



BOLIVIA



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	1	Contact Addresses
	2	General
	3	Passport
	4	Money
	5	Duty Free
	6	Public Holidays
	7	Health
	8	Accommodation
	9	Resorts & Excursions
	10	Sport & Activities
	11	Social Profile
	12	Business Profile
	13	Climate
	14	History and Government
	15	Overview

1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

Location: South America.

Viceministerio de Turismo

Avenida Mariscal Santa Cruz, Edificio de Comunicacion, Piso 16, La Paz, Bolivia

Tel: (2) 367 441. Fax: (2) 374 630. E-mail: turismo@mcei-bolivia.com

Web site: <http://www.mcei-bolivia.com/Turismo/turismo.htm>

Embassy and Consulate of the Republic of Bolivia

106 Eaton Square, London SW1W 9AD

Tel: (020) 7235 4248 or 7235 2257 or 7235 4255 (visa enquiries). Fax: (020) 7235 1286.

Opening hours: 0900-1730 (general enquiries) and 1000-1230 (consular and visa enquiries)

Monday to Friday.

British Embassy

Avenida Arce 2732, Casilla 694, La Paz, Bolivia

Tel: (2) 433 424 or 432 397 or 431 338. Fax: (2) 431 073.

E-mail: ppa@mail.rds.org.bo

Embassy of the Republic of Bolivia

3014 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008-3603

Tel: (202) 483 4410. Fax: (202) 328 3712.

E-mail: bolembus@erols.com

Embassy of the United States of America

Avenida Arce 2780, Casilla 425, La Paz, Bolivia

Tel: (2) 430 251. Fax: (2) 433 900.

Web site: <http://www.megalink.com/usemblapaz>

Bolivian Embassy

Suite 416, 130 Albert Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5G4

Tel: (613) 236 5730. Fax: (613) 236 8237.

E-mail: bolcan@iosphere.net

Web site: <http://www.iosphere.net/~bolcan>

Bolivian Consulate

11231 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 0L5

Tel: (403) 488 1525. Fax: (403) 488 0350.

Canadian Embassy

Avenida 20 de October 2475, Plaza Avaroa, Sopocachi, La Paz, Bolivia

Tel: (2) 432 838. Fax: (2) 430 250.

E-mail: cida-lapaz@mail.megalink.com

Country Dialling Code: 591.

2 GENERAL

Area: 1,098,581 sq km (424,164 sq miles).

Population: 7,767,000 (1997).

Population Density: 7.1 per sq km.

Capital: Legal: Sucre. Population: 163,563 (1997). Administrative: La Paz. Population: 758,141 (1997).

Geography: Bolivia is a landlocked country bordered by Peru to the northwest, Brazil to the north and east, Paraguay to the southeast, Argentina to the south, and Chile to the west. There are three main areas: the first is a high plateau known as the 'Altiplano', a largely barren region lying approximately 4000m (13,000ft) above sea level. It comprises 10% of the country's area and contains 70% of the population, nearly one-third of whom are urban dwellers. The second area is a fertile valley situated 1800m (5900ft) to 2700m (8850ft) above sea level. The third area comprises the lowland tropics which stretch down to the frontiers with Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, taking up some 70% of the land area. Rainfall in this region is high, and the climate is hot.

Government: Republic. Gained independence from Spain in 1825. Head of State and Government: President Banzer Suárez since 1997.

Language: The official languages are Spanish, Quechua and Aymará. English is also spoken by a small number of officials and businessmen in commercial centres.

Religion: Roman Catholic with a Protestant minority.

Time: GMT - 4.

Electricity: 110/220 volts AC in La Paz, 220 volts AC, 50Hz in the rest of the country. Most houses and hotels have 2-pin sockets for both electrical currents. Variations from this occur in some places.

Communications:

Telephone: IDD is available. Country code: 591. Outgoing international code: 00.

Mobile telephone: AMPS network operated by Telefonica Celular (web site: <http://www.telcel.com.bo>). A GSM 1900 network was installed in late 2000.

Fax: Services available.

Internet/E-mail: ISPs include Megalink (web site: <http://www.megalink.com>). There are cybercafés in main towns.

Telegram: Facilities are available from the West Coast of America Telegraph Company; head office at Edificio Electra, Calle Mercado 1150, La Paz.

Post: Airmail to Europe takes three to four days. A poste restante service is available.

