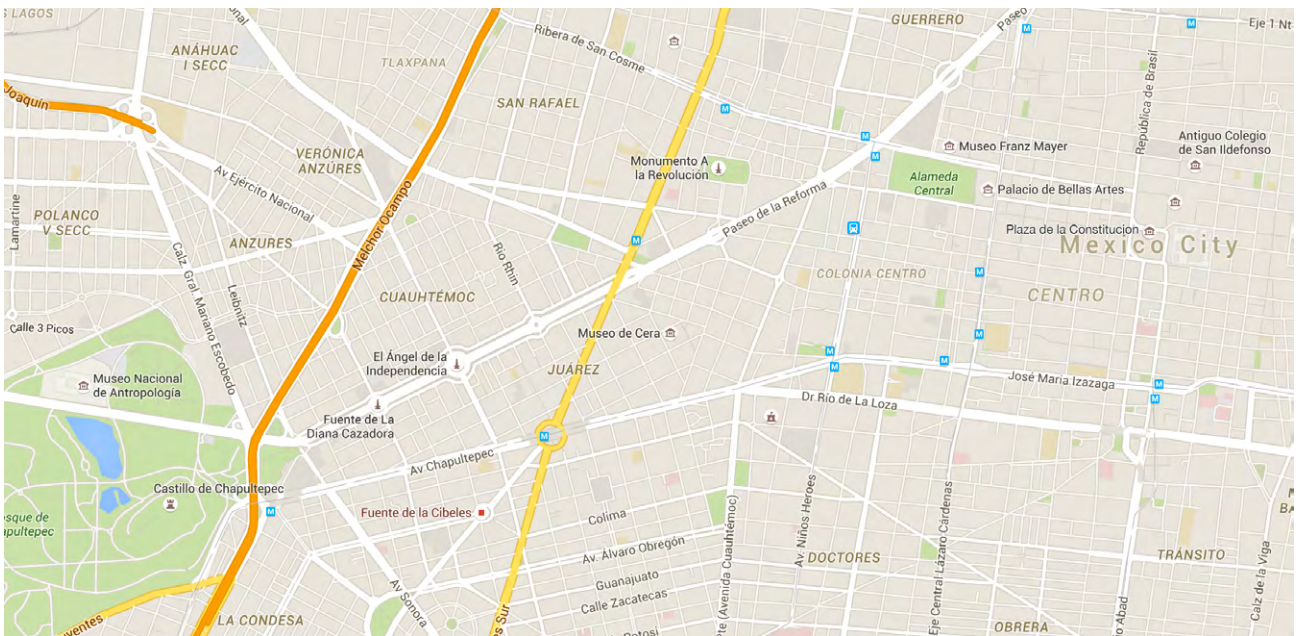
Language

The predominant language of Mexico and Central America is Spanish with a couple of notable exceptions – Belize where English is the official language and the Bay Islands of Honduras, where English is the native tongue. In Utila a hybrid of Spanish and English has developed that can be very hard to decipher! Even in Belize, despite English being the official language, nearly 50% of the population speaks Spanish.

City Map- Mexico City



City Map- Mexico City East



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2.12 Cuba

Cuba has been one of the most controversial countries over the last 100 years and is a fascinating destination. Still governed by the infamous Castro brothers, Cuba is an amazing place to visit with an abundance of attractions.

The capital Havana is brimming with excitement and charm, filled with cobblestone streets and wonderful architecture. Just to the west you will find the Viñales valley which is famous for tobacco fields and the first step in the process of making the famous Cuban cigar. The coastline of Cuba is also picturesque with the resort town of Varadero and Trinidad being a couple of the highlights. Santiago de Cuba offers a real Caribbean vibe and flavour!

Did you know?

- Cuba has the highest doctor-to-population ratio of any country in the world.
- The Bee Hummingbird, the world's smallest living bird is endemic to Cuba.
- Ernest Hemingway wrote "For Whom the Bell Tolls" and "The Old Man and the Sea" while he lived in Cuba.

Visa

Virtually all visitors, including citizens of Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, EU countries and USA need a Cuban visa or tourist card, which allows a stay of 30 days (90 days for Canadian citizens). Tourist Visa Cards (*tarjeta de turista*) cost from US\$25 (subject to change). Visas must be used within 180 days of the date of issue. Visitors need a return ticket and proof that they have booked a hotel room for at least three nights. **You are not permitted entry to Cuba without an onward ticket.** Please note that Chimu Adventures are able to issue tourist cards in-house for Australian and UK passport holders for AU\$125 per person (subject to change).

