



Latin America

Travellers Guide



Peru, Ecuador, Galapagos, Colombia, Brazil, Uruguay, Bolivia, Argentina, Chile,
Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, Cuba

The Latin America and Polar Travel Specialists

Live for today...

WELCOME TO LATIN AMERICA

Finally, your Latin America journey is about to begin. If you are reading this Travellers Guides it means that you are about to set off on the adventure of a lifetime.

Hosting a variety of incredulous terrains, distinct cultures, intriguing histories and hordes of wildlife, Latin America has something for everyone. From the lush islands of the Galapagos and jungles of the Amazon, to the heights of Machu Picchu and the Andes, to the turquoise waters of the Caribbean and the red earth of Atacama Desert, Latin America is a land as beautiful as it is diverse. You will find a little bit of everything here.

Latin America offers an array of opportunities from thrill-seeking to deep relaxation. Whether you are looking to kayak your way through the Lakes District, trek across Patagonia, learn to salsa in Cuba, explore an ancient civilization, scuba diving in Belize or relax on the white sand beaches of Rio de Janeiro, Latin America has something for you. And don't forget to try out the amazing cuisine while you're there. Let the sights, sounds and smells of Latin America captivate you during your trip. We know it won't take long before you've fallen in love with these diverse and stunning regions.

Please read carefully through the handbook as it contains some important information and helpful hints that will help you to prepare for the day-to-day activities and alert you on some things to expect while travelling in Central and South America.

Thank you for choosing to travel with us. We hope you are as excited about your trip as we are.

Greg Carter & Chad Carey

Co-Founders of Chimu Adventures



YOUR TRAVEL DOCUMENTATION

Being environmentally accountable is a crucial part of our organisation. We are currently striving towards using less paper, taking several initiatives to do so and tracking our progress along the way.

Our goal – **a paperless organisation.**

When taking into consideration gas emissions from paper production, transportation, use and disposal, 98 tonnes of other resources are going in to making paper. Paper and pulp production has been noted as the 4th largest industry contributor of greenhouse gas emission in the world today and around 30 million acres of forest is destroyed each year. As a way of giving back to the earth that makes who we are and what we do possible, we are highly dedicated to playing our part in minimising our impact with our 'paperless' movement.

Our office initiatives include online banking, sending of all items electronically, printing only to order on recycled paper and ensuring our staff are kept accountable for their paper usage. We also use online messaging boards for staff communication and frequently recycle in our offices.

Your Travel Documentation

For these reasons all documentation including your Final Travel Documentation will be sent electronically. We encourage our travellers to support our aspirations and actions and ask that you reconsider printing out your documentation. To view your Travel Documentation including this guide simply download them to your iPad, Smart Phone or portable computer before you depart for access during your trip.

At the end of the day you've paid for an incredible holiday experience, not for a piece of paper. So we hope you're on the same page (pardon the pun!).

We're going paperless, will you?

For more information about our Best Practice Guide on sustainability for our organisation and our travellers please go to:

www.chimuadventures.com/about/bestpractices



M.A.D PROJECT

Travelling to Latin America is a moving and thought-provoking experience. We have talked to many travellers who have returned wanting to give back to the wonderful destinations that gave so much.

Since we started in 2004, we have been working with separate projects in and around Latin America and have been advising our travellers individually about these wonderful initiatives. Now, we have pulled these all together under the banner of the Make A Difference (M.A.D.) Project, where we can directly work and promote humanitarian programs that would not otherwise have a voice. This project was set up with facilitation in mind and it is a place where those who want to help make a difference to challenged communities, the environment and historical preservation can come and find reliable ways to contribute. All of our projects have been thoroughly researched for their ethical and moral outcomes. We support the MAD Project so that the project itself has no overheads, every donation made is passed onto the projects it supports, in full.

If you would like to contribute or learn more about this or one of the other projects, donate, join an event or get involved, visit our project at:

www.madproject.org

Doubt breeds Inactivity

Hope breeds Movement

- we hope you join our M.A.D. world.



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1. GENERAL LATIN AMERICA INFORMATION

General Latin America information

Once you are confirmed on a Latin America trip, you will receive an itinerary and welcome brief, plus if confirmed on a Polar cruise various forms requesting personal and medical information, flight details etc. Completed forms need to be returned at least 90 days in advance of your departure, as the forms contain information required for the ship's manifest, as well as your safety on-board. Final documents are sent out approximately 30 days prior to departure. These include detailed transfer and boarding information, contact information for the ship and local emergency contact information for your port of departure.

If you are arriving in your joining city ahead of cruise departure, please ensure that you have booked pre-tour accommodation. If you would like to book any other additional services or tours, prior to or after your Antarctic cruise, please contact your booking agent.

Travel advice and safety precautions

Australian citizens: For Australian citizens travelling anywhere in the world, we recommend registering with Smarttraveller to be kept up to date with the latest travel advice and safety precautions: <https://smartraveller.gov.au>

New Zealand citizens: For New Zealand citizens travelling anywhere in the world, we recommend registering with Safe Travel be kept up to date with the latest travel advice and safety precautions: <https://www.safetravel.govt.nz/register-your-travel>

UK citizens: For UK citizens travelling anywhere in the world, we recommend checking the FCO website for the latest travel advice and safety precautions: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

1.1 CONTACT DETAILS WHILE TRAVELING

If you need to speak to our teams on the ground in Latin America while travelling, please refer to your confirmed itinerary for contact details.

Please note: they will assist you with anything related to your travels such as flight or hotel changes once you have begun your travels. Please, do not contact our local offices prior to commencing your travel arrangements for matters regarding payment or if you wish to book additional services. For these matters, please contact your booking agent.



1.2 TAXES, ENTRANCE CHARGES, PASSPORT & VISAS

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

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

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

Some airports also charge an airport usage fee or embarkation fee that is not included in your ticket price.

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

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

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

Important note for passengers travelling via New Zealand: Some visitors and transit passengers can travel to New Zealand without a visa if they get an NZeTA (New Zealand Electronic Travel Authority) before they travel.

You can: Travel to New Zealand without first applying for a visa – if you are from a visa waiver country, a cruise ship passenger or a permanent resident of Australia. Pass through Auckland International Airport as a transit passenger on the way to or from Australia. And pass through Auckland International Airport as a transit passenger on the way to another country – if you are from a visa waiver or transit visa waiver country.

Please note: If you are from a visa waiver country you must hold an NZeTA before you travel. Allow up to 72 hours for processing, but it could take as little as 10 minutes. An NZeTA request costs NZD \$9 via the app, or NZD \$12 if completed online. You pay an International Visitor Conservation and Tourism Levy (IVL) at the same time as your NZeTA. This costs NZD \$35.



Disclaimer: While we will assist in every possible way to provide you with accommodation and flight details necessary to obtain any necessary visas, we are not a consular service and it is the sole responsibility of the traveller to obtain the necessary visas before departing Australia either through our partner site visalink, or through the consulate. Travelling without a visa may result in the cancellation of part or the whole of your tour without refund. Please refer to our terms and conditions for more information.

1.3 FLIGHTS AND ADDITIONAL AIRPORT TAXES

Flights in Latin America can be subject to change. You may experience unusually long connection times. This is due to the fact that flights in Latin America don't operate as frequently as other destinations. Between major cities such as Lima and Rio there are often only one or two flights per day. There may also be a long transit time of perhaps four plus hours. It may be possible to stay at a hotel in the transit location so please do ask us if this is an option you would like to explore.

1.4 TRAVEL INSURANCE

Please note: that **travel insurance is mandatory** on all itineraries. Travel insurance is one of the most important components of any trip, especially if you are travelling through Latin America to Antarctica – the most remote and inhospitable place on Earth. It is vital that you have the most suitable travel insurance policy with adequate levels of cover.

Any travel insurance policy you purchase should cover you for **accidents, emergency evacuation, sickness, loss of baggage and personal belongings**, as well as **disruption to travel** and **alterations to your pre-booked travel plans** due to local issues.

1.5 BAGGAGE ALLOWANCES

Airlines often enforce baggage restrictions and so we recommend that you check with your airlines ahead of time to determine what your carry-on and checked bag allowance is. This will ensure that you avoid possible check-in issues or excess baggage fees which can be very expensive. The allowances vary greatly between airlines, so we advise you to check the restrictions for each of your flights.