Press: The Bolivian Times is published weekly in English. The main papers published in La Paz are La Razon, Hoy and El Diario.

BBC World Service and Voice of America frequencies: From time to time these change.

BBC:

MHz17.8415.226.1955.970

Voice of America:

MHz13.749.7757.4055.995

3 PASSPORT

	<i>Passport Required?</i>	<i>Visa Required?</i>	<i>Return Ticket Required?</i>
British	Yes	1	Yes
Australian	Yes	1	Yes
Canadian	Yes	1	Yes
USA	Yes	1	Yes
OtherEU	Yes	1	Yes
Japanese	Yes	1	Yes

Note: Some travellers (in particular those from Caribbean countries) should contact the Embassy (or Consular section at Embassy) before travelling to check the latest visa regulations.

PASSPORTS: Passport valid for at least 6 months beyond the intended length of stay required by all except holders of an identity card issued to nationals of Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay.

VISAS: Required by all except the following, provided travelling for touristic purposes:

- (a) 1. nationals of countries mentioned in the chart above (except nationals of Ireland, who do require a visa as well as special authorisation);
- (b) nationals of Antigua & Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Iceland, Israel, Monaco, New Zealand, Netherlands Antilles, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, St Lucia, St Kitts & Nevis, St Vincent & The Grenadines, South Africa, Switzerland, Turkey, Uruguay and Vatican City;
- (c) transit passengers continuing their journey by the same or first connecting aircraft within 24 hours provided holding valid onward or return documentation and not leaving the airport.

Note: (a) All nationals travelling on business do need a Business visa. (b) Nationals not requiring a tourist visa are usually allowed to stay for a period of 30-90 days; check with the Embassy (or Consular section at Embassy). (c) In addition to a visa, nationals of many countries also require special authorisation; check with the Embassy (or Consular section at Embassy).

Types of visa and cost: Tourist: cost depends on nationality; enquire at the Embassy (or Consular section at Embassy). Business: £35. Transit: cost depends on nationality.

Validity: Tourist visas are valid for 30 or 90 days (depending on nationality) from the date of entry. Business visas are valid for 1 month.

Application to: Consulate (or Consular section at Embassy); see address section.

Application requirements: (a) 1 colour passport-size photograph. (b) Completed application form. (c) Passport with remaining validity of at least 6 months. (d) Fee. (e) Return airline ticket or travel itinerary as proof of onward travel. (f) A yellow fever vaccination certificate may be required (see Health section). (g) For Business visas, a company letter as proof of business intentions and the dates of travel.

Working days required: 1-2 days for nationals requiring tourist visas without special authorisation. Between 3-8 weeks for all other nationals requiring tourist visas and special authorisation from the Bolivian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Temporary residence: Enquire at Bolivian Consulate.

4 MONEY

Currency: 1 Boliviano (Bs) = 100 centavos. Notes are in denominations of Bs200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of Bs2, and 1 and 50, 20, and 10 centavos.

Currency exchange: Money can be changed in hotels and cambios.

Credit cards: MasterCard, Diners Club, Visa and American Express have very limited acceptance. Check with your credit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available.

Travellers cheques: US Dollar travellers cheques are probably the best form of currency to take to Bolivia at present. Sterling cheques can sometimes be exchanged, but only with difficulty.

Exchange rate indicators

The following figures are included as a guide to the movements of the Boliviano against Sterling and the US Dollar:

Date March '00 Aug '00 Nov '00 Feb '01 £1.00=9.579.309.099.39 \$1.00=6.056.206.286.43

Note: The Boliviano is tied to the US Dollar.

Currency restrictions: There are no restrictions on the import or the export of either local or foreign currency, subject to declaration.

Banking hours: 0830-1200 and 1430-1800 Monday to Friday. Some banks open 0830-1200 Saturday.

5 DUTY FREE

The following goods may be taken into Bolivia without incurring customs duty by persons aged 18 and over:

200 cigarettes and 50 cigars and 500g of tobacco; 1 opened bottle of alcohol; a reasonable quantity of perfume.

6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Jan 1 2001 New Year's Day. Feb 24-27 Carnival. Apr 13 Good Friday. May 1 Labour Day. Jun 14 Corpus Christi. Aug 6 Independence Day. Nov 1 All Saints' Day. Dec 25 Christmas Day. Jan 1 2002 New Year's Day. Feb 11-12 Carnival. Mar 29 Good Friday. May 1 Labour Day. May 30 Corpus Christi. Aug 6 Independence Day. Nov 1 All Saints' Day. Dec 25 Christmas Day.

