

Overseas Adventure Travel[®]

THE LEADER IN PERSONALIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

Your O.A.T. Adventure Travel Planning Guide[®]



Colombia's Colonial Jewels & the Coffee Triangle

2025

Overseas Adventure Travel®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with O.A.T. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

When you join us, you will slip seamlessly into local life as you explore off the beaten path in your small group. Like all our itineraries, this one is designed to give you an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. You will get to know community leaders and try your hand at local trades during your *A Day in the Life* experience, share traditional fare and lively conversation during a Home-Hosted Visit, discuss the Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, and visit sites supported by Grand Circle Foundation. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our FREE Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

To ensure you experience the true culture and feel supported every step of the way, we provide the services of a local Trip Experience Leader from the beginning of your adventure to the end. Along with introducing you to the history and culture of their homeland, these friendly experts will gladly help you out with any special requests to make your trip even more special. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who personalize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-955-1925**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis
Chair
Overseas Adventure Travel

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La Candelaria, Bogotá

Colombia's Colonial Jewels & the Coffee Triangle Small Group Adventure

Colombia: Bogotá, Medellín, Coffee Triangle, Cartagena

Small groups of no more than 16 travelers, guaranteed

12 days starting from \$3,495

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit www.oattravel.com/bog2025pricing

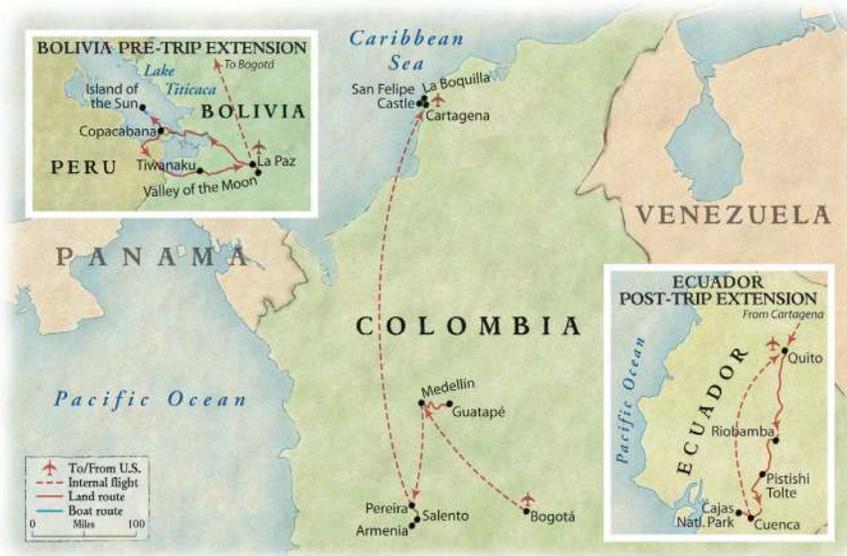
Discover hidden riches when you travel to Colombia, the land that inspired the myth of El Dorado—and whose borders are now open to travelers after decades of being closed. Our adventure takes us from the colonial heart of Bogotá, La Candelaria, to modern Medellín, a former cartel capital that is now a model of urban innovation. We'll also venture down the country's backroads to the Coffee Triangle region and discover the seaside splendor of Cartagena.

IT'S INCLUDED

- 11 nights accommodation
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- All land transportation and 3 or 4 internal flights (depending on season)
- 24 meals—11 breakfasts, 7 lunches, and 6 dinners
- 13 small group activities
- Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next adventure

Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.

Colombia's Colonial Jewels & the Coffee Triangle



ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Fly to Bogotá, Colombia
2-3	Bogotá
4-5	Fly to Medellín • Guatapé
6-8	Fly to Coffee Triangle
9-11	Fly to Cartagena
12	Return to U.S.

PERSONALIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

Bolivia: La Paz & Lake Titicaca

PRE-TRIP: 5 nights from \$1,795

**Riobamba, Cuenca & Quito:
Cultural Treasures in the
Ecuadorean Andes**

POST-TRIP: 7 nights from \$2,095

ARRIVE EARLY

We recommend that you relax after a long flight or explore more in depth before your trip. Prices shown include accommodations and private airport transfer.