Domestic flights often have stricter baggage restrictions than international flights, with lower weight restrictions. Some carriers do not include baggage allowance on their domestic routes and will charge upon check in. Please ensure you check this at time of booking your flights.

Charter flights also have very strict luggage restrictions, so check these carefully as well if a charter flight is included in your travels.

If you are traveling via the United States, we advise that you do not lock your luggage, or alternatively use a Travel Security Administration (TSA) approved security device. Always carry your important documents and necessities (including any prescribed medication) in your carry-on luggage, not in your checked luggage.

1.6 DEPOSIT & FINAL PAYMENT

Please refer to your invoice for details of deposit and final payment. All deposits are non-refundable as per our terms and conditions. It is important to remember that failure to pay deposits or to make the final payment by the due date may result in the cancellation of your booking.

1.7 HEALTH INFORMATION

Vaccination requirements

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

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

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



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

The following websites give further health advice and information on travelling to Latin America:

<http://www.traveldoctor.com.au>

<http://travelvaccines.com.au/index.php/south-america>

1.8 PERSONAL GEAR & PACKING ESSENTIALS

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

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

- Passport – Ensure that it is valid, in good condition with empty pages available
- Photocopy of Passport or upload a photo image of your passport
- Travel Insurance – Ensure that it will be valid for the entire journey
- Passport Photos – Often needed for identification passes and certain overseas visas
- Air tickets and itinerary
- Foreign Currency (US\$) and/or debit/credit cards, traveller's cheques
- Debit/credit card cancellation phone numbers
- Emergency contact numbers
- Money belt – Ensure that it is discrete and comfortable to wear
- Small daypack (for day or overnight trips)
- Basic First Aid kit – Band Aids/Bandages, Anti-diarrhoea remedy, Panadol/Aspirin, Rehydration remedy, Antiseptic cream/powder, Sterile dressing, Personal medication
- Sun block – High UVA protection ideally
- Sunglasses and sunhat
- Mosquito spray and insect repellent
- Comfortable walking shoes (wear these in well before the trip)
- Sandals



- Long-sleeve top and trousers – Useful to protect against mosquitoes at dawn and dusk and the sun through the day
- Light-weight clothing
- Warm clothing (depending on itinerary and time of year)
- Camera with spare battery and memory cards
- Security code padlock
- Adaptor
- Small torch

1.9 MONEY IN LATIN AMERICA

Please refer to the country section for currency relevant to your holiday.

Shopping and Bargaining Tips

Haggling is a way of life in Latin America and is expected in markets and small shops. Please ask your guide for a few tips.

Anything from local handicrafts to designer clothing can be bought in Latin America and is generally at a lower cost than your home country (especially in Peru, Bolivia, Guatemala and Ecuador).

Gold and silver are also very affordable, particularly in Peru. Please beware when returning home (particularly Australia) as some handicrafts are made of wood and may contain seeds that cannot go through customs.

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

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

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

Tipping Guidelines

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



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

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

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

1.10 TOURISM & SUSTAINABILITY

We encourage sustainable touring with all our customers. Remember that in a lot of the places you visit, the infrastructure may not be the same as you are used to in your home country, and locals generally use lower levels of water and electricity. As tourism increases, it places a large strain on the local water reticulation, power supply and other resources. Take short showers in your hotel, turn out the lights when you leave your hotel room, minimize your waste and if on a trek, make sure you bag your rubbish while you are hiking.

Also remember all ecosystems in Latin America such as the Andes, the Amazon, Patagonia and the Pantanal are extremely delicate. When in these rural areas please stay on the trails and don't damage or take any plants or flowers.

Latin American people are proud of their culture and ancestry. Although they are now accustomed to international tourists, each area continues to maintain their identity and culture. Most Latin Americans outside of Brazil dress conservatively. Consider wearing trousers and long sleeve shirts to minimise any potential offence.

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

For more information about our Best Practice Guide on sustainability please go to: www.chimuadventures.com/about/bestpractices



1.11 SAFETY

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

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

- When taking taxis from an airport to your hotel, travel in the more expensive airport taxis and ensure that the drivers have official identification. Never take a taxi waiting outside the airport grounds.
- Travel in a group if possible.
- Learn the basics in Spanish before you arrive in Latin America. Don't expect people to speak English.
- Keep your valuables hidden and watch your pockets, especially around busy tourist areas such as Florida St in Buenos Aires and La Mariscal in Quito.
- Avoid going on your own to remote areas or ruins where tourists would not be expected to go.
- Seek local advice or take a guide.
- Read the guide books and talk with other tourists to find out which areas are best avoided.
- When leaving nightclubs, bars and discos late at night, take a taxi home no matter how close your hostel or hotel is.
- When arriving in a new town, keep to your original plan and stay in the hotel that you have decided on. Don't let the taxi driver persuade you that your hotel is fully booked and that they know a cheaper and better one. They'll be working on commission and the hotel may not be in a safe part of town.
- Although assaults are rare, theft can be prevalent. Latin American thieves are experts at taking advantage of a lapse in concentration. Long bus trips, crowded streets and packed trains are all their territory. We don't recommend that you avoid these places because you can't, but be cautious and use common-sense.
- Don't wear expensive looking jewellery.
- On public transport, always keep your day pack close to you, preferably with the straps around your legs or padlocked to the luggage rack. On buses, your backpack will normally go outside, either on top of the roof or in the external luggage compartments. On long distance buses, ask for a receipt for your bags. On short rides, just keep a careful eye out each time the bus stops to off-load bags.



- Leave your valuables in your hotel safe when making day trips or longer tours. Obtain a receipt not just for your money belt/wallet etc. but for its contents, with each item listed.
- If you plan on going to market areas, crowded streets, fiestas etc. don't go with all your valuables. Leave them in the hotel.
- If you're planning on buying something expensive, keep your money safely in a money belt.
- If the pavements are really crowded, especially in market areas, walk on the road.
- Bag slashing is rare these days, but for added safety you can wear your day pack on your chest. If it's on your back, try to walk without stopping.
- When putting your bag down on the floor, to take a photo or just to sit in a café, remember to put your foot through the strap. This is the most common type of theft in Latin America – tourists forgetting bags in cafes and on returning to ask if anyone has seen it it's gone.

Make sure you have travel insurance and that you have read the fine print before arriving in Latin America so you know what is required to make a successful claim.

If you are robbed, accept it as a travel experience. Excluding precious photos, most things can be replaced in Latin America. Don't let it spoil your holiday and don't believe that every Latin American is a thief. The overwhelming majority are kind, honest, hardworking people who detest the thieves probably more than you do – when they get robbed, they usually don't have coverage.



2. SPECIFIC LATIN AMERICA INFORMATION

2.1 PHOTOGRAPHIC TIPS & HINTS

Ensure that you check over and clean your photographic equipment before leaving home and ensure it is all in working order. If you have purchased a new camera or any other photographic equipment, we strongly recommend that you learn about it and how to use it before your trip. Make sure you bring spare batteries and plenty of memory cards, as you are likely to take far more photos than you expect.

We recommend the following:

- Bring a dry sac or waterproof bag to protect your camera and other equipment.
- Use a polarising filter or a 'warming' filter for shots of the ice and to reduce the glare on the water.
- Use a longer lens length or zoom for wildlife photography to avoid getting too close and disturbing the wildlife.
- Use a wide-angle lens to capture the true scale.
- Consider bringing a tripod.
- Bring spare memory cards, especially if you are not taking a laptop on which to download your images during the voyage.
- Bring camera cleaning gear.