Note: There are other additional holidays celebrated in individual provinces and towns. For further details contact the Embassy or the Viceministerio de Turismo (see address section).

7 HEALTH

	<i>Special Precautions</i>	<i>Certificate Required</i>
Yellow Fever	Yes	1
Cholera	2	No
Typhoid and Polio	Yes	-
Malaria	3	-
Food and Drink	4	-

1: A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers arriving from infected countries. Vaccination is recommended for incoming travellers from non-infected zones visiting risk areas such as the Departments of Beni, Chuquisaca, Cochabamba, Pando, Santa Cruz, Tarija and part of the La Paz Department.

2: Following WHO guidelines issued in 1973, a cholera vaccination certificate is no longer a condition of entry to Bolivia. However, cases of cholera were reported in 1996 and precautions are essential. Up-to-date advice should be sought before deciding whether these precautions should include vaccination as medical opinion is divided over its effectiveness. See the Health appendix for more information.

3: Malaria risk exists throughout the year below 2500m, excluding urban areas, Oruro Department, the provinces of Ingavi, Los Andes, Omasuyos, Pacajes (La Paz Dept), and Southern and Central Potosí Department. Resistance to chloroquine and sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine has been reported. The disease occurs predominantly in the benign vivax form but falciparum malaria occurs in the northern departments bordering Brazil, especially in the localities of Guayaramerín, Riberalta and Puerto Rico.

4: Water used for drinking, brushing teeth or making ice should be boiled or otherwise sterilised. Milk is unpasteurised and should be boiled. Powdered or tinned milk is available and is advised, but make sure that it is reconstituted with pure water. Avoid all dairy products which are likely to have been made from unboiled milk. Only eat well-cooked meat and fish, preferably served hot. Pork, salad and mayonnaise may carry increased risk. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.

Rabies is present. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay. For more information consult the Health appendix. Diarrhoeal diseases and hepatitis A are common.

Health care: There is no reciprocal health agreement with the UK. Medical insurance is strongly recommended. All travellers, but especially those with heart conditions, should allow time to acclimatise to the high altitude of La Paz. In case of a medical emergency, La Paz has a good American clinic.

Travel - International

AIR: The national airline is Lloyd Aéreo Boliviano (LAB). Other airlines serving Bolivia include Aerolineas Argentinas and American Airlines, which fly from major European cities to La Paz via Miami. British Airways flies to Miami and Rio, from where connecting LAB or Varig flights to Bolivia are available.

Approximate flight times: From London to La Paz is 17 hours and to Santa Cruz is 17 hours.

International airports: La Paz (LPB) (El Alto) is 14km (8.5 miles) southwest of La Paz. Coach services to the city depart whenever there are scheduled flight arrivals (travel time - 20 minutes). Services from the city to the airport depart from Plaza Isabel La Católica. Minibus and taxis are also available.

Santa Cruz (VVI) (Viru-Viru) is 16km (10 miles) from the centre of Santa Cruz. Restaurant and duty-free facilities are available.

Departure tax: US\$20. Payable in US Dollars for all non-residents. There are additional exit taxes for visitors staying longer than 90 days; these vary according to onward destination.

SEA: Although it is a member of the International Maritime Organisation, Bolivia is wholly landlocked. However, it is possible to reach ports in Peru, Chile, Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina by ship, and from there there are rail connections to La Paz or Santa Cruz. The nearest seaport is Arica in the extreme north of Chile.

LAKE: Steamers cross Lake Titicaca to the Peruvian port of Puno from Guaqui, the most important port on the lake. Situated 90km (56 miles) from La Paz, it is accessible both by road and rail, though generally services are slow.

RAIL: There is a twice-weekly connection from La Paz to Buenos Aires (Argentina), and a twice-monthly connection to Arica (Chile). There is also a weekly train to Calama (Chile) with bus connections to Antofagasta. There is currently no service to Brazil via the line to Corumba.

ROAD: The Pan-American Highway which links the Argentine Republic with Peru crosses Bolivian territory from the south to the northwest. Driving in the rainy season may be hazardous. During recent years, much attention has been given to new roads, and the principal highways are now well maintained.