Currently the USA prohibits its citizens from travelling to Cuba, unless they obtain a licence, usually reserved for journalists or government officials, but this situation is likely to change in the foreseeable future.

Tourist Visa Card extensions or replacements can be obtained in Havana at a cost of CUC\$25 but the process can be very time-consuming. **You cannot leave Cuba without presenting your tourist card.**

Please ensure that you complete the tourist card clearly and carefully, as Cuban customs do not like corrections and illegibility.

While Chimu Adventures will assist in every possible way to provide you with accommodation and flight details necessary to obtain your visa, we are not a consular service and it is the sole responsibility of the traveller to obtain the necessary visas before departing your home country. Travelling without a visa may result in the cancellation of part or the whole of your tour without refund as per terms and conditions which you can view through the link below.

<http://www.chimuadventures.com/content/terms-and-conditions>

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Time

GMT -5 / -4

Money

The unit of currency in Cuba is the Cuban Peso (CUP).

Please check websites such as www.oanda.com or www.xe.com for up to date exchange rates prior to your departure.

The Cuban Peso (CUP) is one of two official currencies used in Cuba. The CUP does not have any value outside of Cuba and is used almost exclusively within the country. For many years, the United States dollar (USD) has been used by tourists. However, use of the USD is now being replaced by the CUC, or the Cuban Convertible Peso. Thus, Cuba has two parallel currencies - the CUP and CUC. Generally tourists are required to only use CUC.

Foreign currency is best exchanged at banks which have the most favourable exchange rates. Euros, Pounds sterling and Canadian dollars are all readily accepted. There is a 10% surcharge for exchanging US dollars. Alternatively foreign currency can be exchanged at government foreign exchange bureaux (*cadecas*) located at airports, resorts, hotels and at locations across the country. Try to avoid exchanging money at hotels or resorts where the rate will be low as it is not regulated by the government.

There are a few ATMs in Cuba but cash advances will be given on credit cards at CADECA kiosks at Havana airport or at some banks. Some hotels will also offer this service but ensure that you are issued with a receipt.

Currently American credit and debit cards are **NOT** accepted but as a result of renewed relations between the USA and Cuba, US credit and debit cards should begin to be accepted shortly. You can use any type of credit card (American Express, Visa, MasterCard, Discovery, JCB, Banamex, Bancomer, Carnet and Diners Club International) or traveller's cheques in Cuba, providing they are **NOT issued by a US bank.**

Before departing Cuba, all monies not used must be returned to the bank offices located at the international airports. Please note that there is a 10% surcharge on changing \$US dollars so it is recommended to bring Euros or other foreign currency. Since all unused CUC can be converted back into the foreign currency originally used to purchase CUC, it is better to exchange more money than you are likely to need in case of any unexpected expenses.

Banks are generally open from 9.00am to 3.00pm Mon to Friday, with CADECA exchange offices being open from 9.00am to 6.00pm Monday to Saturday and from 9.00am to midday on Sunday.

LDD, Emergency Numbers, Internet

Country code: + 53

Medical: 104

Police: 106

Internet access is tightly controlled throughout Cuba and Cuba is in fact one of the least connected

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countries in the world. There are some expensive government run internet cafes and some hotels offer internet access. There are plans to extend internet access by adding Wi-Fi capacity to the state-run internet centres.

Climate

The climate of Cuba is mainly tropical, with most of the island lying south of the Tropic of Cancer. North-easterly trade winds blow all year and the Caribbean current brings in warm water from the equator. From November to April tends to be drier with the rainy season running from May to October. The average temperature throughout the year is between 20 and 35°C, sometimes dropping to as low as 10°C in the short winter. The eastern side is generally warmer than the west. Rainfall occurs mostly in summer and autumn.

Cuba lies in the path of hurricanes and is subject to these destructive storms on the east coast from August to November, but they are most common in September and October. In general Cuba averages one hurricane every other year.

Cuisine

Cuban cuisine is a fusion of Spanish and Caribbean cuisines. Rice, black beans and plantains are staple foods of the Cuban diet. Pork and chicken may also be included but on the whole the food is fairly bland. The most popular sauce, used to accompany meats, is *mojo* or *mojito* (not to be confused with the *mojito* cocktail), made with oil, garlic, onion, spices such as oregano and bitter orange or lime juice.

