**Bolivia Facts and Culture**

* [Food and Recipes:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Bolivia/recipes.htm) Lunch is generally the most important meal of the day. People take long lunch breaks and many try to eat... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Bolivia/recipes.htm)
* [Family:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Bolivia/family.htm) Bolivian families, especially those in rural areas, may include grandparents as well as parents and children. Grandparents often take care... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Bolivia/family.htm)
* [Fashion:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Bolivia/fashion.htm) Dress in Bolivia varies according to ethnic group, social class, and place of residence. Those in urban areas tend to... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Bolivia/fashion.htm)
* [Visiting:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Bolivia/visiting.htm) In rural areas, the fer'a (market day) is an important weekly social event. The fer'a gives rural people a chance... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Bolivia/visiting.htm)

**Bolivia Facts**

Bolivia stats

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Capital  | La Paz (administrative capital)note: Sucre (constitutional capital)  |
| Government Type  | republic; note - the new constitution defines Bolivia as a "Social Unitarian State"  |
| Currency  | BOB  |
| Population  | 10,461,053  |
| Total Area  | 424,162 Square Miles1,098,581 Square Kilometers  |
| Location  | Central South America, southwest of Brazil  |
| Language  | Spanish (official), Quechua (official), Aymara (official)  |

**Bolivia Geography**

**Terrain and geography**

Landlocked Bolivia shares borders with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Peru. With an area of 424,000 square miles (1,099,050 square kilometers). Bolivia has three well-defined geographic zones — high plateau (altiplano), temperate and semitropical valleys of the eastern mountain slopes (yungas), and tropical lowlands (llanos) of the Amazon River Basin.

Lying between the main eastern and western ridges of the Andean Mountains, the altiplano is 500 miles (805 kilometers) long and 80 miles (130 kilometers) wide. At altitudes ranging from 12,000 to 14,000 feet (3,660 to 4,270 meters), it is one of the world’s highest inhabited regions. Lake Titicaca, on the altiplano, straddles the northern Bolivia-Peru border, with an area of 3,500 square miles (9,060 square kilometers), depths of 700 feet (210 meters), and a constant surface temperature of 55°F (13°C). The most agriculturally productive and populated part of the altiplano surrounds the lake. The inhabitants of the altiplano, mainly Aymara and Quechua Indians, have a subsistence agricultural and grazing economy. Their livestock include sheep, cows, goats, alpacas, llamas, and vicuñas. Rich mineral deposits, Bolivia’s economic backbone, are found in nearby mountain areas (La Paz, Oruro, and Potosí).

The regions of temperate and semitropical valleys lie east and northeast of the altiplano and vary in altitude from 1,600 feet to 9,000 feet (490 meters to 2,740 meters) above sea level. They are major agricultural producers of corn, barley, coffee, cacao, coca, citrus, and sugarcane. The major cities of Cochabamba, Sucre, and Tarija are situated in the valleys southeast of La Paz.

The llanos cover more than two-thirds of Bolivia. Through them flow major tributaries of the Amazon: the Mamoré, Beni, Ichilo, Iténes, and Madre de Díos Rivers. Except for the Santa Cruz Department, the llanos are sparsely populated and undeveloped but offer excellent potential for agriculture and livestock raising. The cities of Santa Cruz (Bolivia’s second largest), Trinidad, Riberalta, and Cobija are the major cities of the llanos. Santa Cruz, the second largest and fastest growing city in Bolivia is the center of the petroleum and natural gas industries.

**Geography - note**

landlocked; shares control of Lago Titicaca, world's highest navigable lake (elevation 3,805 m), with Peru

**Bolivia Geography**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Geographic Location  | South America  |
| Total Area  | 424,162 Square Miles1,098,581 Square Kilometers  |
| Land Area  | 418,263 Square Miles1,083,301 Square Kilometers  |
| Water Area  | 5,900 Square Miles15,280 Square Kilometers  |
| Land Boundaries  | 4,312 Miles6,940 Kilometers  |
| Irrigated Land  | 495 Square Miles1,282 Square Kilometers  |
| Border Countries  | Argentina 832 km, Brazil 3,400 km, Chile 861 km, Paraguay 750 km, Peru 900 km  |
| Geographic Coordinates  | 17 00 S, 65 00 W  |
| Terrain  | rugged Andes Mountains with a highland plateau (Altiplano), hills, lowland plains of the Amazon Basin  |
| Highest Point  | 6,542 Meters  |
| Highest Point Location  | Nevado Sajama 6,542 m  |
| Lowest Point  | 90 Meters  |
| Lowest Point Location  | Rio Paraguay 90 m  |
| Natural Resources  | tin, natural gas, petroleum, zinc, tungsten, antimony, silver, iron, lead, gold, timber, hydropower  |

Top of Form

Bottom of Form

**Bolivia Weather and Climate**

**Climate and Weather**

Bolivia lies entirely within the Tropics, but extreme differences in elevation from 300 feet (90 meters) along the Brazilian border to 21,000 feet (6,400 meters) at the highest peaks produce a great variety of climatic conditions. Coupled with soil diversity, this produces highly varied vegetation, from the sparse scrub grasses in semiarid highlands to lush rain forests containing a variety of hardwoods (Mahogany, South American, Oak, and Cedar). There are two seasons in La Paz: a rainy season beginning in December and continuing through March (it rains almost daily during this period), and a dry season running from April to November. The climate is generally cool, but brilliant sunshine raises daytime temperatures. Midday outdoor parties and activities are pleasant. Rainfall averages 20 inches (51 centimeters) a year.

**Bolivia Environmental Issues**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Climate  | Bolivia lies entirely within the Tropics, but extreme differences in elevation from 300 feet (90 meters) along the Brazilian border to 21,000 feet (6,400 meters) at the highest peaks produce a great variety of climatic conditions. Coupled with soil diversity, this produces highly varied vegetation, from the sparse scrub grasses in semiarid highlands to lush rain forests containing a variety of hardwoods (Mahogany, South American, Oak, and Cedar). There are two seasons in La Paz: a rainy season beginning in December and continuing through March (it rains almost daily during this period), and a dry season running from April to November. The climate is generally cool, but brilliant sunshine raises daytime temperatures. Midday outdoor parties and activities are pleasant. Rainfall averages 20 inches (51 centimeters) a year.  |
| Terrain  | rugged Andes Mountains with a highland plateau (Altiplano), hills, lowland plains of the Amazon Basin  |
| Natural Resources  | tin, natural gas, petroleum, zinc, tungsten, antimony, silver, iron, lead, gold, timber, hydropower  |
| Natural Hazards  | flooding in the northeast (March-April)  |
| Irrigated Land  | 495 Square Miles1,282 Square Kilometers  |
| Environmental Issues  | the clearing of land for agricultural purposes and the international demand for tropical timber are contributing to deforestation; soil erosion from overgrazing and poor cultivation methods (including slash-and-burn agriculture); desertification; loss of biodiversity; industrial pollution of water supplies used for drinking and irrigation  |
| Environment - International Agreements  | party to: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Marine Dumping, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Tropical Timber 83, Tropical Timber 94, Wetlands signed, but not ratified: Environmental Modification, Marine Life Conservation  |