Travel - Internal

AIR: Airlines operating internal flights are LAB, AEROSUR and TAM (the army airline). Because of the country's topography and tropical regions, air travel is the best method of transport. La Paz (El Alto), which is the highest airport in the world, and Santa Cruz (Viru-Viru) are the chief internal airports.

Departure tax: Usually Bs10, but variable depending on airport and destination. It is advisable to check locally.

RIVER/LAKE: Passenger boats are operated between the various small islands on Lake Titicaca; most of them leave from Copacabana.

RAIL: Bolivia has 3697km (2297 miles) of track which goes to make up separate and unconnected networks in the eastern and western parts of the country. A daily through train or connection links La Paz and Cochabamba, with trains at least twice-weekly on other lines. Some trains have restaurant cars, but there are no sleeping-car services. The railways have recently renewed their rolling stock with Fiat railway carriages from Argentina. There are joint plans with the Brazilians to link Santa Cruz and Cochabamba.

ROAD: The internal road system covers 50,419km (31,330 miles). Work is in progress to improve the condition of major highways. Traffic drives on the right. Bus: Long bus trips off the main routes can be erratic. Taxi: All have fixed rates and sharing taxis is a common practice. Tipping is not necessary. Car hire: Hertz and local companies exist in La Paz. Documentation: An International Driving Permit is required. This can be issued by Federación Inter-Americana de Touring y Automovil on production of a national licence, but it is wiser to obtain the International Permit before departure.

URBAN: Bus services in La Paz are operated by a confederation of owner-operators. There are also some fixed route taxi 'Trufi' and 'Trufibus' systems which show coloured flags for particular routes. Fares are regulated.

JOURNEY TIMES: The following chart gives approximate journey times from La Paz (in hours and minutes) to other major cities/towns in Bolivia.

	Air	Road	Rail
Cochabamba	0.25	6.00	7.00
Santa Cruz	0.50	24.00	-
Tarija	1.00	18.00	-
Sucre	0.35	11.00	13.00
Potosí	0.40	12.00	12.00
Beni	0.35	--	--

8 ACCOMMODATION

It is important to arrive in La Paz as early as possible in the day as accommodation, particularly at the cheaper end of the market, can be hard to find.

HOTELS: Bolivia has several deluxe and first-class hotels. Service charges and taxes amounting to 25-27% are added to bills. Rates are for room only, except where otherwise indicated. There is a wide range of cheap hotel accommodation available, generally of good value. For details contact the Bolivian Chamber of Hotel Management, Hansa Building, 9th Floor, Off. 4, Avenida Mariscal Santa Cruz, La Paz (tel: (2) 318 259; fax: (2) 318 259).

GUEST-HOUSES: Several pensions in La Paz, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz provide visitors with reasonable comfort at a reasonable price.

CAMPING/CARAVANNING: There are few camping areas anywhere in South America. However, adventurous travellers may often find adequate lodging for the small fee usually charged at most American or European campsites. Despite no formal organisation or marked zones, camping is possible in Bolivia. Mallasa, Valencia and Palca in the river gorge below the

suburb of La Florida are recommended, also Chinguihue, 10km (6 miles) from the city. For details contact the Viceministerio de Turismo (see address section).

9 RESORTS & EXCURSIONS

La Paz: La Paz, the seat of national government, is situated 3632m (11,910ft) above sea level and is the world's highest capital city. Mount Illimani stands in the background. The city contains many museums and is well provided with modern and comfortable hotels. Nearby attractions include Lake Titicaca, the Yungas Valleys, the Chacaltaya ski resort and the exceptional rock formations in the Moon Valley.

Cochabamba: Cochabamba, known as the garden city, is 2558m (8390ft) above sea level and boasts a long tradition of local culture and folklore. The state of Santa Cruz is rich in natural resources; the city itself, despite considerable modernisation, still retains much of its colonial past and is characterised by its ethnic diversity (owing to the large number of immigrants it has attracted in recent years). Santa Cruz, which shares many historical links with neighbouring Argentina and Brazil, is Bolivia's fastest growing city as well as the centre of the country's economic growth. This region around the city is rich in tradition and folklore and the nearby rainforest offers abundant opportunities to lovers of outdoor activities (such as fishing or swimming). The area's rich cuisine is also to be sampled.