Check out the small Havana Chinatown where you may be able to get a little variety with some Chinese dishes! There are also a number of private restaurants opening up which offer a much higher level of cuisine.

On the drinks front there are two national cocktails that are worth indulging in – the *Cuba Libre* (rum and coke) and the *Mojito* – a blend of rum, lime, sugar, mint leaves, soda water and ice – very refreshing!

Typical dishes include:

Ropa Vieja – Delicious shredded beef in a tomato based sauce.

Bolicho – A beef roast stuffed with chorizo sausage and hard boiled eggs.

Tamales – Made with cornflour, shortening and pieces of pork meat, tamales are wrapped in corn leaves and tied, boiled in salted water and served in a number of different ways.

Language

Spanish is the official language and most Cubans speak it, although the Spanish spoken in Cuba is known as Cuban Spanish, a form of Caribbean Spanish. Haitian Creole is the second largest language in Cuba, spoken by Haitian immigrants and their descendants. Lucumi, a dialect of the West African language can also be heard.

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3. LEARNING SPANISH OR PORTUGUESE

If you would like to learn Spanish quickly and effectively then we recommend one of our two-week live-in Spanish courses, which you can purchase on our payment pages. Below are a few simple lines to get you started!

In addition, our partners in Peru offer a web-based tuition over Skype. This is a great opportunity to learn Spanish from a South American teacher and block-bookings of 10, one hour lessons are available. Please click on the below link for more information and to sign up:

<http://www.webspanish.com/>

For the basics of either Spanish or Portuguese check out the [BBC languages website](#) which has free online classes.

The handy guide below will help you feel more at home, help you relate better to the locals and make your travels that much more enjoyable and rewarding! Chimu Adventures recommends a Latin American Spanish or Portuguese phrasebook, but hopefully we can help you a little here:

Basic Latin American Spanish

Latin American Spanish	English
Hola	Hello
Buenas Días/Tardes	Good Morning/Afternoon
Como estas?	How are you?
..Bien	.. Fine
..Más o menos	.. More or less
..Mal	.. Bad
Gracias	Thank you
Cuánto cuesta este?	How much is this?
..Está bien	.. That's fine
..Demasiado	.. Too much
..Pocito menos?	.. A little less
Donde esta?	Where is?
.. El Mercado	.. The Market
.. La Plaza de Armas	.. The Main Plaza
.. El Baño	.. The Bathroom

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.. La Tienda	.. The Store/Shop
Agua	Water
Gaseosa	Soft Drink
Jugo	Juice
..de Naranja	.. Orange
..de Papaya	.. Pawpaw/Papaya
..de Fresa	.. Strawberry
Pan	Bread
Pollo	Chicken
Carne	Meat (beef)
Chancho/Cerdo	Pork
Policía	Police
Hospital	Hospital
Doctor	Doctor
Emergencia	Emergency
Ladrón	Thief
Amigo/Choche	Friend/Mate

Basic Brazilian Portuguese

Brazilian Portuguese	English
Olá	Hello
Bom dia	Good day
Como estas?	How are you?
Bem	Fine
Mais o menos	More or less
Mal	Bad
Obrigado/a	Thank you (Male or female)
Quanto Custa?	How much does it cost?
.. Esta Bem	.. That's fine
.. Muito	.. Too much
.. Pouco Menos	.. A little less
Onde é?	Where is?

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.. Mercado	.. The Market
.. Praca Central	.. The Main Plaza
.. Banho	.. The Bathroom
..Loja	.. The Store/Shop
Agua	Water
Especie de soda	Soft Drink
Suco	Juice
.. de Laranja	.. Orange
.. de Mamao	.. Pawpaw/Papaya
.. de Fresa	.. Strawberry
Pao	Bread
Frango	Chicken
Carne	Meat (beef)
Porco	Pork
Policia	Police
Hospital	Hospital
Doutor	Doctor
Emergencia	Emergency
Ladrao	Thief
Amigo	Friend

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4. BOOKING TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. Parties

1.1 These terms and conditions form part of the contract between:

1.1.1 Chimu Adventures Limited (Company No. 7146797) ("the company"); and

1.1.2 Any person wishing to travel on a tour provided or offered by the company ("the client")

1.2 The person making the booking for the tour warrants that, before making the booking, he or she has read and has agreed to be bound by these terms and conditions.