**Bolivia Population Details**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Population  | 10,461,053  |
| Population Growth Rate  | 1.63%  |
| Urban Population  | 66.8%  |
| Population in Major Urban Areas  | Santa Cruz 1.719 million; LA PAZ (capital) 1.715 million; Sucre (constitutional capital) 307,000  |
| Nationality Noun  | Bolivian(s)  |
| Nationality Adjective  | Bolivian  |
| Ethnic Groups  | Quechua 30%, mestizo (mixed white and Amerindian ancestry) 30%, Aymara 25%, white 15%  |
| Languages  | Spanish (official), Quechua (official), Aymara (official)  |
| Rate of Urbanization- annual rate of change  | 2.18%  |

**Bolivia Medical Information**

hroughout the country, both personal hygiene and sanitary practices in food handling are far below U.S. standards. Food and beverage precautions are essential. Medical care in large cities is adequate for most purposes but of varying quality. Ambulance services are limited to non-existent. Medical facilities are generally not adequate to handle serious medical conditions. Pharmacies are located throughout Bolivia and prescription and over-the-counter medications are widely available. Western Bolivia, dominated by the Andes and high plains (Altiplano), is largely insect-free. However, altitude sickness (see below) is a major problem. Eastern Bolivia is tropical, and visitors to that area are subject to related illnesses. Insect precautions are recommended.

Travelers to Bolivia should consult with a Travel Clinic well in advance of departure for further information on recommended vaccinations.

Dengue: Dengue is endemic throughout eastern Bolivia, including in the city of Santa Cruz. Since January 2007, there have been several thousand cases, representing a significantly increased incidence and part of a region-wide trend.

Rabies: Bolivia is a high risk area for rabies. Dog and bat bites and scratches should be taken seriously and post-exposure prophylaxis sought.

Yellow Fever: Yellow fever is present in subtropical Bolivia. Yellow fever vaccination certification is required for entry visa applications, and may be required prior to boarding by airlines flying into/transiting Bolivia, as well as at entry points to Bolivia. Please refer to the Center for Disease Control’s (CDC) information on Yellow Fever.

High Altitude Health Risks: The altitude of La Paz ranges from 10,600 feet to over 13,000 feet (3,400 to 4,000 meters) above sea level. Much of Western Bolivia is at the same altitude or higher, including Lake Titicaca, the Salar de Uyuni, and the cities of Oruro and Potosi. The altitude alone poses a serious risk of illness, hospitalization and even death, even for those in excellent health.

Prior to departing the U.S. for high-altitude locations (over 10,000 feet above sea level), you should discuss the trip with your healthcare provider and request information on specific recommendations concerning medication and lifestyle tips at high altitudes. Coca-leaf tea is a popular beverage and folk remedy for altitude sickness in Bolivia. However, possession of this tea, which is sold in bags in most Bolivian grocery stores, is illegal in the United States. "Sorojchi pills" sold in local pharmacies, contain high amounts of caffeine and are not usually recommended.

The State Department cautions travelers planning to visit La Paz to consider the following risks and advice:

Sickle cell anemia or sickle cell trait: persons with sickle cell trait may have a crisis at elevations of more than 8,000 feet. U.S. citizens with this condition have required urgent medical evacuation from La Paz to the United States.
Heart disease: Any person who has heart disease, or known risk factors for heart disease, should consult their doctor about their risks of ascending to high altitude, and whether any testing of their heart would be in order. Even U.S. citizens who adjust well initially to the altitude in La Paz have subsequently suffered heart attacks and been hospitalized.
Lung disease: Anyone with emphysema should consult closely with their doctor and seriously reconsider coming to La Paz or other, high-altitude areas. Anyone with asthma should consult their doctor; mild asthma may be manageable at high altitude, but it is important to remember that emergency care and intensive respiratory care are very limited even in the city of La Paz and are absent outside the city. U.S. citizens with respiratory ailments have previously been medically evacuated from La Paz to other countries to receive medical treatment.
Pregnancy: Given potential complications from altitude sickness, pregnant women should consult their doctor before travel to La Paz and other high-altitude areas of Bolivia. There is an increased risk of miscarriages and other pregnancy-related complications at high altitudes.

Everyone, even healthy and fit persons, will feel symptoms of hypoxia (lack of oxygen) upon arrival at high altitude. Most people will have increased respiration and increased heart rate. Many will have headaches, difficulty sleeping, lack of appetite, minor gastric and intestinal upsets, and mood changes. Try to limit physical activity for the first 36 to 48 hours after arrival, and avoid alcohol and smoking for at least one week after arrival.

**Bolivia Health Information**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Health Expenditures (% of GDP)  | 4.9%  |
| Death Rate/1,000 population  | 6.67  |
| Obesity- adult prevalence rate  | 17.9%  |
| Hospital Bed Density/1,000 population  | 1.1  |
| Physicians Density/1,000 population  | 1.22  |
| Infant Mortality Rate/1,000 population  | 39.76  |
| Infant Mortality Rate- Female/1,000 population  | 35.9  |
| Infant Mortality Rate- Male/1,000 population  | 43.44  |
| Underweight - percent of children under five years  | 4.5%  |
| Total Fertility Rate  | 2.87  |
| Age of Mother's First Birth  | 21.2  |
| Contraceptive prevalance rate (female 15-49)  | 60.5%  |
| Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births  | 190  |
| HIV Adult Prevalence Rate  | 0.2%  |
| HIV Aids Deaths  | 1,300  |
| HIV Aids People Living With  | 12,000  |
| Drinking Water Source: unimproved  | 11.9%  |
| Drinking Water Source - percent of rural population improved  | 71.9%  |
| Drinking Water Source - percent of urban population improved  | 96%  |
| Sanitation Facility Access: unimproved  | 53.6%  |
| Sanitation Facility Access - percent of urban population improved  | 57.5%  |
| Sanitation Facitlity Access - percent of rural population improved  | 23.7%  |
| Major Infectious Diseases - degree of risk  | very high  |
| Food or Waterborne Disease (s)  | bacterial diarrhea and hepatitis A  |
| Vectorborne Disease (s)  | dengue fever, malaria, and yellow fever |

**Bolivia Crime**

**Crime Information**

The U.S. Department of State currently classifies Bolivia as a medium to high crime threat country. Street crime, such as pick pocketing, assaults following ATM withdrawals, and theft from parked vehicles, occurs with some frequency in Bolivia. You should secure your belongings in a hotel safe and refrain from wearing expensive jewelry. U.S. citizens have also had backpacks, passports, and other property stolen at bus terminals or while traveling on buses, as well as at internet cafes and in other situations where the U.S. citizen is distracted or leaves property unattended. Theft of cars and car parts, particularly late-model four-wheel-drive vehicles, is common, and some vehicles have been hijacked.