2.2 LANGUAGE

Our partners in Peru offer a web-based tuition over Skype. This is a great opportunity to learn Spanish from a South American teacher. Block-bookings of 10, one-hour lessons are available. Please click on the below link for more information and to sign up: <http://www.webspanish.com>

For the basics of either Spanish or Portuguese check out the BBC languages website which has free online classes: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/>

Learning the language will help you feel more at home, relate to the locals and make the most of your travels. We recommend a Latin American Spanish or Portuguese phrasebook, but this guide will get you started:



Basic Latin American Spanish

Latin American Spanish	English
Hola	Hello
Buenas Días/Tardes	Good Morning/Afternoon
Como estas?	How are you?
Bien	Fine
Más o menos	More or less
Mal	Bad
Gracias	Thank you
Cuánto cuesta este?	How much is this?
Está bien	That's fine
Demasiado	Too much
Pocito menos?	A little less
Donde esta?	Where is?
El Mercado	The Market
La Plaza de Armas	The Main Plaza
El Baño	The Bathroom
La Tienda	The Store/Shop
Agua	Water
Gaseosa	Soft Drink
Jugo	Juice
de Naranja	Orange
de Papaya	Pawpaw/Papaya
de Fresa	Strawberry
Pan	Bread
Pollo	Chicken
Carne	Meat
Chanco/Cerdo	Pork
Policía	Police
Hospital	Hospital
Doctor	Doctor
Emergencia	Emergency
Ladrón	Thief
Amigo/Choche	Friend/Mate



Basic Brazilian Portuguese

Brazilian Portuguese	English
Olá	Hello
Bom dia	Good day
Como estas?	How are you?
Bem	Fine
Mais o menous	More or less
Mal	Bad
Obrigado/a	Thank you (Male or female)
Quanto Custa?	How much does it cost?
Esta Bem	That's fine
Muito	Too much
Pouco Menos	A little less
Onde é?	Where is?
Mercado	The Market
Praca Central	The Main Plaza
Banho	The Bathroom
Loja	The Store/Shop
Agua	Water
Especie de soda	Soft Drink
Suco	Juice
de Laranja	Orange
de Mamao	Pawpaw/Papaya
de Fresa	Strawberry
Pao	Bread
Frango	Chicken
Carne	Meat (beef)
Porco	Pork
Policia	Police
Hospital	Hospital
Doutor	Doctor
Emergencia	Emergency
Ladrao	Thief
Amigo	Friend



3. SPECIFIC LATIN AMERICA INFORMATION

ICONS OF LATIN AMERICA MAP



3.1 ARGENTINA

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

Did you know?

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

Visa

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

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

Please note: Australian citizens are no longer required to pay a "reciprocity fee" to enter Argentina. If you have any queries regarding other passports and/or any questions about the pre-payment, please contact your applicable Argentinean Consulate.

Time

Argentina time (ART) – UTC –3

Money

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

Please check websites such as www.oanda.com or www.xe.com for up-to-date



exchange rates prior to your departure.

It is easy to change foreign currency in Argentina and there are many foreign exchange bureaux (casas de cambio) throughout the country. You are advised not to change money at the Money Changers located just after immigration at Eziza Airport in Buenos Aires as the exchange rates are very low. If you must change foreign cash at the airport, you should go to the Banco de la Nacion. Better rates of exchange are given for larger bills (US\$50 or 100 and similarly with Euros). US dollars are widely accepted in large hotels, top-end restaurants, supermarkets and major stores, but please note that you will always receive change in pesos, even when you pay with US dollars.

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

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

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

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

Additional spending money

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

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

Argentina: Approximately US\$35–45 per day.

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

LDD, emergency numbers & Internet

Country code: + 54

Ambulance: 107

Police: 101



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

Electrical outlets

The power sockets are of type C and I. The standard voltage is 220v and the standard frequency is 50 Hz.

Climate

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

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

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

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

Cuisine

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

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



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

The pristine waters of Patagonia are home to an abundance of trout and salmon. In the area around Bariloche, Alpine cuisine is more the norm with chocolate bars and fondue restaurants. Tea rooms are a feature of the Welsh communities in Gaiman and Trevelin.

Recommended Argentinian dishes include:

Empanadas – Pastry filled with meat, cheese or mussels.

Asado – Barbecue of beef, pork or chicken.

Pastel de Choclo – Corn casserole with meat stuffing.

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

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

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

Languages

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

Additional Tax

Bariloche Eco-Tax

Please note that the below eco tax is now being implemented and charged on check out at the hotel in Bariloche. This is charged per person per night for a maximum of three nights, for stays in Bariloche only.

- 5-star accommodation: ARS\$60 per person per night (approx US\$4)
- 4-star accommodation: ARS\$45 per person per night (approx US\$3)
- 3-star accommodation: ARS\$30 per person per night (approx US\$2)



Iguazu Tourist Tax

Please note the Iguazu Tourist Tax is now being implemented and charged on check out at all hotels in Iguazu (Argentine & Brazil sides).

The amount is currently AR\$50 (US\$3.40) per person per stay. Please note this tax is subject to change without prior notice.

Transportation

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

Flights out of Ushuaia

Please refer to our Antarctica Travellers Guide for information regarding flights departing Ushuaia after your Antarctica cruise.



3.2 BOLIVIA

Bolivia is the highest, most rugged and most isolated country in the southern hemisphere. This landlocked country bordering Lake Titicaca, has unparalleled scenery ranging from rainforests to mountains, deserts, lagoons and volcanoes. It boasts amazing geological phenomena such as the Salar de Uyuni, the world's largest salt lake, the Valley of the Moon as well as thousands of square miles of virgin Amazon rainforest and towering Andean peaks.

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

Did you know?

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

Visa

A pre-arranged visa is not required to enter Bolivia for citizens of Australia, Canada, the European Union, Ireland, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. Citizens from South Africa and United States of America do require a visa.

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

Time

Bolivia time (BOT) – UTC -4

Money

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

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

We recommend that you travel with a supply of US dollars, as well as small amounts of local currency, as the US dollar is readily accepted across the continent in major department stores, hotels and tourist areas. Use local currency for small purchases. Dollars can be changed in foreign exchange bureaux (casas de cambio), hotels and



tourist offices or on the street. Street vendors usually give a better rate, however proceed with caution! Banks are closed on Saturdays and Sundays. Please ensure that the US dollar notes you take with you to Bolivia are crisp, new notes. It is almost impossible to change US dollar bills that have even the slightest tear or marking on them, even at the airport. Although banks supposedly must accept them, there are reports that some banks discount the exchange rate by 20% for dollar notes that are not in pristine condition.

Additional spending money

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

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

Bolivia: Approximately US\$25–30 per day.

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

LDD, emergency numbers & Internet

Country code: +591

Ambulance: 118

Police: 110

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

Electrical outlets

Power Sockets are type A and C. Most of Bolivia uses 220–330 volt outlets. Be aware that some old buildings in La Paz still use 110 volt outlets. power sockets are of type C and I.

Climate

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

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



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

The climate of Bolivia varies dramatically from tropical in the eastern llanos to polar in the western Andes. The summers are warm and humid in the east and dry in the west. Winters are very cold in the west with snow around the mountain ranges, while in the western regions, windy days are more usual. The autumn is dry in the non-tropical regions.

The Llanos region has a humid tropical climate with an average temperature of 30°C and significant rainfall.

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

The Valleys and Yungas have a temperate climate, with high humidity and rainfall. Temperatures are lower at higher elevations.

In the Chaco region there is a subtropical semi-arid climate. Days tend to be warm and nights cool.

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

Rurrenabaque has a tropical climate with rainfall throughout the year. Over the course of a year the temperature typically varies from 17°C to 33°C and is rarely below 14°C or above 36°C. Rainfall is lowest in August and highest in January and February.

Altitude

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

To prevent altitude sickness you should try to take things easy as soon as you arrive, rest and drink plenty of fluids. Do not plan any strenuous excursions or treks until you have acclimatized for a few days. You should avoid alcohol, cigarettes and heavy foods. Drinking mate de coca, an infusion of coca leaves may help. If symptoms become more severe and prolonged you should quickly seek medical attention and make



arrangements to descend to a lower altitude. After recovery you can re-ascend slowly or in stages. Some visitors use the drug Diamox to speed up the acclimatization process and counteract the symptoms of altitude sickness.

La Paz sits at 3,640m (11,900ft) and Lake Titicaca at 3,810m (12,500ft).

Please remember that altitude sickness effects everyone differently and usually has nothing to do with your general fitness level. If your conditions persist whilst travelling, consult with our local office who will be happy to help you and be able to give you some options regarding the rest of your trip. If you are really worried about AMS and/or have a history with it then talk to your consultant about putting more rest days into your itinerary. Remember that most of our itineraries tours are fully customisable.

Cuisine

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

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

Some notable Bolivian dishes include the following:

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

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

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

We recommend our clients drink bottled water and always avoid tap water which is not safe to drink in Bolivia. Please note that many fruit juices may be mixed with unboiled water and some fruit may be washed in it.

Language

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



the border with Paraguay.