Potosí: Potosí is known as the imperial city and is situated at the foot of Rich Mountain, famed for its mineral wealth. In early colonial times, Potosí was the most important and populous city on the continent, and is now one of its greatest historical memorials. The House of Coins is just one example of this.

Oruro: Oruro is a traditional mining centre, and preserver of many relics of a colonial past. Every year the town hosts one of the most extraordinary and faithful expressions of folklore in South America during the famous carnival (February/March).

Sucre: Sucre, in the state of Chuquisaca, played an important part in the struggle for independence, and is rich in museums, libraries and historical archives. Among the most important are the Cathedral Museum, the National Library, the Colonial Museum, the Anthropological Museum, the Natural History Museum and the Recoleta Convent.

Tarija: Tarija stands 1957m (6480ft) above sea level. The area enjoys an excellent climate, and is festive and hospitable. With its beautiful flowers and fine wines, Tarija is the ideal place for finding peace and quiet.

The states of Beni and Pando, situated in the heart of the Bolivian jungle, occupy a region which offers the visitor landscapes of warmth and colour. The 'Golden' Pantiti with many navigable rivers is a popular place for excursions by both land and water. Good fishing is also possible in the region. The major towns in the area are Trinidad and Cobija.

10 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

An increasing number of local and international tour operators offer customised adventure tours to Bolivia, with a strong focus on trekking, mountaineering, ecotourism and wildlife and jungle tours. For further information, contact the Viceministerio de Turismo (see address section).

Trekking: Trekking: Bolivia's large range of geographical regions and climates makes for an exceptional variety of ecosystems, flora and fauna. There are currently ten national parks and eight protected areas, as well as another dozen or so areas that are being re-evaluated for park or protected area status. La Paz is the most popular starting point for trekking excursions, many of which follow ancient Inca routes through the Cordillera Real and end up in the Yungas, an area of deep valleys that separates the high Andes from the Amazon basin. Well-known trekking routes include the La Cumbre to Coroico trail (three days); the Taquesi route through the Cordillera Real (two days), also known as the Inca Trail; and the El Camino de Oro route (six days) starting at Sorata and ending at the Río Tipuani gold fields. Good maps of Bolivia can be obtained from the Instituto Geografico Militar in La Paz and other major cities.

Jungle tours: Jungle tours: Most treks to the Amazon jungle start from Rurrenabaque (235km/145 miles northeast of La Paz). Typical jungle trips include a motorised canoe trip up the rivers Beni and Tuichi, with rainforest walks and camping en route. Most tours are led by local guides who have an intimate knowledge of the indigenous plants and wildlife (which includes hundreds of species of tropical birds). Further popular itineraries for treks in the Amazon region include expeditions to the pampas (good for wildlife viewing); the remote Parque Nacional Noel Kempff; and river trips along the Río Mamoré.

Mountaineering: Mountaineering: The best opportunities are in the Cordillera Real, which has several peaks above 5000m (14,500ft). Climbing excursions (complete with mules, porters and guides) can also be booked in Sorata, which is set in a beautiful valley with an abundance of trees and flowers.

Skiing: Skiing: At an altitude of 5486m (18,000ft), Mount Chacaltaya (55km/35 miles from La Paz) is reputedly the world's highest ski resort. Visitors should note, however, that lift and accommodation facilities are fairly basic and that low oxygen levels and icy snow often make for difficult conditions. The best time to attempt skiing here is from April to June.

Fishing: Fishing: Bolivia is reputed to offer some of the best lake fishing in the world, especially for trout.

11 SOCIAL PROFILE

Food & Drink: Bolivian food is distinctive and is generally good. National dishes include empanada salteña (a mixture of diced meat, chicken, chives, raisins, diced potatoes, hot sauce and pepper baked in dough), lomo montado (fried tenderloin steak with two fried eggs on top, rice and fried banana), picante de pollo (southern fried chicken, fried potatoes, rice, tossed salad with hot peppers), chuño (naturally freeze-dried potato used in soup called chairó) and lechón al homo (young roast pig served with sweet potato and fried plantains). International- and local-style restaurants are available in La Paz and other main towns. Drink: Bolivian beer, especially paceña, is one of the best on the continent. Chicha, made from fermented cereals and corn, is very strong. Mineral water and bottled drinks are available. Local bars are increasing in number and are unrestricted with no licensing hours.