Express Kidnappings: Incidents in which tourists are robbed and forced to withdrawal money from ATMs, known as “express kidnappings”, are common in La Paz. Typically, the victim enters a taxi driven by a criminal, and then an additional person or two gets in the vehicle. The victim is then robbed of his/her belongings and/or driven to an ATM where he/she is forced to provide personal identification numbers for debit and credit card withdrawals. The areas where these crimes are most frequent include Plaza Humbolt (Zona Sur), Plaza Abaroa, Plaza del Estudiante, Plaza Isabel La Católica, and Plaza San Francisco. Avoid becoming a victim of this crime by using only radio taxis and not traveling alone, particularly if you’re under the influence of alcohol or it’s late at night.

Coronilla Hill: We recommend that you avoid the Coronilla Hill, a Cochabamba landmark adjacent to the main bus terminal and near several markets, hostels, and restaurants. The Coronilla Hill has become an increasingly dangerous place for tourists and local citizens alike. The local police, tourist authorities, and press have declared the area off limits and cautioned people to enter the area at their own peril. U.S. citizens have been assaulted in the area. The police have made several sweeps of the area in an attempt to control the situation, but incidents of crime continue. Police reports indicate that thieves in that area have gone from purse snatching and burglary to increasingly violent assaults on passerbys.

Public Transportation: The U.S. Embassy in La Paz continues to receive reports of U.S. citizens traveling by bus from Copacabana to La Paz being held up and robbed of their ATM cards and other valuables. This crime reportedly involves U.S. citizens taking an evening bus from Copacabana. While the bus is scheduled to stop at the La Paz bus terminal, the driver will stop short of that location, typically near the General Cemetery late at night. Disembarking and disoriented passengers then have little option but to hail a waiting taxi. Thieves in cooperation with the taxi driver enter the taxi to blindfold and coerce the U.S. citizen(s) into surrendering cash, cameras, ATM cards, and other valuables. Victims have reported that once the thieves withdrew funds using the ATM cards, they were released without further harm. If you plan to travel from Copacabana, you should try to arrive during daylight hours, verify the final destination, and buy tickets directly at the Copacabana bus terminal rather than from third parties.

Scam Artists: Bolivian police report the presence of organized criminal groups operating in the La Paz area. The techniques employed by these groups vary, but there are a few major patterns, including “false police” - persons using police uniforms, identification, and even buildings modified to resemble police stations, who intercept and rob foreigners. Remember, under Bolivian law, police need a warrant from the “fiscal” (prosecutor) to detain a suspect. Any searches or seizures must occur at a bona fide police station in the presence of the prosecutor. The warrant requirement also applies to suspected drug trafficking cases, although such searches and seizures may occur without a prosecutor present. If you are detained, you should request to see the warrant and insist on immediate contact with the nearest U.S. consular office.

Be cautious of anyone introducing themselves to you as a policeman or even a fellow tourist, especially in popular tourist areas. Be wary of strangers and “false friends.” If you have any doubts about a situation, immediately remove yourself from the scene.

Street Crime: Thefts of bags, wallets, and backpacks are a problem throughout Bolivia, but especially in the tourist areas of downtown La Paz and the Altiplano. Most thefts involve two or three people who spot a potential victim and wait until the bag or backpack is placed on the ground, often at a restaurant, bus terminal, internet café, etc. In other cases, the thief places a disagreeable substance on the clothes or backpack of the intended victim and then offers to assist the victim with the removal of the substance. While the person is distracted, the thief or an accomplice grabs the bag or backpack and flees. If you find yourself in such a situation, you should decline assistance, secure the bag/backpack, and walk briskly from the area.

In order to steal wallets and bags, thieves may spray water on the victim's neck, and while the person is distracted an accomplice takes the wallet or bag. At times, the thief poses as a policeman and requests that the person accompany him to the police station, using a nearby taxi. If this happens to you, say you want to contact the U.S. Embassy; do not enter the taxi. Under no circumstances should you surrender ATM or credit cards, or release a personal identification number.

While most thefts do not involve violence, in some instances the victim has been physically harmed and forcibly searched for hidden valuables. This is particularly true in “choke and rob” assaults where the victims report being choked from behind until they lost consciousness and later awoke to find all of their possessions gone. Again, avoid being alone on the streets, especially at night and in isolated areas.

Don’t buy counterfeit and pirated goods, even if they are widely available. Not only are the bootlegs illegal in the United States, you may be breaking local law, too.

**Bolivia Penalties for Crime**

**Criminal Penalties**

While you are traveling in another country, you are subject to the local laws even if you are a U.S. citizen. Foreign laws and legal systems can be vastly different from our own. In some places, you may be taken in for questioning if you do not have your passport with you. In some places, it is illegal to take pictures of certain buildings and driving under the influence could land you immediately in jail. There are also some things that might be legal in Bolivia, but still illegal in the United States, and you can be prosecuted under U.S. law if you buy pirated goods or engage in child pornography. While you are overseas, U.S. laws don’t apply. If you do something illegal in the host country, your U.S. passport won’t help. It is very important to know what is legal and what is not legal where you are going. If you violate Bolivian laws, even unknowingly, Bolivian authorities may expel, arrest and/or imprison you. Under Bolivian law, suspects can be detained in prision for up to 18 months without formal charges while the investigation is conducted. Penalties for possessing, using, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Bolivia are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. It is not unusual for legal cases in Bolivia to drag on for years, with numerous delays and costly set-backs along the way.

**Bolivia Life Expectancy**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Life Expectancy At Birth  | 68 Years  |
| Life Expectancy At Birth- Female  | 71 Years  |
| Life Expectancy At Birth- Male  | 65 Years  |
| Median Age (female)  | 23 Years  |
| Median Age (male)  | 22 Years  |
| Median Age  | 23 Years  |

**Bolivia Literacy**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Predominant Language  | Spanish (official), Quechua (official), Aymara (official)  |
| Literacy Definition  | age 15 and over can read and write  |
| Literacy Female  | 81.6%  |
| Literacy Male  | 93.1%  |
| Literacy Total  | 86.7%  |

**Bolivia Education**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Education Expenditures - percent of GDP  | 6.9%  |
| Literacy - female  | 81.6%  |
| Literacy - male  | 93.1%  |
| Literacy - total population  | 86.7%  |
| Literacy Definition  | age 15 and over can read and write  |
| School Life Expectancy - female  | 13 Years  |
| School Life Expectancy - male  | 13 Years  |
| Total School Life Expectancy - (primary to tertiary)  | 13 Years  |

**Bolivia Age of Population**

Age 0-14: 33.8 %Age 15-24: 19.9 %Age 25-54: 35.9 %Age 55-64: 5.6 %Over 64: 4.8 %Highcharts.com

**Classroom**

Classes usually begin at 8:00 a.m. and finish at 1:00 in the afternoon, Monday through Friday, although some schools will stop at noon for a lunch break, and then open back up from 2:00 until 5:00 p.m.

Many but not all schools require a school uniform of white shirts and pants or skirts. In secondary school, students in some schools might also need to have a separate sports uniform.

There is a wide variety of school resources in the Bolivian schools. In the poorer parts of the country, the schools lack benches, desks, and blackboards. The benches are old, and the schools are poorly maintained. In the cities, schools may have modern resources, complete with well-maintained facilities and sufficient computers for students to study technology, including Internet connectivity. A normal class size is 30 children.