1.3 Where the booking for a tour is made other than by all persons wishing to travel on the tour, the person making the booking warrants that he or she has advised each person wishing to travel on the tour of these terms and conditions and further warrants that each such person has agreed to be bound by them.

2. Payment of deposit

2.1 At the time of booking, the client must pay a deposit of at least the following:

2.1.1 In respect of cruises, an amount equivalent to at least 20% of the estimated total cost.

2.1.2 In respect of land tours, transfers and accommodation, an amount equivalent to at least 25% of the estimated total cost.

2.1.3 In respect of airfares, 100% of the estimated total cost.

2.1.4 In respect of the Independent Inca Trail tour, 100% of the estimated total cost. (hereafter referred to as the "minimum deposits")

2.2 The company shall be at liberty to give notice to the client of any variation to the minimum deposits at any time before the minimum deposits are paid.

2.3 A booking shall not be deemed to have been accepted or to be binding until such time as the minimum deposits, or any of them that are applicable, have been paid.

2.4 The acceptance by the company of payment of a deposit does not, by itself, constitute acceptance of a booking. A booking will be deemed to have been accepted once the company has confirmed its acceptance in writing.

3. Payment of the balance of the tour price

3.1 The balance of the tour price, being the total estimated tour price less any deposits paid, must be paid at least 85 days prior to the client's departure date. The balance of the tour must be paid 95 days prior to the client's departure date for any bookings including tours or cruises to Antarctica. For Antarctica bookings operated by Quark Expeditions or Antarctica XXI the balance of the tour price must be paid at least 125 days prior to the

client's departure.

- 3.2 In the event that the balance of the tour price is not paid in accordance with 3.1 above, then the company reserves the right to cancel the client's booking. In that event, the client agrees that he or she shall not be entitled to a refund of any deposit paid, such deposit to be retained by the company by way of compensation for the time spent and work done by it. The company shall however retain a discretion, to be exercised entirely as it thinks fit, as to whether or not to refund all or part of any deposit paid in the event of cancellation in these circumstances.
- 3.3 In the event that the balance of the tour price is not paid in accordance with 3.1 above, and the company, at its discretion, determines not to cancel the client's booking, then the client agrees to pay to the company any additional charges, fees or expenses that have been or may be properly incurred as a result of the balance of the tour price not having been paid by the stipulated time.

4. Variation by the client

- 4.1 In the event that the client wishes to vary his or her booking, the request for a variation must be made in writing.
- 4.2 The company will use reasonable endeavours to try and satisfy the request for variation and will advise the client if it can be satisfied.
- 4.3 If the request for variation can be satisfied:
- 4.3.1 The company will advise the client of any variation in the tour price; and
- 4.3.2 The client agrees to pay to the company an administration fee of £70 (plus VAT) in respect of each variation requested, payable within 14 days of confirmation of the variation.
- 4.4 If, despite the reasonable endeavours of the company, the request for variation cannot be satisfied, then it is agreed that the booking sought to be varied shall remain in existence (if the client seeks to cancel the booking, the cancellation provisions set out herein will apply).

5. Cancellation by the client

- 5.1 In the event that the client wishes to cancel a booked tour, then he or she must provide a written notice of cancellation ("the cancellation notice") to the company.
- 5.2 The cancellation notice must be:
- 5.2.1 Delivered to an office of the company; or
- 5.2.2 Sent by facsimile transmission to the company's facsimile number existing as at the date of the cancellation notice; or

5.2.3 Sent by e-mail to the company's e-mail address existing as at the date of the cancellation notice.

5.3 In the event that the cancellation notice is received by the company more than 95 days before the client's departure date (or 125 days before the client's departure date for any Antarctica cruises operated by Quark Expeditions), then the company shall refund to the client all monies paid less any deposit as set out in 2.1 above and which deposit the company shall be entitled to retain as compensation for the work done and time spent by it.

5.4 In the event that the cancellation notice is received by the company 95 days or less before the departure date (or 125 days or less before the departure date for any Antarctica cruises operated by Quark Expeditions), then the company shall not be obliged to make any refund to the client. In this respect, the client acknowledges that, in addition to the work done and time spent by it, the company will have paid monies to tour suppliers and it may not be possible for the company to obtain a refund from these suppliers where the cancellation notice is received within that period. Notwithstanding that, the company shall, if practical, and at its sole discretion, make such refund as circumstances reasonably permit.