Nightlife: La Paz has many nightclubs, which generally open around midnight. There are also numerous whiskeria, local bars. On Fridays and Saturdays there are folk music and dancing shows, which start late in the evening. Cochabamba and Santa Cruz have several discotheques.

Shopping: Special purchases include woodcarvings, jewellery, llama and alpaca blankets, Indian handicrafts and gold and silver costume jewellery. Shopping hours: 0930-1230 and 1500-1930 Monday to Friday; 1000-1500 Saturday.

Special Events: For a complete list of events and festivals, contact the Embassy (see address section). In many places a festival is associated with a local holiday. The following list is a selection of some of the major festivals and events celebrated in Bolivia:

Feb 2001 Carnival, Oruro, Sucre, Santa Cruz and Tarija. Mar 8 San Juan de Dios, Tarija. Mar 11 Phujllay (one of the largest fiestas in Bolivia), Tarabuco. Apr 8-14 Holy Week. May 3 Fiesta de la Cruz, countrywide. Jun Santísima Trinidad (most important festival in the Beni at the start of the month); Gran Poder, La Paz; San Juan, Tarija, Santa Cruz and rural provinces. Jun 14 Corpus Christi, Potosí, Sucre and Copacabana. Jun 29 San Pedro and San Pablo Fiestas, countrywide. Jul 25 Apostle Santiago, Tarija and throughout the Andes. Jul 31 San Ignacio de Moxos (one of the largest festivals in the Beni). Aug 15 Virgen de Urkupiña (greatest religious celebration in Cochabamba), Quillacollo; other religious festivals, countrywide. Aug 28-Sep 4 San Agustín, Toledo. Sep 1-9 San Roque, Tarija. Sep 14-29 Lord of the Exaltation, Potosí, Cochabamba and Oruro. Sep 21 Spring Equinox, Tihuanacu. Oct 24-28 San Rafael, Santa Fé. Nov 1-2 All Saints' Day, throughout the country. Nov 10 Santo Domingo, Oruro. Nov 18 Anniversary of the Foundation of the Beni Department, Trinidad. Nov 30 San Andrés, Santa Cruz and Taquri. Dec 8 Día de la Inmaculada Concepción, Santa Cruz and Cochabamba. Dec 14 Santa Barbara (7 day festival), Oruro. Dec 24 Christmas Eve Celebrations, throughout the country.

Social Conventions: Normal social courtesies in most Bolivian families and respect for traditions should be observed. Remember to refer to rural Bolivians as campesinos rather than Indians, which is considered an insult. Western dress and diet are gradually being adopted by the campesinos (although further to the north great poverty remains); a suit and tie for men and dress for women should be worn for smart social occasions. Casual wear is otherwise suitable. Smoking is accepted except where indicated. Tipping: It is customary to add 10% as a tip to the 13% service charge added to hotel and restaurant bills. Porters also expect tips for each piece of luggage.

12 BUSINESS PROFILE

Economy: Bolivia has the second lowest per capita income in Latin America. Agriculture employs nearly half the working population although it suffers from relatively low productivity. The main cash crops are soya, sugar and coffee; timber is an import and export earner, as are beef and hides from the extensive livestock-rearing industry. There is also a substantial unregistered and illegal trade in coca, the plant source for cocaine, which provides a livelihood for many peasants, although the Government has officially co-operated with the USA in a major continent-wide campaign to eradicate it. Bolivia has large mineral deposits, especially of tin - of which it is one of the world's leading producers - and also natural gas, petroleum, lead, antimony, tungsten, gold and silver. Oil and gas deposits serve both to meet the much of the country's energy needs and as valuable export commodities. Reliance on primary products has made Bolivia vulnerable to fluctuations in world commodity prices, which have been low throughout the 1990s. Bolivia is a member of the Latin American Integration Association, the River Plate Basin Alliance and, most importantly, of the Andean Pact. The country's largest trading partners are neighbouring Brazil, Argentina and Chile along with the USA followed by Japan and the EU countries.

Business: Suit or a shirt and tie should be worn. Appointments should be made in advance. Office hours: 0830-1200 and 1430-1830 Monday to Friday; 0900-1200 Saturday (some offices).

Commercial Information: The following organisation can offer advice: Cámara Nacional de Industrias, 1st Floor, Edif. Cámara Nacional de Comercio, Piso 14, Avenida Mariscal Santa Cruz 1392, La Paz (tel: (2) 374 477; fax: (2) 362 766; e-mail: cni@mail.megalink.com).