**Education Culture**

 A long history of political problems and instability have had a negative effect on Bolivia’s overall educational programs. Though government officials, educational leaders, and the general population all understand that a successful future must include quality education, the challenges of a difficult economy and changing national politics makes that type of education easier to talk about than implement.

Bolivia has both public and private schools. Most schools are operated by the government, but religious and other organizations are allowed to run private schools as well. Private schools charge tuition and tend to have middle-class to upper-class students.

The school year begins each year in late February and ends in November, with a 15-day vacation in the middle of winter in late June and early July. Summer vacation then covers December to late February.

Education is seen as the best chance for someone to get a better job and improve the family situation. Families who have an educated person in the family are often viewed more favorably than others. Unfortunately, over half of all adults are not employed, and 15% of those who do have jobs are underemployed and underpaid.

**Learning**

Schools are required to teach 12 to 14 mandatory subjects to their students in the general areas of language and communications, mathematics, life sciences, technical and practical knowledge, and expression and creativity. Bolivia has three main cycles of education, and children are required to attend school from age 6 to 14. The first cycle consists of basic learning, then three years of essential skills, and finally two years of applied learning.

Many children drop out after the first six years. Even though education is mandatory until age 14, approximately 1 out of every 3 children aged 7 to 19 is in the workforce (71% of that young workforce lives in rural areas, with the remaining 29% coming from cities). Because of the high numbers of working children, night schools have become for some the only option for some children to become educated: over 500 schools have been created in Bolivia’s three largest cities of La Paz, Cochabamba, and Santa Cruz.

Additional studies show that approximately 80% of all elementary school students attend school, dropping to only 25% of secondary students remaining in school.

Like many Latin American countries, the quality of education can vary widely throughout the country, with money being the most important influence. In communities with more money, the schools have better resources; in poor villages, the local school can struggle to even provide the most basic education.

**To School**

School is in session Monday through Friday and generally begins at 8:00 in the morning and is done at around 1:00 in the afternoon. In rural areas they sometimes must travel from 1 to 3 hours to and from the school, although in the cities they will usually walk or ride a public transportation bus to school, depending on how far from the school they live.

Bolivia’s public elementary and secondary schools are underfunded. In addition, a majority of the children come from low-income families. For the poorest children, the school lunch is the only meal they will have that day, so government and international agencies strive to provide well-balanced, affordable foods through the schools. These often include such staples as bananas and passion fruit, which are locally grown and help improve the nutrition of the students.

Not all schools have lunch programs, however. Many students, especially in areas with higher family incomes, will eat lunch at home.

**Bolivia Government**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Capital Name  | La Paz (administrative capital)note: Sucre (constitutional capital)  |
| Country Name  | Bolivia  |
| Local - Long  | Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia  |
| Full Country Name  | Plurinational State of Bolivia  |
| Local - Short  | Bolivia  |
| Government Type  | republic; note - the new constitution defines Bolivia as a "Social Unitarian State"  |
| Capital - geographic coordinate  | 16 30 S, 68 09 W  |
| National Holiday  | Independence Day, 6 August (1825)  |
| Constitution  | 7 February 2009  |
| Legal System  | civil law system with influences from Roman, Spanish, canon (religious), French, and indigenous law  |
| Suffrage  | 18 years of age, universal and compulsory  |

**Bolivia Economy Data**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| GDP - Gross Domestic Product  | $59,110,000,000 (USD)  |
| GDP - official exchange rate  | $30,790,000,000 (USD)  |
| GDP - real growth rate  | 6.8%  |
| GDP Per Capita  | $5,500.00 (USD)  |
| GDP by Sector- agriculture  | 9.2%  |
| GDP by Sector- Industry  | 38.5%  |
| GDP by Sector- services  | 52.3%  |
| Population Below Poverty Line  | 30.3%  |
| Inflation Rate  | 7.2%  |
| Labor Force  | 4,186,000  |
| Labor Force By Occupation- agriculture  | 32%  |
| Labor Force By Occupation- industry  | 27.4%  |
| Labor Force By Occupation- services  | 40.6%  |
| Unemployment Rate  | 6.5%  |
| Unemployment - note  | data are for urban areas; widespread underemployment  |
| Fiscal Year  | calendar year  |
| Annual Budget  | $10,110,000,000 (USD)  |
| Budget Surplus or Deficit - percent of GDP  | 0.1%  |
| Taxes and other revenues - percent of GDP  | 48.8%  |
| Major Industries  | mining, smelting, petroleum, food and beverages, tobacco, handicrafts, clothing  |
| Industrial Growth Rate  | 4%  |
| Agriculture Products  | soybeans, coffee, coca, cotton, corn, sugarcane, rice, potatoes; timber  |
| Currency Code  | boliviano (BOB)  |
| Child Labor - % of children ages 5-14  | 26%  |
| Child Labor - # of children ages 5-14  | 553,323  |
| Child Labor - note  | note: data represents children ages 5-13  |
| Commercial Bank Prime Lending Rate  | 11.41%  |

**Bolivia Economy**

**Economic Overview**

Bolivia, long one of the poorest and least developed Latin American countries, made considerable progress in the 1990s toward the development of a market-oriented economy. Successes under President SANCHEZ DE LOZADA (1993-97) included the signing of a free trade agreement with Mexico and becoming an associate member of the Southern Cone Common Market (Mercosur), as well as the privatization of the state airline, telephone company, railroad, electric power company, and oil company. Bolivia remains highly dependent on foreign aid unless and until it can develop its substantial natural resources.

**Bolivia Exports**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Exports  | $6,956,000,000 (USD)  |
| Major Exports  | soybeans, natural gas, zinc, gold, wood  |
| Top Export Partners  | Brazil 24.3%, Switzerland 15.7%, US 14.1%, Venezuela 12.8%, Colombia 10.2%, Peru 5.4%  |

**Bolivia Imports**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Imports  | $5,366,000,000 (USD)  |
| Major Imports  | capital goods, raw materials and semi-manufactures, chemicals, petroleum, food  |
| Top Import Partners  | Brazil 22%, Argentina 17.4%, US 15.6%, Chile 6.9%, Japan 5.5%, Peru 5.4%, China 4.8%  |

**Bolivia Flag**

Red symbolizes the blood of the national heroes, sacrifice and love. The yellow stands for the mineral resourses and for the Incas, who were the fist to make use of them. Green is a symbol of eternal hope, evolution and progress.