- Arrive early in **La Paz** before your Bolivia pre-trip extension from **\$190** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **Bogotá** before your main adventure from **\$140** per room, per night

WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderate

Pacing: 4 locations in 12 days with one 2-night stay; 3 or 4 internal flights (depending on the season); early mornings

Physical requirements: Travel on city streets, rugged paths and trails, cobblestone roads, and uneven ground. Travel by 20-passenger minibuses, horse-drawn carriage, Jeep, aerial tram, local bus, and moto taxi

Flight Time: Travel time will be 3-12 hours and will most likely have one connection

View all physical requirements at www.oattravel.com/bog

COLOMBIA: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

Unbeatable Value: Travel at the lowest price and per diems in the industry.

People-to-People Experiences: Spend **A Day in the Life** in the Coffee Triangle to see (and taste) how Colombia's most famous export is grown, harvested, and brewed; while there, you'll also sit down to an authentic meal with members of the community.

O.A.T. Exclusives: Visit a recycling center that is supported in part by **Grand Circle Foundation** to see how Colombians have taken their tragic past and turned it into hope for the future; you'll also learn about **Controversial Topics**—including Colombia's decades-long internal conflict and Pablo Escobar's drug cartel—during conversations with locals.

Colombia's Colonial Jewels & the Coffee Triangle

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

5 nights in *Bolivia: La Paz & Lake Titicaca*

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Day 2 Arrive La Paz, Bolivia • Explore La Paz

Day 3 Explore La Paz • Discover the Valley of the Moon

Day 4 La Paz • Overland to Lake Titicaca • Explore Copacabana

Day 5 Copacabana • Cruise Lake Titicaca • Discover the Island of the Sun • Overland to La Paz

Day 6 La Paz • Discover Tiwanaku

Day 7 La Paz • Fly to Bogotá, Colombia

Day 1 Depart U.S. • Arrive Bogotá, Colombia

- Destination: Bogotá
- Accommodations: Hotel de la Opera or similar

Afternoon/Evening: Depart the U.S. today for your flight to Bogotá. An O.A.T. representative will meet you at the airport and assist with the transfer to our hotel, where you'll join travelers who took the pre-trip extension to *Bolivia: La Paz & Lake Titicaca* and those who arrived early in Bogotá before their main adventure.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations.

Day 2 Explore Bogotá • Gold Museum

- Destination: Bogotá
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel de la Opera or similar

Activity Note: Bogotá is at an altitude of 8,000 feet. We recommend staying hydrated while at high altitude. Travelers may rest at the hotel if necessary.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll start the day with a Welcome Briefing at our hotel. Then, we'll head to Plaza de Bolívar to begin a walking tour of Old Town. A highlight will be a visit to Bogotá's Gold Museum, which is home to the world's biggest collection of pre-Hispanic gold artifacts. These pieces—more than 6,000 are on display out of the museum's 55,000-piece collection—are not

only elaborate in their own right, but also give us an introduction to the indigenous cultures of Colombia.

Lunch: At local restaurant.

Afternoon: After our lunch concludes, we'll return to the hotel. The remainder of the afternoon is yours to explore independently.

Late this afternoon, our Trip Experience Leader will give us an overview of a few of Colombia's most infamous controversies—including guerrillas and drug cartels—which we'll learn about in more detail later in our adventure.

Dinner: On your own. You might ask your Trip Experience Leader to point out their favorite local options.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 3 Bogotá • Controversial Topic: Colombia's paramilitary/guerilla conflict • Optional local market & urban street art tour

- Destination: Bogotá
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel de la Opera or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Free to make your own discoveries. Perhaps you'll make the trip to Monserrate Mountain, on the city's eastern edge; a popular hike (or funicular, for those feeling less energetic) takes you to the Spanish colonial-era church on top, which affords spectacular views of the city below.