Safety

Crime against tourists has increased in recent years in Bolivia, especially in La Paz and to a lesser extent in Cochabamba, Copacabana and Oruro. Be careful of pickpockets especially in crowded areas and never leave your bags unattended even in hotel foyers as there are often opportunist thieves acting as if they work at the hotel. Scams are quite common and there are also increasing numbers of fake police, false tourist police and 'helpful' tourists that you need to be wary of. If you are approached by what appears to be a plain-clothed police officer, do not show them your Passport or any valuables. Undercover police are under orders not to hassle tourists.

If taking a taxi, ensure that the taxi is a Radio Cab with the phone number and their call centre listed on a board above the cab.

There is a strong tradition of social protest in Bolivia and demonstrations are a regular occurrence throughout the country. The demonstrations are generally peaceful, but protestors will throw stones and rocks if they become agitated. The best advice is to avoid any such demonstration. Roadblocks (bloqueos) are also quite regular and can result in long delays. During transport strikes it is best not to use taxis as they are targets for rocks for not supporting the protest.



3.3 BRAZIL

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

From cruising the remote waters of the Amazon in Brazil's north to celebrating the world's greatest carnival in bustling Rio or sipping caipirinhas at Copacabana beach, Brazil offers diversity that is second to none.

Did you know?

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

Visa

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

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



Time

Brazil is divided into four time zones and only part of the country observes daylight saving time or 'summer time' as it is officially called.

Rio de Janeiro UTC-3

Amazon UCT -4

Fernando de Noronha UCT-2

Money

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

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

Brazil has a very extensive banking network and ATMs are widely accessible. Most banks have ATM facilities, some of which accept foreign credit and debit cards. With very few exceptions, bank ATMS do not function between the hours of 10.00pm and 6.00am for security reasons. During this period cash is only available from private ATMs in pharmacies, petrol stations, or convenience stores. If using one of these private ATMs, please note that withdrawal fees are very high.

The permitted withdrawal amount per card per day is generally R\$ 1,000 but this is reduced to R\$ 500 after 10.00pm.

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

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

Additional spending money

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

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

Brazil: Approximately US\$40-50 per day



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

LDD, emergency numbers & Internet

Country code: + 55

Ambulance: 192

Police: 190

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

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

Pre-paid (pré-pago) SIM cards for mobile phones are widely available in pharmacies, supermarkets, retail shops and at news-stands.

Electrical outlets

Power Sockets are type N with standard voltage 127-220 and standard frequency 60 Hz.

Climate

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

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

In the Amazon, temperatures in the high 30s (°C) are common year-round. Further south, around São Paulo and parts of Minas Gerais, winter temperatures can fall as



low as 5°–8°C. In the southern states of Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul, snowfalls do occur in winter, although the snow is only every light.

Manaus is generally hot with a humidity of almost 90 percent. Temperatures average 30 to 33°C most days and rarely drop below 22 or 23°C at night. Between August and November temperatures can reach as high as 38°C. The main rainy season runs from January to May. After this time, it becomes drier and temperatures are still fine.

Cuisine

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

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

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

Other typical dishes include:

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

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

Traditional dishes include the following:

Tapioquinha, a glutinous pancake made from manioc starch, usually buttered and filled with palm fruit and cheese.



Tacacá, a local Amazonian soup.

Banda de Tambaqui is the most famous and one of the most delicious fish dishes from here.

Pamonha, made from green corn and coconut milk boiled in corn husks.

Bolo de macaxeira, a tasty glutinous translucent cake made from manioc.

Sugar cane juice, a favourite drink among locals.

The region is also known for its exotic fruits such as cupuaçú and açaí.

Language

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

The number of Brazilians that speak English is very low, and there is a general lack of English-speaking staff in service industries throughout Brazil.

Health Information

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

For some states of Brazil (generally in or around the Amazon rainforest), it is compulsory for all travellers to have a vaccination against Yellow Fever. It is also compulsory for all travellers to have a vaccination against Yellow Fever if entering Brazil through Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, Venezuela.

If returning to your home country from Latin America you may require to be vaccinated against yellow fever.

A single yellow fever vaccine is considered to confer lifetime immunity and countries cannot require revaccination at entry. However, revaccination may be indicated in specific cases eg travel to an area with ongoing outbreaks or travel for a prolonged period in an endemic area.

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



It is every client's responsibility to have the necessary vaccinations for travel.

We will not be held responsible for travel delays or refused entry into countries due to customers not having the necessary vaccinations.

Additional Tax

Please note the Iguazu Tourist Tax is now being implemented and charged on check out at all hotels in Iguazu (Argentine & Brazil sides). The amount is currently ARS50 (USD3.40) per person per stay. Please note this tax is subject to change without prior notice.

Transportation

Please do not be alarmed if public and private vehicles (transfers, taxis, buses) do not stop at red lights between the hours of 10.00pm and 6.00am. It is not a legal requirement for vehicles to stop at red lights in Brazil during these hours and is in the interests of passenger safety.

Carnival

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



3.4 CHILE

Chile is one of the longest north-south countries in the world occupying a narrow strip of land between the Pacific Ocean and the Andes. Like Argentina, its landscapes are diverse and its scenery spectacular ranging from the arid Atacama Desert in the north with its geysers and fascinating rock formations, to wild, rugged and breathtakingly beautiful Patagonia in the south with its volcanoes, lakes, glaciers and fjords. Easter Island is also part of Chile and famous for its giant statues carved from volcanic rock. Then of course there is the capital Santiago, surrounded by snow-capped peaks, and a testament to the emergence of Chile as the modern economy in the region. No matter where you go, Chile will amaze you.

Did you know?

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

Visa

A pre-arranged visa is not required to enter Chile for citizens of Australia, Canada, the European Union, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom and United States. For other nationalities please visit the website of the relevant consulate.

Please note:

- Effective for travel from 16 December 2019 the administrative reciprocity fee of USD117 charged on arrival at Santiago airport will be removed. Australian passport holders will not be required to pay this reciprocity fee on arrival to enter Chile.



Travelling to Easter Island:

All visitors to Easter Island may stay for a maximum period of 30 days from date of arrival. The following documents **MUST** be presented at time of check-in at Santiago Airport for your flight to Easter Island:

- Passport
- Return ticket from Easter Island
- Printed copy of Hotel confirmation provided by Chimu Adventures

An Immigration Form (FUI according to its initials in Spanish) is required to entry Easter Island. This can be done only 24 hours prior your departure to Easter Island. Please contact us for further assistance.

Failure to present all 3 documents may result in entry being denied.

Time

Chile Standard Time (CLT) – UTC –3

Easter Island Standard Time (EAST) – UTC –5

Money

The unit of currency in Chile is the Chilean Peso (CLP). Please check websites such as www.oanda.com or www.xe.com for up to date exchange rates prior to your departure.

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

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

ATMs are widely spread across the country with different banks charging different amounts for extracting cash. The usual fee is 2,500CLP and the maximum withdrawal allowed is 200,000CLP. Please note majority of ATMs have an English language option.

Traveller's cheques tend to be difficult to exchange because of poor exchange rates.

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



Additional spending money:

Latin America can vary greatly in terms of prices in each country. The following should be used as a rough guide for additional spending money whilst on your journey and is based on having moderately-priced lunches and dinners, as well as picking up a few souvenirs at local markets. Keep in mind all our itineraries will provide breakfast every day (excluding arrival day) and many other meals may be included as well, as is stated in your itinerary: Chile Approximately US\$60–70 per day.

Please note:

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

LDD, emergency numbers & internet

Country code: + 56

Ambulance: 131

Police: 133

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

Electrical outlets

Power Sockets are type C & L with standard voltage 220 and frequency 50 Hz.

Climate

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

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

Santiago and the central valley has a temperate climate which neither becomes unbearably hot or cold. January sees average highs of around 28°C, with average highs of around 10°C in the height of the winter (July). The rainy season here is between May and August.

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



Cuisine

Chilean food is simple and features seafood, beef, fruit and vegetables. The cuisine stems from a combination of traditional Spanish cuisine, Chilean Indigenous culture and local ingredients and is influenced by German, Italian and French cuisines. The country is probably best known for its seafood with an immense array being caught along its vast coastline including abalones, razor clams, mussels, spider crabs, oysters, conger eels, salmon and sole. Beef now tends to be more common than llama meat, having been brought in by Europeans.

Traditional dishes include:

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

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

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

Cazuela marina/pollo – Seafood/chicken stew.

Asado de cordero – Lamb barbecue.