**Bolivia Flag Description**

three equal horizontal bands of red (top), yellow, and green. The state flag also has a coat of arms centered on the yellow band; similar to the flag of Ghana, which has a large black five-pointed star centered in the yellow band

Bolivia flag



|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Anthem History  | The composer of the music (Leopoldo Benedetto Vincenti) is an Italian, which is not that uncommon for "Latin American epic anthems" such as this one, as they often resemble Italian operatic pieces. The author of the lyrics was an ardent patriot, a signer of the Bolivian declaration of Independence and of the first constitution of the country.  |
| Anthem Lyrics English  | Bolivians, a favourable destinyHas crowned our vows and longings;This land is free,Your servile state has ended.The martial turmoil of yesterdayAnd the horrible clamour of warAre followed today, in harmonious contrast,By sweet hymns of peace and unity.Are followed today, in harmonious contrast,By sweet hymns of peace and unity.CHORUS:We have kept the lofty name of our countryIn glorious splendour,And on its altars we once more swearTo die, rather than live as slaves.To die, rather than live as slaves.To die, rather than live as slaves.This innocent and beautiful land,Which owes its name to Bolivar,Is the happy homeland where menEnjoy the benefits of good fortune and peace.For the sons of the great BolivarHave sworn, thousands upon thousands of times,To die rather than see the country'sMajestic flag humiliated.CHORUSEternal praise to the brave warriorsWhose heroic valour and firmnessConquered the glories that nowA happy Bolivia begins to enjoy!Let their names, in marble and in bronze,Transmit to remote agesAnd in resounding song repeat the call:Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!CHORUS  |

**Bolivia National Anthem**

Listen to Bolivia national anthem

**Bolivia National Anthem History**

The History of the Bolivia National Anthem

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | The composer of the music (Leopoldo Benedetto Vincenti) is an Italian, which is not that uncommon for "Latin American epic anthems" such as this one, as they often resemble Italian operatic pieces. The author of the lyrics was an ardent patriot, a signer of the Bolivian declaration of Independence and of the first constitution of the country.  |

**Bolivia Interesting Facts**

* An indigenous people of Bolivia, Peru and Chile, the Aymara have lived in the Andes for over 2000 years. There are still about 2 million Aymara in the region.
* Aymara women wear their bowler hats tipped to one side if they are unmarried, and on the middle of their heads if they are married.
* At the age of 16 the birthday girl wears a white dress and dances the waltz with her father and other boys.
* Jewish people have been living in Bolivia since 1557. After the Second World War, thousands of holocaust survivors came to Bolivia to start a new life.
* On August 16, the day of the Fiesta of San Roque, the patron saint of dogs, animals are decorated with ribbons.
* There are still Incan roads in Bolivia. These roads were built over some of the roughest terrain in the world. During Incan times, messengers called chasquis ran along these roads delivering messages across the Incan empire.
* The Kallawaya are a group of traditional healers still living in the Andes. Kallawaya means "medicine on the shoulder" and refers to the pack of herbs they carry on their shoulders. They were once the healers of Incan emperors and are still knowledgeable about herbal medicines. The drug quinine, which is used around the world to treat malaria, was discovered by the Kallawaya.
* At an elevation of 3805 m, Lake Titicaca is the highest navigable lake in the world. There are ancient ruins near the lake and on the island called Isla del Sol (Island of the Sun).
* In the Lake Titicaca area, lightweight boats made out of balsa wood and tortora reeds have been made since the days of the Incas. In the 1940s, a Norwegian, Thor Heyerdahl, created a replica of an Incan boat and sailed it across the Pacific to prove that Incas could have traveled to Polynesia. He named his boat the Kon-Tiki, after the Incan sun god.
* The Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes, author of the famous novel Don Quixote, was a candidate for mayor of La Paz in colonial times.
* Bolivia has the highest ski resort in the world. Mount Chacaltaya is 5,200 meters high. The resort keeps oxygen tanks for skiers who become faint because of the high altitude.
* Salar de Uyuni, located in southwest Bolivia, is the world's largest salt flat. It is 10,582 square kilometers and the salt can be over 32 feet thick in the center. It is located 11,995 feet above sea level, near the top of the Andes.
* Bolivia is named after Simon Bolivar, the great South American liberator. Bolivar led the struggle to free Bolivia and the rest of South America from Spanish colonial rule. He was also the author of Bolivia's first constitution.
* Some Bolivians bring their new cars to Copacabana, to the shrine of the Virgin of Candelaria. A local priest blesses the car and then the owner showers it with champagne.
* Bolivia's indigenous languages incorporate new ideas in creative ways. For instance, the Quechuan word for airplane, latapisco, literally means "metal bird."
* Before people drink chicha, they sprinkle a few drops onto the ground for the Earth Goddess, Pachamama. This ritual is called cha'lla and is thought to guarantee a good harvest.
* The coca leaf has been used since ancient times to combat stomach pains, hunger, fatigue, altitude sickness and other common maladies. It is chewed and also put in gums, cough syrups, toothpastes and teas.
* Many special dances are associated with festivals.

La morenada re-enacts the story of black slaves in Bolivia.

T'inkus are dance-like ritual fights.

Caparales is a dance representing the plight of slaves.

A special dance called the auqui-auqui is performed by old men to make fun of the rich.
* Bolivians value education and give special titles to professionals. University graduates are called licenciado (for a man) or licenciada (for a woman). Engineers are called ingeniero or ingeniera, teachers are called profesor or profesora, and medical doctors and lawyers are called doctor or doctora.
* The Chippaya people in the Chaco region hunt birds and animals with weapons called bolas, which are Y-shaped cords with weighted tips. They throw the bolas at their prey. The cords twist around the legs of the birds or animals so they cannot get away.
* Bolivia became a landlocked country in 1884 when the War of the Pacific resulted in Chile acquiring Antofagasta and other coastal territory.

A small Bolivian navy currently trains on Lake Titicaca and patrols many of Bolivia's large rivers.

Bolivians celebrate the Dia del Mar in hopes that the country can someday return to the sea.

In 2010, the presidents of Peru and Bolivia signed a 99 year lease for 1.4 square miles at the Port of Ilo. The lease will permit Bolivia to build and operate a small port on Peru's southern coast.
* The Mexican marathon team trains in Bolivia because of the altitude. Training at high altitudes expands the lungs and makes it easier for teams that come from lower-altitude countries to compete in high-altitude countries.
* Paleontologists come to Bolivia to study its preserved dinosaur footprints. The footprints of tyrannosauruses, ankylosauruses and theropods have been found near Sucre.
* Children in public elementary schools wear white uniforms. While girls continue to wear this uniform in public secondary schools, boys are not required to do so.

**Bolivia Lost Tooth Traditions**

When children lose their baby teeth it is said that if they put it under their pillow, when they sleep, the "teeths mouse" will pick it up and leave a coin in change, but of course the condition is for them to be good and brave children.

**History of Bolivia**

THE HISTORY OF THE REPUBLIC OF Bolivia reflects both its pre-Columbian and its colonial heritage. The ruins of Tiahuanaco testify to the first great Andean empire. Bolivians still speak the languages of the Aymara kingdoms and of their Quechua conquerors; the society remains predominantly Indian and rural, and only a minority is monolingual in Spanish. Nevertheless, Spain also left its imprint in the political, economic, and social spheres. During 300 years of colonial rule, Spain imposed its institutions on the colony and concentrated on mineral exports, which are still the backbone of the Bolivian economy. Using forced Indian labor, local entrepreneurs extracted the mineral wealth--the silver deposits at Potosí were the largest in the Western world--and shipped it to Spain in accord with the prevailing mercantilist practices.

After Bolivia received independence from Spain in 1825, political instability became endemic. Rivalries among caudillos resulted in numerous coups and countercoups. Despite attempts at reform by the nation’s first three presidents, the economy did not recover from the disruptions caused by the wars of independence; taxes paid by the Indians were the main sources of income for the governments.