Or, you may choose to join our optional tour to a local produce market where we'll stroll through stalls filled with aromatic herbs, exotic fruits, and local meat, and mingle with

the locals. Then, we'll explore the city's urban street art scene and discover the many colorful and often political expressions that cover the city's walls. We'll listen to firsthand stories from local street artists about the history and meaning of graffiti.

Lunch: On your own. Travelers on today's optional tour will enjoy a lunch of *ajiacó*, a traditional Colombian soup of chicken, potatoes, and corn, at a local restaurant.

Afternoon: If you chose to remain in the city, continue exploring Bogotá on your own. Travelers on the optional tour will return to our hotel mid-afternoon.

Later this afternoon, our group will gather in a private conference room at the hotel for a conversation about a **Controversial Topic:** Colombia's lengthy internal conflict, which pitted the government against extremist guerilla and paramilitary groups. Since the 1960s, it's estimated that some 220,000 Colombians have died, 25,000 have disappeared, and another 5 million have been internally displaced—making this one of the deadliest and longest-running conflicts in the Western World. To gain a richer and more in-depth understanding of the issue, we'll meet with two former combatants—one from each side of the conflict.

At the heart of the issue is the left-wing, pro-communist guerilla groups who oppose the Colombian government, and who funded their violent, anti-government activity by becoming involved in Colombia's widespread drug trafficking operations in the 1980s. In response to the rising crime rates and instability in their country, far-right paramilitary groups cropped up to combat the guerilla militants. Today, the Colombian government has reached a delicate peace. Still, the conflict continues to divide the country.

Dinner: This evening, we'll enjoy a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 4 Fly to Medellín • Explore Medellín • Botero Museum

- Destination: Medellín
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Novotel Medellín El Tesoro or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll transfer to the airport for our flight to Medellín. Upon arrival late this morning, we'll make our way to the city center, which we'll explore on foot.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Next, we'll make our way to the Botero Museum and plaza. The plaza has an open-air collection of 23 sculptures by Medellín-born artist Fernando Botero, whose exaggerated figures have been shown in the world's greatest museums and galleries. We'll also venture inside the Botero Museum, which houses one of Latin America's most prominent international art collections—including works by Balthus, Georges Braque, Marc Chagall, and Salvador Dalí.

After making our way to our hotel and checking in, the remainder of the day is free for your own discoveries. Perhaps you'll join your Trip Experience Leader in a brief orientation walk this evening to get acquainted with the city.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 5 Medellín • Explore Guatapé

- Destination: Medellín
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Novotel Medellín El Tesoro or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll drive to Guatapé, a colorful village located in the countryside outside of Medellín, which is known for its *zócalos*, beautifully crafted tiles that decorate houses and the town's church. This area is peaceful now, but was once the scene of conflict between government and paramilitary forces in the late 20th century—a history we'll learn about as we explore. Our discoveries begin with a boat ride along the shores of Guatapé.

Then we'll disembark our boat and stroll the town's vibrant streets on foot during a walking tour, interacting with the local people we meet along the way.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Guatapé.

Afternoon: Following lunch, you'll enjoy some free time before we return to our hotel in Medellín.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 6 Comuna 8 • Grand Circle **Foundation visit: Hill of Values • Fly to Pereira**

- Destination: Coffee Triangle
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Finca Hotel Bosques de Samán or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we set out for Comuna 8 via Medellín’s award-winning public transit system, which connects the city’s lower-income mountainside neighborhoods with services and opportunities in the center, and has been essential to Medellín’s dramatic revitalization. Our journey begins aboard the *travía*, or tram, which can only take us so far: Comuna 8 is nestled among the slopes of the Aburrá Valley, so we’ll need to board a cable car to complete our journey.

Once considered one of the most dangerous *comunas* (neighborhoods) in the city, Comuna 8 is now a model example of Medellín’s transformation. Our Trip Experience Leader will guide us through the neighborhood, where we’ll see firsthand how the community has changed and learn how local leaders aided this transformation.

Our walking tour concludes at the Hill of Values (*El Cerro de los Valores*)—a **NEW Grand Circle Foundation** site.