Tomaticán – Thick vegetable stew.

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

Porotos granados – Bean stew.

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

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

Language

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

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



3.5 COLOMBIA

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

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

Did you know?

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

Visa

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

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

Time

Colombia Time (COT) – UTC -5

Money

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

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

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

Foreign currency bureaux (casas de cambio) are generally the best places to change



foreign currency. US dollars and Euros attract more favourable exchange rates than Pounds sterling. Traveller's cheques are accepted in Colombia, the most commonly used being American Express and Citicorp, but most Colombian banks will only change US dollar traveller's cheques. Many hotels will also change foreign cash and traveller's cheques but at lower exchange rates.

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

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

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

Additional spending money

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

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

Approximately US\$20–30 per day

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

LDD, emergency numbers & Internet

Country code: + 57

National Emergency No. (24-hour general line): 123 Ambulance: 132

Police: 112

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



Electrical outlets

Power Sockets are type A & B with standard voltage 110 and standard frequency 60 Hz.

Climate

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

Bogotá has a spring-like climate, with cool days and crisp nights, and the city has been known to reach temperatures below 0°C, but when the sun is shining it can get quite hot. Coastal cities such as Cartagena, Santa Marta and Barranquilla are hot and humid. Mid-altitude cities in the Andes such as Medellín have year-round spring weather.

Cuisine

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

Popular dishes include:

Ajiaco – This is a type of soup made with chicken, potatoes, corn, sour cream, capers and guasca.

Guasca is a locally grown herb that gives the soup its distinct flavour.

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

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

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

Patacones – Fried green plantains.

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



Language

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

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

Health information

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

It is compulsory for all travellers to have a vaccination against Yellow Fever if entering Colombia through Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Peru, Suriname or Venezuela.

Similarly, travel to Central America from South America also requires all travellers to be vaccinated.

If returning to your home country from Latin America you may require to be vaccinated against yellow fever.

A single yellow fever vaccine is considered to confer lifetime immunity and countries cannot require revaccination at entry. However, revaccination may be indicated in specific cases eg travel to an area with ongoing outbreaks or travel for a prolonged period in an endemic area.

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

It is every client's responsibility to have the necessary vaccinations for travel.

We will not be held responsible for travel delays or refused entry into countries due to customers not having the necessary vaccinations.



3.6 ECUADOR

Small in size but big on experience, Ecuador boasts diverse geographical, biological and cultural wonders. From the snow-capped peaks of the mighty Andes, to the remote waters of the magnificent Amazon, awe-inspiring volcanoes, luscious rainforests brimming with endemic wildlife, indigenous villages reflecting the country's endearing culture and endless stretches of beautiful beaches, an Ecuador tour really is a once in a lifetime adventure.

The urban jewel of mainland Ecuador is Quito, with its wonderful colonial architecture and set amidst the Andean Mountains. Often a stopover point on the way to visit the Galapagos Islands, Quito is worth taking the time to explore. Beyond Quito, the culture and scenery of the highlands is captivating, where Quichua-speaking communities retain many of their traditional customs in the shadow of snow-capped volcanoes. The eastern part of Ecuador has some of the highest biodiversity on the planet contained in the Amazon jungle region.

Did you know?

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

Visa

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

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

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



Time

Ecuador Time (ECT) – UTC –5

Galapagos Time (GALT) – UTC –6

Money

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

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

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

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

ATMs are plentiful in major cities such as Quito or Guayaquil and in large towns such as Otavalo, Baños and Cuenca. They are less common in smaller towns and more remote parts of the country. The ATMs generally only recognise four-digit pins. Cards that are most widely accepted are Visa and MasterCard with a daily withdrawal limit of US\$200 per day. If you are taking a Galapagos cruise, please check the boat document we provide which will tell you if your vessel accepts credit/debit cards or cash only for the bar/ boutique tab.

Additional spending money

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

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

Approximately US\$40–50 per day

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



LDD, emergency numbers & Internet

Country code: + 593

Ambulance: 131

Police: 101

Police (Quito): 911

Police (Guayaquil, Cuenca, Loja): 112

Internet cafes are still to be found throughout Ecuador although they are not as common as they used to be. Wi-Fi is becoming increasingly common in many hotels and guesthouses, shopping malls, airports and some restaurants. Please be aware that Wi-Fi is not always free. Most streets in the centre of Coca offer an internet café and most are air-conditioned and relatively cheap, although more expensive than in larger cities in Ecuador. Local SIM cards can be purchased for unlocked mobile phones.

Electrical outlets

Power Sockets are type A & B with standard voltage 120 and standard frequency 60 Hz.

Climate

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

In the highlands, the dry season runs from June until the end of September. In the Amazon basin, it rains during most months, but August and December to March are usually the driest. On the coast, the wet season (January to May) sees sunny days with showers everyday – usually in the afternoon. This is in fact the best beach weather as during the dry season (June to December) the weather is cooler and usually overcast.

The climate in Coca is moderately hot and humid. The heaviest rainfall is in May and June.

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



altitude. We highly recommend acclimatizing at altitude before taking strenuous treks or walks. Quito is at 2,850 metres (9,350 feet).

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

To prevent altitude sickness you should try to take things easy as soon as you arrive, rest and drink plenty of fluids. Do not plan any strenuous excursions or treks until you have acclimatized for a few days. You should avoid alcohol, cigarettes and heavy foods. Drinking mate de coca, an infusion of coca leaves may help. If symptoms become more severe and prolonged you should quickly seek medical attention and make arrangements to descend to a lower altitude. After recovery you can re-ascend slowly or in stages. Some visitors use the drug Diamox to speed up the acclimatization process and counteract the symptoms of altitude sickness.

Cuisine

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

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

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

Some typical Ecuadorian dishes include:

Patacones – Green plantains sliced and fried twice.

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

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

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



Canelazo is a drink made from aguardiente.

In the rainforest, a dietary staple is the yucca or cassava. Rich in starch, the tuber is peeled then typically boiled, fried, and used in a variety of dishes. It is the main ingredient in Pan de Yucca (Yucca Bread).

There are a few other traditional dishes including:

Masatos – prepared with yucca and green bananas

Pango – meat cooked with green banana

Chontaduro – or peach-palm, an edible palm fruit which is cooked for several hours

Chucula – a banana drink

Yucca soup

Guayusa – this tree is native to the Ecuadorian Amazon Rainforest and one of three known caffeinated holly trees. The leaves are dried and brewed like a tea.

Local delicacies include:

Maito – grilled fish or meat wrapped in banana leaves

Mayones – grilled palm weevil grubs

Language

Spanish is the most widely spoken language in Ecuador and is in fact the official language but there are three regional variations – Equatorial Pacific Spanish, Andean Spanish and Amazonian Spanish.

They are, however, all very similar. The Indian population speaks Quechua. Ecuador is in fact one of the best places in Latin America to learn Spanish as Ecuadorian Spanish is spoken slowly and clearly.

Health information

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

It is compulsory for all travellers to have a vaccination against Yellow Fever if entering



Ecuador through Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Peru, Suriname or Venezuela.

Similarly, travel to Central America from South America also requires all travellers to be vaccinated.

If returning to your home country from Latin America you may require to be vaccinated against yellow fever.

A single yellow fever vaccine is considered to confer lifetime immunity and countries cannot require revaccination at entry. However, revaccination may be indicated in specific cases eg travel to an area with ongoing outbreaks or travel for a prolonged period in an endemic area.

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

It is every client's responsibility to have the necessary vaccinations for travel.

We will not be held responsible for travel delays or refused entry into countries due to customers not having the necessary vaccinations.

Travel Insurance

If you are visiting Ecuador, it is essential to obtain travel insurance before you travel and to carry documentation of this with you on your trip.



3.7 THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

The Galapagos Islands are located west of Ecuador and are renowned for being the home to a vast array of fascinating species of wildlife, including lava lizards, the giant tortoise as well as red and blue-footed boobies! They are one of the world's foremost destinations for wildlife viewing, many of the plant and animal species being found nowhere else in the world. Located at the confluence of three ocean currents and surrounded by a marine reserve, the islands abound with marine species.

The Galapagos Islands, of which there are 19 main islands, are an archipelago of volcanic islands in the Pacific Ocean. They lie either side of the Equator and 1,000 km west of the South American continent and mainland Ecuador of which they are a part.