The War of the Pacific (1879-80), in which the country lost its access to the sea to Chile, had a profound impact on Bolivia. Civilian governments replaced the erratic caudillo rule, and for fifty years Bolivia enjoyed relative political stability. The economy improved with the dramatic rise of tin as the main source of wealth. Because Bolivians, rather than foreigners, dominated the tin-mining industry, the former made most political decisions. As a result, the parties in power--the Conservative Party, Liberal Party, and Republican Party--were remarkably alike in that they were primarily interested in the development of the mining sector. Increasing democratization benefited the middle class but still excluded the Indians.

The devastating defeat suffered by Bolivia at the hands of Paraguay in the Chaco War (1932-35) discredited the traditional leadership and brought the military back to politics. Between 1936 and 1939, military governments tried to reform the country from above with a program of "military socialism" that included social justice and the control of the country’s natural resources. In 1937 they nationalized the Standard Oil holdings, the first such step taken in Latin America. Although they failed because they were inconsistent in their rule and unable to marshal popular support, these governments were important because they facilitated the formation of a number of new parties that, despite differences, agreed on the need to limit the power of the tin magnates.

Although members of the Conservative Party attempted to stop the growing trend toward reform in the 1940s, they could not contain the popular discontent. Unrest in the countryside increased, and the middle class resented the government’s inability to deal with economic stagnation and increasing inflation. The unifying force in the opposition was the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement, a primarily middle-class party that became more radical as it integrated the militant ideology and demands of the workers.

Bolivia’s 1952 Revolution, led by the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement, was a turning point in the country’s history. The government decreed universal suffrage without literacy or property requirements, an action that increased the electorate from some 200,000 to 1 million voters. It nationalized the mines of the three great companies--Patiño, Hochschild, and Aramayo-- and distributed land to the campesinos under a far-reaching agrarian reform. The revolution remained incomplete and lost momentum, however, when the government’s policies produced a virtual bankruptcy of the economy. In exchange for massive assistance from the United States and the International Monetary Fund (bolivia/bo\_glos.asp#International">IMF--see Glossary), the government agreed to cut social spending. This action produced renewed labor unrest and eroded support for President Víctor Paz Estenssoro (1952-56, 1960-64, and 1985-89). The government then made the fateful decision to rebuild the Bolivian armed forces, which had been purged and decimated in 1952. During the early 1960s, the military became the arbiters in Bolivian politics as widespread anarchy convinced many that only the armed forces could restore order. As a result, a military coup in 1964 led by General René Barrientos Ortuño and General Alfredo Ovando Candia had widespread support.

The military governments in power after 1964 varied in their ideological outlook. The armed forces were divided by personal ambitions, generational differences, and regional interests and lacked the corporate identity of a modern military. Barrientos’s conservative rule, for example, encouraged foreign investment and suppression of the left, whereas the "Revolutionary Nationalist" governments of Ovando and Juan José Torres González nationalized United States holdings and courted the workers, peasants, and students. Another conservative, Colonel Hugo Banzer Suárez (1971- 78), was forced out because of growing opposition and pressure from the United States to reestablish democracy. The attempt at a transition to democracy after 1978 failed at first because no single party achieved a majority in three elections, and alliances of various groups could not break the deadlock. Military coups, including one led by the ruthless and corrupt General Luis García Meza Tejada (1980-81), overthrew civilian interim presidents. Only in 1982 did the military return the country to democratic government.

**Bolivia History Timeline**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Bolivia Year in History | Bolivia Timeline |
| 1538  | **Spanish conquer Bolivia**Spanish conquer Bolivia, which becomes part of the Vice-royalty of Peru.  |
| 1825  | **Bolivia becomes independent with Simon Bolivar as its president.**Bolivia becomes independent with Simon Bolivar as its president.  |
| 1879  | **Bolivia becomes landlocked.**Bolivia becomes landlocked after losing mineral-rich, coastal territory in the Atacama to Chile.  |
| 1903  | **Bolivia loses the rubber-rich province of Acre to Brazil.**Bolivia loses the rubber-rich province of Acre to Brazi.  |
| 1920  | **Rebellion by indigenous peoples.**Rebellion by indigenous peoples.  |
| 1932  | **Bolivia loses territory to Paraguay after it is defeated in the Chaco War.**Bolivia loses territory to Paraguay after it is defeated in the Chaco War.  |
| 1952  | **Peasants and miners overthrow military regime**Peasants and miners overthrow military regime; Victor Paz Estenssoro returns from exile to become president and introduces social and economic reforms, including universal suffrage, nationalization of tin mines and land redistribution, and improves education and the status of indigenous peoples.  |
| 1964  | **Military coup**Vice-President Rene Barrientos stages military coup.  |
| 1967  | **US helps suppress peasant uprising led by Ernesto “Che” Guevara.**US helps suppress peasant uprising led by Ernesto “Che” Guevara, who is killed after being betrayed by peasants.  |
| 1969  | **Vice-President Siles Salinas replaces Barrientos who is killed in plane crash.**Vice-President Siles Salinas replaces Barrientos who is killed in plane crash, but Salinas is himself deposed by the army, which rules with increased severity.  |
| 1971  | **Col Hugo Banzer Suarez comes to power after staging military coup.**Col Hugo Banzer Suarez comes to power after staging military coup.  |
| 1974  | **Banzer postpones elections**Banzer postpones elections and bans political and trade union activity in the wake of an attempted coup.  |
| 1980  | **General Luis Garcia stages coup.**General Luis Garcia stages coup after inconclusive elections; US and European countries suspend aid in view of allegations of corruption and drug trafficking.  |
| 1981  | **General Celso Torrelio Villa replaces Garcia, who is forced to resign.**General Celso Torrelio Villa replaces Garcia, who is forced to resign.  |
| 1982  | **Torrelio resigns as the economy worsens**Torrelio resigns as the economy worsens; military junta hands over power to civilian administration led by Siles Zuazo, who heads a leftist government.  |
| 1985  | **Siles resigns in the wake of a general strike**Siles resigns in the wake of a general strike and an attempted coup; elections held but are inconclusive; parliament chooses Paz Estenssoro as president.  |
| 1989  | **Leftist Jaime Paz Zamora becomes president**Leftist Jaime Paz Zamora becomes president and enters power-sharing pact with former dictator Hugo Banzer.  |
| 1990  | **Some 4 million acres of rainforest allocated to indigenous peoples.**Some 4 million acres of rainforest allocated to indigenous peoples.  |
| 2000  | **Banzer announces the almost total eradication of the coca plant in the Chapare jungle region.**Banzer announces the almost total eradication of the coca plant in the Chapare jungle region.  |
| 2001  | **Government declares almost half of Bolivia a natural disaster area following heavy rains**Government declares almost half of Bolivia a natural disaster area following heavy rains  |
| 2003  | **More than 30 killed in violent protests against proposed income tax**More than 30 killed in violent protests against proposed income tax. President Sanchez de Lozada withdraws the proposal.  |
| 2005  | **President Mesa submits his resignation**President Mesa submits his resignation, blaming protests which he says have made it impossible to govern. Congress rejects the offer, as well as a later request by the president for early elections, and Mr Mesa remains in office.  |
| 2005  | **Socialist leader Evo Morales wins presidential elections**Socialist leader Evo Morales wins presidential elections. He becomes the first indigenous Bolivian to take office.  |
| 2006  | **President Morales claims victory in elections**President Morales claims victory in elections for a new assembly which will write a new constitution, aimed at giving more power to the indigenous majority.  |
| 2007  | **Government declares a state of emergency after months of heavy rain.**Government declares a state of emergency after months of heavy rain leave dozens of people dead and many thousands homeless.  |
| 2009  | **President Morales**President Morales is re-elected for a second term with more than 60% of the vote  |
| 2010  | **Cost of fuel increases**Thousands of Bolivians take to the streets to protest government plans to increase the cost of fuel.  |
| 2012  | **Conventions on Narcotics**Bolivia temporarily leaves United Nations Conventions on Narcotics in protest against classification of coca as an illegal drug.  |