13 CLIMATE

Bolivia has a temperate climate but with wide differences between day and night. The wettest period is November to March. The northeast slopes of the Andes are semi-tropical. Visitors often find La Paz uncomfortable because of the thin air due to high altitude. The mountain areas can become very cold at night.

Required clothing: Lightweight linens with a raincoat. A light overcoat is necessary at night, particularly in the Altiplano and the Puna.

14 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

History: Bolivia was inhabited by the ancient Aymará civilisation, who lived on Lake Titicaca. Later this civilisation was conquered by the Incas, who were themselves conquered by the Spanish in 1538. Throughout the country's colonial history it was known as Upper Peru. In 1825 Simon Bolivar led the country to independence. In its early years, independent Bolivia was ruled by a succession of caudillos (military dictators) who tried with mixed success to integrate the country's three disparate regions - the central region, the eastern Andes and the Altiplano - into a national entity. Wars with three neighbouring countries followed. The 1879-83 War of the Pacific, against Peru (with whom Bolivia had been briefly confederated in the 1830s) and Chile, and later the 1928 Chaco Wars against Paraguay, as a result of which Bolivia lost the strip of land leading to the coast. The one positive effect of the wars was that the rule of the caudillos was challenged by a rising mercantile class whose prosperity was rooted in the mining industries then under steady development. In 1953 Chile declared the port of Arica 'free' and has allowed Bolivia certain privileges in its use. The issue was never fully settled, until 1992, when Peru agreed to allow Bolivia free use of the port of Ilo for 100 years. Bolivia itself has, meanwhile, entered an unprecedented era of political stability, ending a record of military coups and recurrent internal strife which was little short of ludicrous: there were 192 coups in the 156 years from independence to 1981, an average of one every ten months. Much of the credit is due to President Victor Paz Estenssoro - the grand old man of Bolivian politics who had also held the presidency in 1952-56 and 1960-64 - who was elected in August 1985 at the head of a loose coalition of both left- and right-wing parties. By the time Paz Estenssoro ceded office in August 1989 to Jaime Paz Zamora, rampant hyper-inflation (an estimated 14,000% in 1985) had been dramatically cut after initial unrest over the Government's strict austerity programme. Paz Estenssoro had been the candidate of one of Bolivia's five main political parties, the Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario (MNR). The other four are the right-wing Acción Democrática Nacionalista (ADN), the Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR), the Unión Cívica Solidaridad (UCS) and Conciencia de Patria (CONDEPA). The most recent presidential election in June 1997 returned the ADN candidate Hugo Banzer Suarez, a former general with a long history of political activity, as president after a second round of voting. Perhaps the most important domestic issue for the Government is the US-sponsored 'war on drugs'- coca and its products in the case of Bolivia - which is widely unpopular in the country where coca is considered to be both a traditional product and a valuable cash crop. Other important foreign policy issues are the development of regional cooperation, principally concerned with trade and economic harmonisation and - on a bilateral level - Bolivia's persistently problematic relations with Chile.

Government: The bicameral congress is the legislature, and is made up of the 27-member Senate and 130-member Chamber of Deputies. Both the Congress and the President, who is head of state and wields executive power with a Cabinet of Ministers, are directly elected for terms of four years.

15 OVERVIEW

Country Overview: Bolivia borders Peru to the northwest, Brazil to the north and east, Paraguay to the southeast, Argentina to the south, and Chile to the west. La Paz, the seat of government, is the world's highest capital city. It contains many museums and provides visitors with modern and comfortable hotels.

Cochabamba, the garden city, boasts a long tradition of local culture and folklore and Tarija City's excellent climate, combined with beautiful flowers and fine wines, makes it ideal for finding peace and quiet.

The states of Beni and Pando, in the heart of the jungle, occupy a region offering visitors dramatic and colourful landscapes. The 'Golden' Pantiti's many rivers provide popular land and water excursions.

National dishes include empanada salteña (a mixture of diced meats, chives, raisins, diced potatoes, hot sauce and pepper baked in dough) and lomo montado (fried tenderloin steak with two fried eggs, rice and fried banana). Cruzena, is considered to be one of the best beers on the continent.

La Paz has many nightclubs, which generally open around midnight. On Fridays and Saturdays there are folk music and dancing shows which start late in the evening.

More countries : <http://www.umzugs.com>