The islands were formed by processes resulting from volcanic and seismic activity. These processes along with the isolation of the islands resulted in the development of unusual animal life. Charles Darwin's visit to the islands in 1835 was the inspiration for his theory of evolution by natural selection.

The largest island Isabela, measures 5,827 sq.kms accounting for nearly three quarters of the total land area of the Galapagos. Volcan Wolf on Isabela is the highest point of the Galapagos at 1,707m above sea level.

For any questions regarding travel to Ecuador, see the above section, listed 3.6 Ecuador.

Climate

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

Each month brings unique climate variations to the Galapagos and with it varying wildlife viewing opportunities. Peak season for naturalist tours is typically December through to May when the seas are the calmest and the weather the warmest. The months June, July and August are also very popular as the animals tend to be more active. For divers the peak season is from July to November when whale sharks can be found at Wolf and Darwin Islands.



Month	Air Temp (°C)	Water Temp (°C)
January	16-27	22-23
February	16-29	22-24
March	18-32	22-23
April	16-29	21-24
May	16-27	21-23
June	16-24	18-23
July	16-24	17-21
August	15-21	17-19
September	16-24	15-19
October	16-24	17-21
November	16-24	18-22
December	16-27	19-22

Galapagos National Park Tax

All visitors to the Galapagos Islands are required to pay a National Park Tax of US\$120 for adults and US\$60 for children under 12 years old. This is payable in CASH ONLY on arrival and is in addition to all costs for your journey previously paid. Please note that the fee may be subject to change.

Landings

Dry Landings: Passengers step directly from a dinghy to rocks or onto a dock.

Wet Landings: The dinghy will edge up to a beach, allowing you step into knee-deep water assisted by crew members and guides.

Safety

Once on board, you will receive special orientation in terms of fire and other safety explanations, a procedure necessary for the unlikely event of emergency during your stay on board.

Electrical Outlets

Most of the newer boats have both 110-volt (USA) and 220 volt (Europe/ Australia) outlets on board, although some of the older boats will only have 110 volt outlets.



Payment on Board

On most boats you can bill your drinks, souvenirs and other expenses to an account which will be settled at the end of the cruise. Only a few boats accept credit cards.

General Health Tips

- If you need any special medication, be sure to take enough for the duration of your trip and a little more, in case of any emergency.
- If you have a special diet, please inform us in advance.
- UV rays are very strong on the Galapagos Islands. Do not forget to take 30+ sunscreen protection.
- We recommend that passengers be in reasonably good physical condition as some trails are difficult and therefore elderly or disabled people may find them too hard.
- The local cruise operators reserve the right to refuse a passenger if someone fails to inform us of any physical disability, or who in the opinion of the company constitutes a danger to themselves, other guests, members of the crew, or to the operation of the vessel.
- Please notify us of any medical or physical disabilities at the time of booking.

Hazards

In general, crime is not a problem on the Galapagos Islands although petty crime may occur in the towns. We advise you to keep personal items and valuables locked away in bags in your cabins.

Most animal life on the islands is docile except for the larger sea lions, particularly the bulls, who will vigorously protect their females, and can inflict dangerous and potentially lethal bites. Do not snorkel close to sea lion colonies.

There is a minimal danger from sharks but in general sharks will not attack unless provoked.

Personal Gear

Casual and light clothing is recommended on board all vessels and there is no need to dress up. A wind-proof jacket is recommended for windy nights.

What to Pack:

- Cotton long sleeved shirts



- T-shirts
- Lightweight pair of trousers
- Shorts
- Good walking shoes
- Thongs/flip flops or tevas
- Wide brimmed hat (straps can be helpful in the windy season especially)
- Swimwear
- Sunglasses (preferably with straps)
- Wind proof jacket
- Light sweatshirt or fleece
- Sunscreen (30+ & waterproof)
- Camera with spare memory cards and batteries
- Binoculars
- Day Pack – for excursions

Sustainability & Preservation

Approximately 97 percent of the total land area of the archipelago is National Park, and only three percent of the total land area can be visited by tourists. The Charles Darwin Station was established in 1961. The National Park Service and Charles Darwin Station work for the protection and the sustainable management of the Galapagos Islands.

While on the cruise, you will have multilingual, naturalist guides who are trained by the Charles Darwin Station and licensed by the Galapagos National Park. The park is strictly regulated and during island visits, passengers must be accompanied at all times by a guide. Visitors are only allowed on land from sunrise to sunset and all itineraries are registered with the park in advance. The guides know each site intimately, and will share their knowledge during walks and hikes, as well as during slide shows, briefings or informal conversations at the end of each day. Do not hesitate to approach them with any questions.

Please note that this is a unique ecosystem and as such please be careful that you do not leave any rubbish or drop anything overboard while on or near the Galapagos Islands. Wildlife should never be disturbed and generally two metres is the minimum distance to keep between you and wildlife.



One of the greatest dangers to the islands is introduced species, as after evolving for thousands of years without predators, the Galapagos wildlife is not adapted to dealing with new species. The park service is trying to eliminate goats, rats, cats, dogs, and introduced plant species on many of the islands. When travelling to the islands, please ensure that you do not bring any plant or animal life with you, and always clean your footwear when travelling between islands to avoid transferring seeds.

The park rules include the following:

- To visit the National Park you must always be accompanied by a certified Galapagos National Park guide.
- Galapagos is a unique and fragile environment. Take only photographs and video. Professional shooting needs authorization from the National Park.
- Please stay within the limits of the walking trails, for your safety and that of the flora and fauna.
- To avoid affecting the wildlife's natural behaviour please avoid getting closer than two metres to the animals.
- Help conservation by cooperating with the authorities in their inspection, monitoring and control duties.
- Do not introduce foreign organisms to the islands as these can have a negative impact on the ecosystem.
- Please do not buy souvenirs which are made from black coral, sea shells, sea lion teeth, tortoise shell, volcanic rock or endemic woods.
- Galapagos animals have their own feeding behaviour. Never feed the animals as this can be detrimental to their health.
- Galapagos landscapes are beautiful and unique. Do not spoil them by writing or etching on rocks or trees.
- Do not leave any litter while on the islands. Always dispose of rubbish in a safe and appropriate way.
- Smoking or making camp fires in the National Park areas is strictly forbidden and can cause devastating fires.
- Fishing is strictly forbidden, except on those boats specifically authorised by the Galapagos National Park.
- Jet skiing, submarines, water skiing and aerial tourism are all strictly forbidden.
- Do not disturb the animals.



3.8 PERU

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

Did you know?

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

Visa

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

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

Time

Peru Time (PET) – UTC –5

Money

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

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

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



dollar is widely accepted in many stores throughout the country and prices are often given in both US dollars and Soles.

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

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

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

Additional spending money

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

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

Approximately US\$20-30 per day

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

LDD, emergency numbers & internet

Country code: + 51

Ambulance: 117

Police: 105

Most regions of Peru have excellent internet connections and internet cafes are common, even in smaller rural villages and charge reasonable prices.

Many hotels, restaurants, cafes and retailers offer free Wi-Fi access or charge a small fee for usage. You will also find many Internet cabinas (booths) where connections are usually fast and the service cheap.

Although Puerto Maldonado now has high speed cable internet, internet tends to be slower here than in other Peruvian cities. There are several places in town that offer internet access by the hour.



Local SIM cards are readily available for use with unlocked mobile phones.

Electrical outlets

Power sockets are type A and C. with standard voltage 220V and standard frequency is 60 Hz.

Climate

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

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

Iquitos is tropical with a hot and humid (90 percent) climate year-round. Temperatures average 30–32°C during the day, falling to 20–23°C at night. Rain is common in all months, but June to September is slightly drier than average.

August is the driest month with around 165mm of rain, whereas April is generally the wettest month with over 300 millimetres of rain.

Puerto Maldonado is in the tropical Amazon Basin and the climate is hot and humid year-round. The average annual temperature is 26°C with the months of September and October generally being the hottest. Annual rainfall often exceeds 1,000 millimetres with the wet season running from October to April. The main part of Puerto Maldonado is slightly elevated and does not normally flood in the wet season, but road travel often becomes virtually impossible during this time.

In June and July, the temperature can sometimes drop to as low as 8°C for several days. This phenomenon is known as a *friaje* and occurs when polar winds blow in from the mountains of the south.