**Bolivia Holidays and Events**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Display Date | Title |
| August 6th  | **Independence Day**  |
| December 25th  | **Christmas**Christmas in Bolivia is more of a religious celebration and Christmas decorations and gifts are few. Christmas trees are absent and Nativity scenes are usually handmade. In many villages, villagers congregate for communal meals which may feature pork, beef, fresh vegetables, and *locotos* (chili). More colorful festivities happen on New Year's eve. |

**Bolivia Meals and Food**

Recipes from Bolivia

* [Humintas - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Bolivia/recipe/humintas.htm)
* [Leche Asada (Roasted Milk) - Dessert](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Bolivia/recipe/leche-asada-roasted-milk.htm)
* [Masaco de Yuca (Yucca casserole) - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Bolivia/recipe/masaco-de-yuca-yucca-casserole.htm)
* [Pique Macho - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Bolivia/recipe/pique-macho.htm)
* [Sopa de Maní (Peanut Soup) - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Bolivia/recipe/sopa-de-mani-peanut-soup.htm)

**Bolivia Recipes and Diet**

Bolivia food and meal customs

**Diet**

A Bolivian breakfast usually consists of a cornmeal drink called "api" and an "empanada" (a pocket of pastry filled with cheese and other ingredients). Many people take a mid-morning break to eat a "saltena". Saltenas are a national dish. They are pockets of pastry filled with beef or chicken, peas, potatoes, onions, olives, raisins and an egg.

Potatoes are important in Bolivian cooking. In rural areas, people preserve potatoes by laying them out in the sun and then stamping on them to remove all of the water. They leave the potatoes to freeze during the night. These preserved potatoes are called "chunos" and they last for months.

Corn and beans are also staples. Sweet popcorn called "pasankalla" is a favorite treat and people enjoy eating white corn called "choclo". Cassava and fried plantains are popular side dishes. Rice and a grain called quinoa are often eaten with meals or added to soups. Bolivians enjoy a wide variety of fruits, including prickly pears and chirimoya (custard apples).

**Meals**

Lunch is generally the most important meal of the day. People take long lunch breaks and many try to eat at home with their families. Lunch usually begins with soup, followed by a main course. During the afternoon, people may take a tea break and eat a pastry with their tea. Most families eat a small supper at night.

**Bolivia Languages**

**Languages**

Spanish (official), Quechua (official), Aymara (official)

**Language Translations:**

**Greetings in Aymara**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Merry Christmas | Sooma Nawira-ra  |

**Greetings in Quechua**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Merry Christmas | Sumaj kausay kachun Navidad ch'sisipi |

**Greetings in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Do you speak English? | Habla usted ingles? |
| Do you speak Spanish? | Habla usted espanol? |
| Excuse me | Dispenseme |
| Fine / Good | Bien |
| Good afternoon | Buenas tardes |
| Good evening | Buenas tardes |
| Good morning | Buenos diás |
| Good night | Buenas noches |
| Goodbye | Adios |
| Happy New Year! | ¡Felíz año nuevo! |
| Hello | ¡Hóla! |
| How are you? | Como esta usted? |
| I'm pleased to meet you | Encantado de conocerle |
| Merry Christmas | Feliz Navidad |
| Please | Por favor |
| See you later | Hasta luego |
| Thank you | Gracias |
| Welcome | Bienvenido |
| What is your name? | Como se llama? / Deme su nombre |
| Yes / No | Si / No |

**Days in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Sunday | Domingo |
| Monday | Lunes |
| Tuesday | Martes |
| Wednesday | Miercoles |
| Thursday | Jueves |
| Friday | Viernes |
| Saturday | Sabado |

**Months in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| January | Enero |
| February | Febrero |
| March | marzo |
| April | Abril |
| May | Mayo |
| June | Junio |
| July | Julio |
| August | Agosto |
| September | Septiembre |
| October | Octubre |
| November | Noviembre |
| December | Diciembre |

**Colors in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Black | Negro |
| Blue | Azul |
| Green | Verde |
| Orange | Anaranjado |
| Pink | Rosado |
| Red | Rojo |
| White | Blanco |
| Yellow | Amarillo |

**Numbers in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| One | Uno |
| Two | Dos |
| Three | Tres |
| Four | Cuatro |
| Five | Cinco |
| Six | Seis |
| Seven | Siete |
| Eight | Ocho |
| Nine | Nueve |
| Ten | Diez |
| Fifty | Cincuenta |
| one Hundred | Cien |
| One Thousand | mil |

**Bolivia Clothing and Fashion**

Dress in Bolivia varies according to ethnic group, social class, and place of residence. Those in urban areas tend to wear European-style clothing.

The Aymara and Quechua people, who live in the “altiplano” region, have a distinctive way of dressing. Aymara women wear bright skirts called &ldquopolleras” and bowler hats. Aymara men often wear striped ponchos and hats with ear flaps called “chullos”. Quechua women wear long skirts and hats that are unique to their home village. Today, some Quechua and Aymara people wear Western clothes.



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**Dating, Family and Children Bolivia**

**Family and Children**

Bolivian families, especially those in rural areas, may include grandparents as well as parents and children. Grandparents often take care of their grandchildren if both parents work outside of the home. Children are taught to be respectful of their elders and often have a close relationship with their grandparents. If grandparents are not available, older children often watch over their brothers and sisters.

"Godparents" also play an important role, especially in rural areas. Being a godparent is a heavy responsibility, and the ties between godparents and their godchildren often last their entire lives. This relationship, which is called “compadrazgo”, creates connections among different families.



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**Bolivia Gestures and Greetings**

**Gestures**

Eye contact is considered essential and avoiding eye contact shows lack of trust, suspicion, or shyness. The title Senor ("Mr."), Senora ("Mrs."), or Senorita ("Miss") is used for first-time introductions or for a stranger such as a store owner. Patting someone on the shoulder is a sign of friendship.

**Visiting**

In rural areas, the fer'a (market day) is an important weekly social event. The fer'a gives rural people a chance to see each other and to hear the community news. Women often get together for tea at a friend's house or in a cafe. Bolivians enjoy attending parties or informal barbecues called "parrilladas". Bolivian parties usually feature music and dancing.