Grand Circle Foundation

Hill of Values

Partner since: 2021

During the darkest days of Colombia’s political conflict, the hill was a stronghold of the city’s paramilitary groups, and several battles were fought on its slopes. Today, it has found a new life as a community garden.

Upon arrival, we’ll meet one of the founders of the organization, who once served in a paramilitary group. After he demobilized, he made it his mission to transform this one-time symbol of brutality into a living memorial to all who suffered during the violence of the 1980s and 1990s.

From the founder, we’ll learn more about the activities that take place at the Hill of Values. In addition to the garden, the organization also operates a recycling center, maintains a compost pile, and hosts educational events. The goals of the organization are multipronged: to raise awareness about environmental best practices, to offer local youths a productive alternative to drugs and gangs, and to foster understanding between Colombians and visitors.

With the help of our generous travelers, **Grand Circle Foundation** funded the purchase of a solid trash compactor, which is now generating income for the site. Future projects we hope to fund include garden maintenance, constructing a new “green wall,” and making vital repairs to the event room.

After learning more about the organization’s mission, we’ll pay a visit to the recycling center and then be invited to participate in a hands-on activity, enabling us to leave a permanent, positive mark on this special place.

Lunch: We’ll gather in the organization’s event room to enjoy lunch with our host and other community members who’ve been impacted by the Hill of Values.

Afternoon: We transfer to the airport and fly to Pereira, one of three towns that comprise Colombia’s “coffee triangle.” Along with Manizales and Armenia, Pereira is a key player in the Colombian coffee-making tradition that is known worldwide. The top-quality Arabica beans grown in this region are harvested,

washed on local plantations, dried, and exported all over the world. After we arrive, we transfer to our hotel in nearby Alcala, which will likely be a *finca* (estate) on a coffee plantation.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: Yours to do as you please. Your Trip Experience Leader would be happy to make suggestions.

Day 7 Montenegro • A Day in the Life of the Coffee Triangle

- Destination: Coffee Triangle
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Finca Hotel Bosques de Samán or similar

Activity Note: If Day 7 of this itinerary falls on a Saturday or Sunday, travelers will instead hike in Cocora and visit a working hacienda on Day 8.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Our small group will experience **A Day in the Life** of the community of Montenegro in Colombia's Coffee Triangle today. Our discoveries begin in the main plaza, where we'll savor a cup of the region's brew, ordering on the street alongside the locals. After we've finished our coffee, we'll visit the town market where we'll break into smaller groups to shop for ingredients for our lunch later today.

Then, we'll board *Jeepaos* (Jeeps) and make our way to Buenos Aires Farm, a family-owned coffee plantation and our next destination. These all-terrain vehicles dramatically improved efficiency for plantation owners when they arrived in this mountainous region after World War II and have since become a symbol of the Coffee Triangle.

Upon arrival, we'll meet the farm's administrator, who is responsible for keeping the farm and its staff organized and producing the best quality coffee. He will give us a hands-on introduction to coffee growing by showing us how to plant, harvest, dry, or sort beans depending on the season. Then we'll head into the *hacienda* to help with the lunch preparations.

Lunch: We'll enjoy lunch at the plantation with the owners of Buenos Aires Farm, as well as some of the workers.

Afternoon: You have the rest of the afternoon free to relax or explore at your own pace.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: Continue enjoy time at leisure this evening. Perhaps you'll take advantage of some of our hotel's amenities.

Day 8 Explore Salento • Cocora Valley

- Destination: Coffee Triangle
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Finca Hotel Bosques de Samán or similar

Activity Note: Today's exploration of Corcora National Park includes a 4-mile uphill hike over steep hills and uneven terrain. Travelers do not have to participate in this hike if they feel it may be too difficult.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: The final turn in our triangle is the region around Armenia, once a way station on the march of Simón Bolívar. We visit Salento, a 19th-century village perched on a plateau over the Quindío River, where we'll learn about the process of roasting coffee. We'll witness local baristas making "latte art," decorative patterns in the foam on espresso drinks. Going beyond the common leaf or heart patterns frequently

seen in U.S. cafés, the “latte artists” here often “draw” animals, faces, and more with coffee and foam.