Altitude

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



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

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

To prevent altitude sickness you should try to take things easy as soon as you arrive, rest and drink plenty of fluids. Do not plan any strenuous excursions or treks until you have acclimatized for a few days. You should avoid alcohol, cigarettes and heavy foods. Drinking mate de coca, an infusion of coca leaves may help. If symptoms become more severe and prolonged you should quickly seek medical attention and make arrangements to descend to a lower altitude. After recovery you can re-ascend slowly or in stages. Some visitors use the drug Diamox to speed up the acclimatization process and counteract the symptoms of altitude sickness

Cuisine

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

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

Over recent years, some traditional foods such as quinoa, kiwicha and chilli peppers have increased in popularity leading to a revival of interest in native Peruvian foods and culinary techniques.

Gastronomists around the world now rate Peruvian cuisine as the best cuisine in Latin America.

If you have the opportunity, we recommend that you sample some Peruvian food prior to departure so you have a better idea of some of the native dishes when you arrive in Peru.

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



Typical dishes include:

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

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

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

Pollo a la Brasa – Roasted marinated chicken.

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

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

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

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

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

Traditional Amazonian local cuisine makes use of native plants, fruits and spices. The most popular regional specialities include *tacacho*, *chapo*, *pataraschca* and *inchicapi*.

Tacacho consists of mashed plantains and pork meat.

Chapo is a beverage made of sweet plantains, water and spices such as cinnamon and cloves.

Pataraschca is a dish where the whole fish is wrapped in leaves and cooked directly on charcoal or on a fire.

Inchicapi is a soup made from chicken, peanuts, corn, garlic and spices.

For the more adventurous skewers of fruit maggots can be found at street vendors!

Iquitos is a great place to sample some of the traditional dishes of the Peruvian Amazon.

Juane is one of the main dishes of the area. It is made from rice, cassava or beans, meat, olives, hard-boiled egg and spices.

Tacacho is also popular and is made from fried slices of plantain mashed with *chicharones* (fried pork fat) and accompanied with *chorizo* (fried sausage).

Specialties of the Belén Market include Amazon worms, *ishpa* (simmered sabalo fish intestines and fat) and *sikisapa* (fried leafcutter ants) – maybe not to everyone's palate.



Language

Spanish is the official language of Peru but there are many indigenous languages as well including Quechua and Aymara. The Spanish spoken in Peru has some regional variations in pronunciation, accent and in some expressions. The variations correspond with the geographical regions of coast, rainforest and mountains.

Health Information

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

It is compulsory for all travellers to have a vaccination against Yellow Fever if entering Ecuador through Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Peru, Suriname or Venezuela.

If returning to your home country from Latin America you may require to be vaccinated against yellow fever.

A single yellow fever vaccine is considered to confer lifetime immunity and countries cannot require revaccination at entry. However, revaccination may be indicated in specific cases eg travel to an area with ongoing outbreaks or travel for a prolonged period in an endemic area.

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

It is every client's responsibility to have the necessary vaccinations for travel.

We will not be held responsible for travel delays or refused entry into countries due to customers not having the necessary vaccinations.

Transportation in Cusco

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



3.9 THE GUIANAS

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

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

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

Did you know?

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

Visa

Guyana

A pre-arranged visa is not required to enter Guyana as 90 day visas are issued on arrival for citizens of Australia, Canada, the European Union, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom and United States. For other nationalities please visit the website of the relevant consulate.

French Guyana

A pre-arranged visa is not required to enter Guyana for citizens of Australia, Canada, the European Union, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and United States. For other nationalities please visit the website of the relevant consulate.

Suriname

A pre-arranged visa is not required to enter Guyana for citizens of Canada, the European Union, Ireland, the United Kingdom and United States. Visas can be obtained at the point of entry for US\$25 or Euro 20. For other nationalities please visit the website of the relevant consulate.



Time

Guyana:

Guyana Time (GYT) – UTC –3

French Guiana:

French Guiana Time (GFT) – UTC –3

Suriname:

Suriname Time (SRT) – UTC –3

Money

Guyana:

The unit of currency in Guyana is the Guyana Dollar (GYD).

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

French Guiana:

The unit of currency in French Guiana is the Euro (EUR)

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

Suriname:

The unit currency in Suriname is the Suriname Dollar (SRD).

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



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

Additional spending money

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

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

Approximately US\$30–50 per day

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

LDD, emergency numbers & Internet

Guyana:

Country code: + 592

Emergency numbers: Police 911, Medical 913

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

French Guiana:

Country code: + 594

Emergency numbers: Police 112 or 17, Medical 112 or 15

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

Suriname:

Country code: + 597

Emergency numbers: Police 115, Medical 113

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



Electrical outlets

Guyana: Power sockets are types A, B, D and G. The standard voltage is 240v and standard frequency is 60 Hz.

French Guiana: Power sockets are type C, D and E. The standard voltage is 220v and standard frequency is 50 Hz.

Suriname: Power sockets are types A, B, C and F. The standard voltage is 110/220v and standard frequency is 60 Hz.

Climate

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

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

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

Cuisine

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

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

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



Language

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

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

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

Health information

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

It is compulsory for all travellers to have a vaccination against Yellow Fever if entering the Guianas through Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, French Guiana, Peru, Suriname or Venezuela.

If returning to your home country from Latin America you may require to be vaccinated against yellow fever.

A single yellow fever vaccine is considered to confer lifetime immunity and countries cannot require revaccination at entry. However, revaccination may be indicated in specific cases eg travel to an area with ongoing outbreaks or travel for a prolonged period in an endemic area.

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

It is every client's responsibility to have the necessary vaccinations for travel.

We will not be held responsible for travel delays or refused entry into countries due to customers not having the necessary vaccinations.



3.10 URUGUAY

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

Did you know?

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

Visa

A pre-arranged visa is not required to enter Uruguay for citizens of Australia, Canada, the European Union, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom and United States. For other nationalities please visit the website of the relevant consulate.

Time

Uruguay Time (UYT) – UTC -3

Money

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

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

US dollars are commonly accepted in major tourist areas but the exchange rates can sometimes be low and you are better off paying in pesos. In more rural areas US dollars are of limited use.

Unlike Argentina, Uruguay has no black or 'blue' market offering higher exchange rates for US and European banknotes.

Foreign currencies can be exchanged at banks or at foreign exchange bureaux (casas de cambio) that are widespread in Montevideo, Colonia and coastal tourist resorts. Some hotels will also provide money exchange services, but the rates are very much lower than at banks and foreign exchange bureaux.



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

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

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

Additional spending money

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

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

Approximately US\$45-55 per day

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

LDD, emergency numbers & Internet

Country code: + 598

Ambulance: 105

Police: 911

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

Electrical outlets

Power are type C, F, I and L. The standard voltage is 230V sockets and the standard frequency is 50 Hz.

Climate

Montevideo and Colonia have pleasant year-round temperate climates with no wet season, the annual rainfall being spread throughout the year. The climate in coastal areas such as Punta del Este is relatively mild with summer temperatures ranging



from 25 to 32°C, and winter temperatures never falling below zero. Along the Rio Uruguay, the summer climate is generally hot and humid, with temperatures reaching as high as 36°C. The interior hill country tends to be slightly cooler with average temperatures of 17°C and summer temperatures averaging a maximum of 21 to 26°C.

Cuisine

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

Other typical dishes include:

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

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

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

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

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

Language

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



3.11 CENTRAL AMERICA AND MEXICO

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

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

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

Did you know?

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

Visa

A pre-arranged visa is not required to enter Mexico or any Central American country for citizens of Australia, Canada, the European Union, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom and United States.

Please note:

Honduras has a check-in requirement for tourists entering the country by land. All visitors must fill out a check-in form online at least one week prior their arrival. This requirement has no extra cost. Pre-check-in can be done at

<https://prechequeo.inm.gob.hn/>



Time

Mexico:

Mexico has four time zones and most of the country uses Central Standard Time.

Pacific Time (PT/PST) – UTC –8 / Pacific Daylight Time (PDT) – UTC –7

Mountain Time (MT/MST) – UTC –7 / Mountain Daylight Time (MDT) – UTC –6

Central Time (CT/CST) – UTC –6 / Central Daylight Time (CDT) – UTC –5

Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua & Costa Rica:

Central Time (CT/CST) – UTC –6

Panama:

Eastern Time (ET/EST) – UTC –5

Money

Mexico: The unit of currency is the Mexican Pesos (MXP).