5.5 In the event that the cancellation notice is received in respect of the Independent Inca Trail tour, the client shall not be entitled to any refund irrespective of when the cancellation notice is received.

5.6 The company strongly recommends that the client take out and maintain a policy of insurance to cover cancellation of any tours.

6. Variation or cancellation by the company

6.1 The company will use its best endeavours to provide any tour that is advertised or offered. However, it may be necessary for the company to vary or even cancel some tours, whether due to force majeure or otherwise. Where it becomes necessary for the company to vary or cancel a tour, the company will use its best endeavours to provide an alternate tour that is substantially the same or as similar as practical to the tour that is advertised or offered. The client acknowledges that such a necessity may arise from time to time and the client warrants not to make any claim of any nature, subject to these terms and conditions, against the company in respect of any such variations or cancellations.

6.2 The client acknowledges that the company may, in order to provide maximum opportunities for the client, propose flexible or alternate arrangements. Any flexible or alternate arrangements may extend to routes, schedules, itineraries, amenities and mode of transport. The client accepts, at the time of booking, the possibility for and appropriateness of such flexible or alternate arrangements and shall make no claim against the company in respect thereof. The information provided by the company in its brochures is correct to the best of the knowledge of the company at the time of print but the company does not, and cannot, guarantee that any item or amenity will be available at the time requested by the client.

- 6.3 If the company cancels a booked tour, the client may choose:
- 6.3.1 to accept an alternate tour offered by the company, if available; or
 - 6.3.2 to receive a full refund of all monies paid for payment of the tour.
- 6.4 If the company makes a significant alteration, the client may choose:
- 6.4.1 to accept the alteration; or
 - 6.4.2 to cancel the travel arrangement and receive a full refund of all monies paid for payment of the tour; or
 - 6.4.3 to accept an alternate travel arrangement of a comparable standard, if available.
- 6.5 If the company cancels or makes a significant alteration to a confirmed booking, for reasons other than force majeure, on or after the balance due date, then the company will also pay reasonable compensation.
- 6.6 If the company cancels or makes a significant change to a booked tour after departure, the company will make suitable alternative arrangements at no additional cost to the client. In the event that the making of suitable alternative arrangements is impossible or where they are not accepted by the client for good reason, the company will provide the client, where appropriate, with equivalent transport back to the place of departure or an alternative location to which the client has agreed. The company may also, where appropriate to do so, provide compensation to the client.

7. Unused services

- 7.1 The company shall not be liable to refund to the client any monies paid by the client for a tour, part of a tour or for services not used by the client.

8. Prices

- 8.1 Prices quoted by the company prior to or at the time of booking are calculated by reference to a number of factors, including exchange rates, Government charges, both in the United Kingdom and overseas, transport costs including fuel charges, prices charged by suppliers in other countries and other matters.
- 8.2 The company will use its best endeavours to ensure that prices quoted by it prior to or at the time of booking remain valid until payment in full is made for the tour. The client acknowledges that some of the variable factors affecting the cost of the tour, including but not limited to those referred to in 8.1 above, may increase between the time of booking and the time of payment in full. In the event of any such increases, the company reserves the right to pass on to the client any such amounts, provided that, subject to term and condition 8.4 below, it does so at least 30 days before the date of departure and the client agrees to pay same.
- 8.3 No surcharges will be applied for small cost charges (less than 2% of the cost of the tour).
- 8.4 Once the client has paid in full for the tour, the company shall not be entitled to pass on

to the client any increases in the variable factors referred to above, save where any such increases are imposed by Government regulation, or similar, whether in United Kingdom or overseas, or where such increases, wherever imposed, are solely as a result of fuel surcharges. In that event, the company shall be entitled to require the client to pay such surcharges, and the client agrees to do so.

9. Acceptance of risk

- 9.1 The client acknowledges that the tours offered by the company may be considered to be, in full or in part, adventurous. That consideration is one taken into account by the client in making the booking. The tours may involve personal risk, such risks to include illness, injury, disease, loss or damage to property, discomfort and inconvenience. The client, in making the booking, accepts such risks and agrees that he or she has made the booking upon the condition that he or she travels at his or her own risk. The client warrants that he or she shall not make any claim against the company for injury or loss, howsoever caused, arising out of the acceptance of such risk.
- 9.2 It is the responsibility of the client to be informed about any travel advisories or warnings issued by any Government Department. If a travel advisory or warning is issued by a Government Department in relation to a destination to which the client has booked to go, then the client may, at his or her discretion, cancel the booking (and in which case the cancellation provisions herein referred to will apply) or proceeding with it. If the client decides to proceed with the booking, then the client acknowledges and agrees that he or she has decided to do so at his or her own risk and will not make any claims against the company in respect thereof.