Then we discover that coffee is not the only treasured resource here when we explore Corcora National Park. We’ll travel through this lush valley dotted by sharp peaks. We’ll stop to take a guided hike near the cloud forest.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: We’ll return to Salento with free time to explore the town further. You may choose to stroll the Calle Real, Salento’s main street, which gives a glimpse into times past, as many buildings still reflect the *bahareque* cane-and-mud construction style. Here, you can browse the local handcrafts shops.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 9 Fly to Cartagena

- Destination: Cartagena
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Bantu or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We head to the airport for our flight from Armenia to Cartagena on Colombia’s Caribbean coast.

Lunch: On your own. You may want to get something to eat at the airport.

Afternoon: We’ll touch down in Cartagena in the late afternoon. Officially known as Cartagena de Indias—so named because Spanish explorers believed the port would become part of a spice trade route to India—Cartagena is one of South America’s most colorful cities. Presiding over sandy

beaches and sweeping ocean views, Cartagena still exudes both a colonial elegance and a tropical Caribbean flavor. From its inception, Cartagena’s riches made it a tempting target for pirates, as well as British and French forces, and Spain spent lavishly on its fortifications, a large portion of which have survived the centuries.

After checking in to our hotel, the remainder of the afternoon is yours to explore the city. Perhaps you’ll stroll to Parque Fernandez de Madrid, which was the setting for much of the novel *Love in the Time of Cholera*, by noted Colombian author Gabriel García Márquez.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 10 Explore Cartagena • San Felipe Castle • Walled City visit

- Destination: Cartagena
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Bantu or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We’ll head to one of Cartagena’s most conspicuous and commanding structures, the 17th-century San Felipe Castle. From its inception, Cartagena’s riches were desired by coastal pirates and defended by Spaniards, who eventually built the fortress to protect their prized city. Explore the labyrinthine tunnels that run underground, or enjoy panoramic views of the city from atop the castle walls. We then head to Cartagena’s oldest section, the *Ciudad Amurallada*, or Walled City, which is encircled by 12-foot stone walls and considered to be one of the best-preserved walled cities in the world. We’ll enjoy a stroll through the narrow, flower-lined streets of this UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Then we'll head to Bocagrande, a neighborhood known for its scenic stretches of beaches and trendy restaurants.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: We'll visit a local jewelry shop that specializes in emeralds. After perusing the emerald collection and learning about their formation, you can shop around for souvenirs here before we return to our hotel. You have the rest of the afternoon on your own to make independent discoveries.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations.

Evening: The remainder of the evening is yours to do as you please. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at one of the city's many lively bars.

Day 11 Explore Cartagena • Getsemani walk • Cumbia dancing lesson

- Destination: Cartagena
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Bantu or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Our day begins with a walking tour of the Getsemani neighborhood, the oldest part of the city. Then, we experience a local mode of transportation with a ride on a *chiva*, a vibrantly painted bus, while listening to a live musical performance. We'll take our *chiva* to La Boquilla, a small village near the beach. During our time here, we'll have the opportunity to interact with residents to get local perspectives of life in Cartagena. On the beach, we'll discover *cumbia*, a Latin America dance style, during a drum and dance lesson.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: Free for making your own discoveries. Perhaps you'll visit the massive cathedral on Plaza Bolívar, completed in 1602 after being partially destroyed in 1575 by Sir Francis Drake. Or examine the treasure trove of gold and ceramics found at the Museo de Oro y Arqueología.

In the early evening, a traditional carriage ride through the historic neighborhoods of Cartagena will bring us to a Farewell Dinner.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend your final night in Colombia as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 12 Cartagena • Return to U.S. or begin post-trip extension

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We transfer to the airport for our flight home. Or, begin your optional post-trip extension to *Riobamba, Cuenca & Quito: Cultural Treasures in the Ecuadorean Andes*.