Debit and credit cards are widespread in Mexico and are accepted at most larger hotels, shops and restaurants. Visa, MasterCard and American Express are the most widely accepted. ATMs (cajero automático) are also widespread but it is also a good idea to carry some cash as a backup. Foreign currencies can be exchanged at banks and foreign exchange bureaux (casas de cambio) and many hotels. US dollars cash is the most easily exchanged but Euros, Pounds sterling and Canadian dollars are readily exchangeable as well. Traveller's cheques can generally also be exchanged at banks and cambios but the process can be more time-consuming than changing cash.

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

Belize: The unit of currency is the Belize Dollar (BZD)

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

Guatemala: The unit of currency is the Quetzal (GTQ).



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

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

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

Honduras: The unit of currency is the Lempira (HNL).

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

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

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

Nicaragua: The unit of currency is the Cordoba Oro (NIO).

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

Foreign currency can be exchanged in hotels, foreign exchange bureaux (*casas de cambio*) and at some banks as well as at Managua International Airport. It is difficult to change traveller's cheques outside Managua.

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



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

Costa Rica: The unit of currency is the Colon (CRC).

Some hotels and businesses will accept US dollars, but the exchange rate is not very favourable. There are foreign exchange bureaux (casas de cambio) at the international airports as well as in cities and towns. ATMs (cajero automático) are also widespread and are linked to the Cirrus and PLUS networks. Most machines only accept 4-digit PINs. Credit cards are accepted by many businesses but there is generally a surcharge and often a minimum purchase amount.

Panama: The unit of currency is the United States Dollar (US\$)/Balboa (PAB).

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

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

Additional spending money

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

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

Mexico: Approximately US\$40–50 per day

Belize: Approximately US\$20–30 per day

Guatemala: Approximately US\$25–35 per day

Honduras: Approximately US\$20–30 per day

Nicaragua: Approximately US\$10–20 per day

Costa Rica: Approximately US\$50–60 per day

Panama: Approximately US\$20–30 per day

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



LDD, emergency numbers & Internet

Mexico: Country Code: +52

Emergency Contact: Medical: 065 / Police: 066

Belize: Country Code: +501

Emergency Contact: Medical: 90 / Police: 911

Guatemala: Country Code: +502

Emergency Contact: Medical: 1500 or 125 / Police: 1500 or 120

Honduras: Country Code: +504

Emergency Contact: Medical: 195 / Police: 199

Nicaragua: Country Code: +505

Emergency Contact: Medical: 128 / Police: 118

Costa Rica: Country Code: +506

Emergency Contact: Medical: 1128 / Police: 911 or 1117

Panama: Country Code: +507

Emergency Contact: Medical: 911 or 103 / Police: 104

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

Electrical outlets

Mexico: Power sockets are type A and B. The standard voltage is 127v and the standard frequency is 60 Hz.

Belize: Power sockets are type A, B and G. The standard voltage is 110/220v and the standard frequency is 60 Hz.

Guatemala: Power sockets are type A and B. The standard voltage is 120v and the standard frequency is 60 Hz.

Honduras: Power sockets are type A and B. The standard voltage is 110v and the standard frequency is 60 Hz.

Nicaragua: Power sockets are type A and B. The standard voltage is 120v and the standard frequency is 60 Hz.

Costa Rica: Power sockets are type A and B. The standard voltage is 120v and the



standard frequency is 60 Hz.

Panama: Power sockets are type A and B. The standard voltage is 110v and the standard frequency is 60 Hz.

Climate

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

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

Cuisine

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

Mexico: Mexican cuisine varies by region due to local climate, geography and ethnic differences among the indigenous inhabitants. The north of Mexico is known for its beef, goat and ostrich production and meat dishes. In contrast, the Oaxaca region is known for its savoury tamales and celebratory moles. The mountainous regions of the west are known for goat birria (goat in a spicy tomato-based sauce). The three staples in Mexican dishes are corn, beans and chillies (hot peppers), ingredients that were already present before the Spanish arrived. Corn is consumed in all possible forms, but most importantly as a tortilla (a thin, round pancake made from corn dough).

Tortillas are also used to make tacos and quesadillas, popular throughout the country. Drinks include tepache (made from pineapple), tuba (fermented juice from the coconut tree and pulque (ferment made from the maguey plant). Tequila, of course, is also offered and is usually served as a major ingredient in margaritas, with salt-rimmed



glasses and lime juice. Mezcal is a rougher version of tequila.

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

Guatemala: The traditional foods are based on Mayan cuisine with corn, chillies and beans as the main ingredients. Guatemalan food tends to be less spicy than Mexican food, with the chillies being served separately to be added as desired. Many dishes are also like those of Mexico including nachos, tamales and enchiladas. Cheese and tortillas also feature quite heavily. Meat stews (caldos) and soups (sopas) are popular dishes.

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

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

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

Panama: Cuisine is varied and in the larger cities you can find many styles of restaurant serving everything from French cuisine to sushi, as well as Arabic, Mexican, Chinese,



Indian and Italian. In more rural areas the cuisine is Panamanian featuring seafood and beef and taking on the influences of Afro-Caribbean, French and Spanish. Most dishes are served with coconut rice and native vegetables. A typical Panama meal usually includes meat, coconut rice and beans accompanied by local fruits and vegetables like yucca, squash and plantains. On Panama's islands and along the coast, fresh seafood features heavily with mango and coconut.

Typical Mexican and Central American dishes include:

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

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

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

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

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

Language

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

Addition Tax

Belize: Please be aware that the conservation tax in Belize will be US\$20.00. New departure taxes will be:

- Departing from the Belize Int'l Airport: \$55.50 USD per person +\$0.75 USD per person (Domestic Security Screening).
- Departing via Land (either Guatemala or Mexico Border) or by Sea: \$20.00 USD per person.

Departure fees are payable in cash (USD currency) and must be paid by adults and children alike.



Nicaragua: On arrival into Nicaragua you will be issued with a Tourist card, the cost of which is US\$10. New departure taxes will be \$55.50 USD per person (departing from the Bze Int'l Airport) and US\$35.00 per person (departing from any of the land borders).

Baja California: New Tourist Tax in Baja California. Please be aware that clients visiting Baja California must pay approx \$18.50 ASD in Kiosks at the Airport hotels when land arrivals or collected by Port Authorities.

3.12 CUBA

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

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

Did you know?

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

Visa

All visitors, including citizens of Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, European Union countries and the United States need a Cuban visa or tourist card, which allows a stay of 30 days (90 days for Canadian citizens). Visas must be used within 180 days of the date of issue. Visitors need a return ticket and proof that they have booked a hotel room for at least three nights. You are not permitted entry to Cuba without an onward ticket.

When entering Cuba directly from the USA, only the airline booked can issue a pink coloured tourist card. This is issued by the airline at the time of check-in in the USA. Travellers flying directly from the USA to Cuba will also be provided with an affidavit from the airline to sign, outlining their purpose of travel to Cuba.



For entry via any other country, Chimu Adventures can provide a tourist card which is green in colour. Please contact your booking agent for full details on this tourist card and prices.

Time

Cuba Standard Time (CST) – UTC –5 / Cuba Daylight Time (CDT) – UTC –4

Money

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

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

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

Only exchange foreign currency at CADECAS (Casa de Cambio – Exchange Office) or Banks. The best currencies to bring to Cuba are Euros, Canadian Dollars and Sterling Pounds. There is a 10 percent surcharge for exchanging US dollars. Try to avoid exchanging money at hotels or resorts where the rate will be low as it is not regulated by the government and do not exchange money in the street under any circumstances.

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

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

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



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

Additional spending money

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

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

Approximately US\$30–40 per day

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

LDD, emergency numbers & Internet

Country code: + 53

Medical: 104

Police: 106

Internet access is tightly controlled throughout Cuba and Cuba is in fact one of the least connected countries in the world. There are some expensive government run internet cafes and some hotels offer internet access. There are plans to extend internet access by adding Wi-Fi capacity to the state-run internet centres.

Electrical outlets

Power sockets are type A, B, C (also works with plugs E and F) and L (also works with plug C) with a standard voltage of 110/120v and standard frequency of 60 Hz.

Climate

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



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

Cuisine

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

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

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

Typical dishes include:

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

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

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

Language

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



4. BOOKING TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Please refer to the following link for our full terms and conditions:
www.chimuadventures.com/travel/terms-and-conditions