10. Insurance

- 10.1 The client shall, prior to or at the time of booking, take out, and maintain for the duration of the tour, insurance that will provide indemnity to the client for at least the following:
- 10.1.1 £5,000,000 in medical expenses; and
- 10.1.2 £5,000,000 in repatriation expenses.
- 10.2 The company shall, at any time, be at liberty to request the client to produce to the company a copy of a policy or certificate of insurance to show that 10.1 above has been satisfied. In the event that the client fails to produce a copy of the policy or certificate within 48 hours after being so requested by the company, then the company reserves the right to cancel the client's booking, and in which case any monies paid by the client shall be forfeited to and retained by the company by way of compensation for the work done and time spent by it. The client acknowledges that the request for evidence of such insurance is an important request in relation to the company's business.

11. Authority on tour

- 11.1 At all times, the decision of the company's tour leader or representative will be final on all matters of or pertaining to the tour. The client agrees to comply at all times with any

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decisions or directions of the company's tour leader or representative as well as with the laws, customs requirements, foreign exchange requirements and drug regulations of all countries to be visited.

- 11.2 Should the client fail to comply with a decision or direction of the company's tour leader or representative, unless same shall be manifestly unreasonable or unlawful, then the tour leader or representative may require the client to leave the tour and in which case the client agrees to do so. In that event, the client shall not be entitled to make any claim against the company and warrants that he or she will not do so.

12. Travel documents

- 12.1 The client acknowledges that it is his or her responsibility to obtain and maintain a valid passport, any valid visas, permits or certificates, including vaccination certificates, for any tour booked with the company. The client further acknowledges that it is his or her responsibility to ascertain any requirements for such matters and to ensure that those requirements are satisfied.

- 12.2 Whilst the company will endeavour to notify the client of any changes to matters of the type referred to in 12.1 above, the client acknowledges that the company has no legal responsibility to do so and further acknowledges that it is the client's responsibility to ascertain such matters.

13. Disclaimer of liability

- 13.1 The company will use its best endeavours to ensure that its obligations pursuant to the contract with the client are satisfied. However, despite those best endeavours, it is not always possible for those obligations to be satisfied. Unless otherwise excluded or modified by law, the company hereby disclaims liability for any loss of or damage to the client, including loss of life or injury, and loss of or damage to any of the client's property, however such loss or damage may be caused. Unless such disclaimer shall be excluded or modified by law, the client warrants that he or she will not make or pursue any claim against the company in respect of any such loss or damage, however caused.

- 13.2 In the event that term and condition 13.1 above is excluded or modified by law, and loss or damage other than personal injury occurs resulting from the non performance or improper performance of the services involved in the package, the company limits the maximum amount of compensation to be paid to a client to the value of £1,000.

- 13.3 The client acknowledges that the provisions of 13.1 above are reasonable and necessary for the business of the company having regard to a range of matters including but not limited to the following:

- 13.3.1 The adventurous nature of tours advertised and offered by the company
- 13.3.2 The location where tours are conducted, and where services, amenities and facilities may be of a lower standard than the standard to which a client is accustomed.
- 13.3.3 The tours or parts of them are supplied or undertaken by third party operators.

Whilst the company has undertaken due diligence on the quality of the services offered by such third party operators, and has been satisfied as to the adequacy of that quality, it cannot be responsible for any acts or omissions on their parts.

13.4 The client also acknowledges that there may be flight delays (due to circumstances beyond the control of the company) that may lead to interference with a tour for which the client has booked. The company will not be responsible for any flight delays or loss of flight connections whether such loss is caused by the client, the company, any of its suppliers, an airline or other. In the case of any loss of flight connections, whilst every effort will be made by the company to continue with the booked tour, the company will not be liable to compensate clients for any lost part of their itinerary and the company will not be liable to pay for any additional costs that may be incurred by the client as a result of any loss. The company strongly recommends that clients have insurance that will cover them for flight cancellations and delays.