END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

7 nights in *Riobamba, Cuenca & Quito: Cultural Treasures in the Ecuadorean Andes*

Day 1 Fly to Quito, Ecuador

Day 2 Travel to Riobamba • Visit local folk artist & rose cultivators • Conversation about the last iceman in Ecuador

Day 3 Overland to Cuenca • Visit Andean village of Pistishi Tolte

Day 4 Explore Cuenca • Pottery workshop

Day 5 Visit Cajas National Park

Day 6 Panama hat factory tour • Fly to Quito

Day 7 Discover Quito

Day 8 Depart for U.S.

OPTIONAL TOURS

During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Trip Experience Leader. He or she will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover credit cards. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

Please note: *Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.*

Local Market & Urban Street Art Tour

(Day 3 \$105 per person)

This Optional Tour combines two different, energetic sides of Bogotá. We'll start our journey with a visit to a local produce market where we'll stroll through stalls filled with aromatic herbs, fresh-cut flowers, exotic fruits, and local meat and fish. We'll learn how locals find different ways to make a living, and interact with the vendors. Then, we'll explore the city's urban graffiti scene. We'll explore a variety of neighborhoods and discover the many colorful and often political expressions that cover the city's walls. Street artists and locals involved in the art scene will guide us through the streets and tell us about the history and meaning of the graffiti, giving us a deeper understanding of their culture and society's struggles.

PRE-TRIP

Bolivia: La Paz & Lake Titicaca

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » Airfare from La Paz to Bogotá
- » Accommodations: 4 nights in La Paz at the Atix Hotel or similar, and 1 night in Copacabana at the Hotel Rosario del Lago or similar
- » 12 meals—6 breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 3 dinners
- » 9 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

Please note: For travelers who make their own internal flight arrangements, there is an additional per-person charge for the flight from La Paz to Bogotá.

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

From the shores of Lake Titicaca to the blend of modern and ancient cultures in La Paz, countless discoveries await you in Bolivia. Journey here before you travel to Colombia and explore Andean landscapes, visit indigenous villages, and discover ancient ruins that pre-date the Inca Empire.

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Activity Note: For travelers who choose to make their own air arrangements and arrive this evening, the hotel in La Paz will be available.

Afternoon/Evening: Depart the U.S. on your overnight flight to Bolivia.

Day 2 Arrive La Paz, Bolivia •

Explore La Paz

- Destination: La Paz
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Rosario Del Sur or similar

Activity Note: La Paz is at an altitude of 12,000 feet. We recommend staying hydrated while at high altitude. Travelers may rest at the hotel if necessary.

Early Morning: Upon arrival in La Paz before dawn today, you'll be met by an O.A.T. representative and assisted with your transfer to our hotel.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Yours to relax after your flight, as well as to begin adjusting to the altitude of La Paz, which is one of the world's highest cities.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: Our small group will gather for a Welcome Briefing at our hotel. Then, we'll begin our explorations of La Paz with an orientation walk around our hotel's vicinity. We return to our hotel in the late afternoon, and you'll have some free time to relax or continue making your own discoveries.

Dinner: We'll enjoy a Welcome Dinner at our hotel. Get to know your fellow travelers and toast to the discoveries to come as you dine on typical Bolivian cuisine.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend your first evening in Bolivia—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 3 Explore La Paz • Discover the Valley of the Moon

- Destination: La Paz
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Rosario Del Sur or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll drive to the Killi Killi *mirador*, or scenic viewpoint, at the northern outskirts of La Paz that offers incredible city and mountain vistas. From here, we can appreciate the unique topography of La Paz—a mountain-ringed city shaped somewhat like a bowl, with brick buildings and workshops perched on the rim and a dense city center bustling below—as well as the rugged landscape of the Altiplano.

Next, we'll head to downtown La Paz where we'll enjoy a guided tour, starting out with the neighborhood of El Prado Avenue, Murillo

Plaza, and San Francisco Church. While Sucre is the official capital city of Bolivia, La Paz is the country's second-largest city, and is often considered its de facto capital. We'll learn more about its current status and get an introduction to its history as we stroll past buildings that range from colonial cathedrals to the skyscrapers of the present day. And we'll also take in some of the city's striking settings as we walk, catching glimpses of the surrounding Andes Mountains, including the three snowcapped peaks of towering Illimani, the name of which comes from the indigenous Aymara people who lived here before the Incas, and whose descendants still dwell in Bolivia.