**Cultural Attributes**

In Bolivia, scheduled events begin late since arriving on time is not expected. Bolivians maintain little personal space and tend to stand close during conversations. In restaurants, the tip is usually included but leaving a little extra is considered polite.

**Bolivia Church and Religion**

Most Bolivians are Roman Catholic. Baptisms and First Communions are occasions for gatherings of extended family members. In February, celebrations honor the Virgin of Candelaria in Copacabana on the shores of Lake Titicaca. The Virgin of Candelaria is a statue that depicts the Virgin Mary as a dark-skinned woman. People pray to the Virgin for help with their problems, and many miracles are attributed to her intervention.

Catholics may also make a pilgrimage to Quillacollo during the fiesta of the Virgin of Urkupiña (the Virgin of the Mountain). In the 19th century, the Virgin Mary appeared to a young girl in the mountains near Quillacollo, and the site has been considered sacred ever since.

The Incas and, later, Quechua people worshiped Inti (the Sun God), Pachamama (the Earth Goddess), Mama Cocha (the Sea Goddess) and Illampu (the Storm God). The Incas believed that farming was sacred, and many of their holidays and festivals were held at important times during the farming year. Aymara people traditionally honored their ancestors, as well as Viracocha (the Creator God), Pachamama, Supay (an evil earth spirit) and many minor gods, goddesses and spirits. Ekeko, the Aymara household god who represents abundance, matchmaking, marriage and success, is honored annually at the Alacitas Festival in La Paz.

The right to practice different religions is guaranteed in the Bolivian constitution

**Students Life in Bolivia**

**Mornings**

Bolivians in general eat three meals a day, breakfast being the lightest of the three. Breakfast usually consists of a breadlike pastry and a drink, often tea or coffee for teenagers and adults. Various pastries and local fruits are also common to a Bolivian breakfast.

**School**

School is in session Monday through Friday and generally begins at 8:00 in the morning and is done at around 1:00 in the afternoon. In rural areas they sometimes must travel from 1 to 3 hours to and from the school, although in the cities they will usually walk or ride a public transportation bus to school, depending on how far from the school they live.

Bolivia’s public elementary and secondary schools are underfunded. In addition, a majority of the children come from low-income families. For the poorest children, the school lunch is the only meal they will have that day, so government and international agencies strive to provide well-balanced, affordable foods through the schools. These often include such staples as bananas and passion fruit, which are locally grown and help improve the nutrition of the students.

Not all schools have lunch programs, however. Many students, especially in areas with higher family incomes, will eat lunch at home.

**Classroom**

Classes usually begin at 8:00 a.m. and finish at 1:00 in the afternoon, Monday through Friday, although some schools will stop at noon for a lunch break, and then open back up from 2:00 until 5:00 p.m.

Many but not all schools require a school uniform of white shirts and pants or skirts. In secondary school, students in some schools might also need to have a separate sports uniform.

There is a wide variety of school resources in the Bolivian schools. In the poorer parts of the country, the schools lack benches, desks, and blackboards. The benches are old, and the schools are poorly maintained. In the cities, schools may have modern resources, complete with well-maintained facilities and sufficient computers for students to study technology, including Internet connectivity. A normal class size is 30 children.

**Student Learning**

Schools are required to teach 12 to 14 mandatory subjects to their students in the general areas of language and communications, mathematics, life sciences, technical and practical knowledge, and expression and creativity. Bolivia has three main cycles of education, and children are required to attend school from age 6 to 14. The first cycle consists of basic learning, then three years of essential skills, and finally two years of applied learning.

Many children drop out after the first six years. Even though education is mandatory until age 14, approximately 1 out of every 3 children aged 7 to 19 is in the workforce (71% of that young workforce lives in rural areas, with the remaining 29% coming from cities). Because of the high numbers of working children, night schools have become for some the only option for some children to become educated: over 500 schools have been created in Bolivia’s three largest cities of La Paz, Cochabamba, and Santa Cruz.

Additional studies show that approximately 80% of all elementary school students attend school, dropping to only 25% of secondary students remaining in school.

Like many Latin American countries, the quality of education can vary widely throughout the country, with money being the most important influence. In communities with more money, the schools have better resources; in poor villages, the local school can struggle to even provide the most basic education.

**After School Activities**

Sports in Bolivia are usually organized by leagues rather than schools, so schools offer very few sports or similar extracurricular activities. Nonetheless, some schools will offer after-school activities such as music, chorus, dance, or sports. A few might also have sports teams, such as volleyball, basketball, and soccer, although those few are more likely to be private schools.

**Student Free Time**

Regardless of where they gather, young Bolivians are generally courteous and concerned for one another’s well-being. Teenagers may get together regularly to watch movies, dance, and hang out in cafes and town plazas.

**Evenings**

Typical Bolivian food consists mostly of rice, beans, vegetables, chicken, pasta, meat, and various soups. Families usually eat together at lunch and dinner, and they do not snack in between meals. In fact, it is usually considered rude to “raid the refrigerator,” especially for children who are visiting friends at their home.

Bolivian social life is centered around the family, and parents are generally quite conservative in how they rear their children. The mother usually supervises the children and manages the household, while the husband is often occupied with work outside the home. Wealthier families often employ one or more maids to help with housework and cooking.

Families are very important to the social and economic lifestyle of Bolivia. Although children love to spend time with friends, the majority of their youthful evenings will be with family at home. Multiple generations will live together in the same home, eat together at meal times, watch TV together, and socialize together. Children are respectful of the older members of their family, and the elderly are included in all parts of the family’s activities.

**Education Culture**

 A long history of political problems and instability have had a negative effect on Bolivia’s overall educational programs. Though government officials, educational leaders, and the general population all understand that a successful future must include quality education, the challenges of a difficult economy and changing national politics makes that type of education easier to talk about than implement.

Bolivia has both public and private schools. Most schools are operated by the government, but religious and other organizations are allowed to run private schools as well. Private schools charge tuition and tend to have middle-class to upper-class students.

The school year begins each year in late February and ends in November, with a 15-day vacation in the middle of winter in late June and early July. Summer vacation then covers December to late February.

Education is seen as the best chance for someone to get a better job and improve the family situation. Families who have an educated person in the family are often viewed more favorably than others. Unfortunately, over half of all adults are not employed, and 15% of those who do have jobs are underemployed and underpaid.

**Bolivia Sport and Recreation**

Bolivians love soccer, which is called "futbol" in Spanish. Many Bolivians enjoy playing chess and card games. Women often play canasta or rummy. Men get together on Fridays, which are commonly called Bachelor Fridays, to play cacho, a game with dice, or sapo, in which they try to shoot small metal pieces into the mouth of a receptacle shaped like a frog.

Children play with marbles and with tops called "trompos". Little girls like to jump rope or play hopscotch, which is called "coscoja" or "tuncuna". Poorer children make their own toys, such as dolls or slingshots

Every year there is a reed boat race in Lake Titicaca and an annual swimming race. The contestants cover themselves in grease and swim quickly because the water is very cold.