13.5 The client acknowledges that it is the client's responsibility to check-in on time for his or her flight at any airport. The company will not be responsible for any flights that are not taken by the client due to the client's late arrival at any airport. It is also the client's responsibility to contact the relevant airline companies at an appropriate time before any flight departure to confirm that all details relating to their flights are correct.

14. Medical condition

14.1 The client warrants that he or she has disclosed or will disclose to the company prior to or at the time of the booking of a tour any adverse medical condition from which the client has suffered during a period of 2 years prior to the date of booking. The client acknowledges that such disclosure is important and relevant because it may affect the willingness of the company to accept the client's booking and may affect any advice that the company would seek to give to the client in relation to any proposed tour.

15. Allergies

15.1 The client warrants that he or she has disclosed or will disclose to the company prior to or at the time of the booking of a tour any allergies, including food allergies, from which the client suffers. The client acknowledges that such disclosure is important and relevant because it may affect the willingness of the company to accept the client's booking and may affect any advice that the company would seek to give to the client in relation to any proposed tour.

16. Credit card administration fee

16.1 The client acknowledges that payment by the client by credit card will attract an administration fee and which the client agrees to pay to the company. Currently, the administration fee is 2% for any amount debited by Visa or MasterCard and 3% for any amount debited by American Express card. The administration fee will be debited to the client's credit card at the time of payment of the balance of the tour price.

17. Conventions

17.1 The client acknowledges that there exists a number of international conventions governing travel and specifically limiting liability and compensation in certain circumstances. These conventions include by are not limited to: Warsaw Convention 1929 as amended by the Hague Protocol of 1955; Berne Convention 1961; Athens Convention 1974; Paris Convention 1962; Geneva Convention 1973 and the Montreal Convention 1999. The client acknowledges that some or all of those conventions may apply to any tour to be undertaken by the client.

18. Binding law

18.1 The contract between the company and the client, including these terms and conditions, are subject to and are to be construed in accordance with the laws of England. In relation to any dispute between the parties, the company and the client agree to submit to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Courts of England.

19. Variation

19.1 These terms and conditions may only be varied with the prior written consent of the company.

20. Superseding effect

20.1 The terms and conditions set out herein supersede any previous understandings, arrangements or terms and conditions that may previously have existed between the company and the client.

21. Binding effect

21.1 The contract between the company and the client, including these terms and conditions, shall be binding upon the heirs and successors of the parties hereto.

22. Data Protection

22.1 The company will use its best endeavours to protect the client's personal information. However, the client acknowledges that the company will, in order to provide the services or products in question, need to provide some or all of the client's personal information to third parties, including overseas tour suppliers.

23. Arbitration

23.1 Any dispute arising out of an alleged breach of contract or negligence may be referred to arbitration

24. Complaints

24.1 If the client has a complaint against the company, the client must first inform the tour leader or company representative whilst on tour in order that the leader or representative can attempt to satisfy the complaint. If a complaint has not been resolved to the client's reasonable satisfaction on tour or if the client has any further complaint,

then the client must report it immediately in writing to the company. If the complaint is made against the company after the conclusion of the tour, it must be made within 30 days of completion of the tour to enable the company to investigate the client's complaint. If the client does not notify the company of its complaint within 30 days of the completion of the tour, the company's ability to investigate the claim may be affected and it may disregard the claim.

25. Your Financial Protection

- 25.1 When the client buys an ATOL protected air holiday package and/or flights from the company, the client will receive a confirmation invoice from the company (or via the company's authorised agent through which the client has booked) confirming the client's arrangements and the client's protection under our Air Travel Organiser's Licence number 10240.
- 25.2 In the unlikely event of the company's insolvency, the CAA will ensure that the client is not stranded abroad and will arrange to refund any money the client has paid to the company for an advance booking. For further information visit the ATOL website at www.atol.org.uk
- 25.3 Not all holiday or travel services offered and sold by the company will be protected by the ATOL Scheme. Please ask the company to confirm what protection may apply to the client's booking.
- 25.4 If the company fails, services to be provided by you pursuant to a licensable transaction may be provided by another ATOL holder or as the consumer may be required to claim a refund under the ATOL scheme. If your booking is made via an agent then that money accepted by your agent is held by that agent on behalf of the Trustees of the Air Travel Trust.

26. ATOL Protection Contribution

- 26.1 The price of the company's air holiday packages includes the amount of £2.50 per person as part of the ATOL Protection Contribution (APC) the company pays to the CAA. This charge is included in the company's advertised prices.

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