Then, we'll visit some of the local *mercados* (markets), which are wonderful places to meet the people of La Paz—from well-dressed professionals to itinerant street vendors and Andean women in their traditional garments of brightly colored, multi-layered skirts and bowler hats. We'll also visit the Witches' Market, where indigenous people sell plants, potions, and talismans used in ancient Aymara *curandero* (healing) rituals, and *yatiri* (witch doctors) offer their fortune-telling services.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: We'll head south of the city to discover the Valley of the Moon. This rugged and fantastical landscape features deep gullies, oddly shaped outcroppings, and spindly stone spires, all formed by centuries of erosion. We'll take a short hike through the valley, returning to our hotel in La Paz later in the afternoon. You'll have some free time to rest or explore more of the city on your own.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 4 La Paz • Overland to Lake Titicaca • Explore Copacabana

- Destination: Copacabana
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Rosario del Lago or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We depart La Paz for the village of Copacabana, set on the broad, blue banks of Lake Titicaca. During our ride, we'll have another chance to view the Andean landscapes, as we cross through the mountains on our way to the lakeshore.

We'll stop en route to meet some of the indigenous people whose ancestors have lived around Lake Titicaca for millennia. They are known for their use of *balsas*, traditional boats handcrafted from *titora*, the marsh reeds that grow in the shallow water by the shore. The vessels are primarily used for fishing and are sometimes affixed with sails, also made from reeds. We'll witness the construction of these traditional boats during our travels today, and we'll also get a chance to board a more modern boat ourselves, as we cross the Tiquina Strait to reach Copacabana.

Lunch: On your own upon arrival in Copacabana—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: We set out on a walking tour of the village. The name Copacabana is thought to derive from the Aymara word for “view of the lake,” and it's a fitting name—the views across the lake to the snow-draped peaks of the Andean range are magical, and its easy to see why this site has been considered a sacred place for centuries. We'll learn more

about Copacabana's spiritual heritage—and get a good look at Lake Titicaca—as we explore. In addition to the striking scenery, our tour includes the Basilica of Our Lady of Copacabana, the religious heart of this centuries-old community, and an important pilgrimage site for Bolivians throughout the country.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 5 Copacabana • Cruise Lake Titicaca • Discover the Island of the Sun • Overland to La Paz

- Destination: La Paz
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Rosario Del Sur or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We cruise the historic waters of Lake Titicaca. The highest navigable lake on Earth, at 12,580 feet, Lake Titicaca covers more than 3,800 square miles. Beyond its clear water, many islands, and the Andes Mountains that rise behind it, the lake holds a cherished place in Inca and pre-Inca history. According to Andean legend, a pair of gods rose from the waters of Lake Titicaca to found the Inca empire, and the Indian people who live in the small settlements around the lake believe that the *Isla del Sol* (Island of the Sun) and *Isla de la Luna* (Island of the Moon) are the sites of this mythic moment of creation.

We'll delve into this ancient history today, as our boat ride takes us to the Island of the Sun. This rocky landmass is the largest island in Lake Titicaca, and while it has no motor vehicles or paved roads, it is home to a number of indigenous families who dwell amidst its

patchwork of ancient agricultural terraces. We'll have a chance to meet some of the local people as we visit the hilltop village of Yumani—from which we'll enjoy views of the Island of the Moon—and we'll also discover one of the island's many ruins: the archaeological site of Pilko Kaina, an ancient Inca palace.

Lunch: At a local restaurant on the Island of the Sun.

Afternoon: We return to Copacabana by boat. From there, we depart for La Paz. Upon arrival, we'll check into the same hotel we stayed in on our first night in La Paz.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 6 La Paz • Discover Tiwanaku

- Destination: La Paz
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Rosario Del Sur or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll drive to Bolivia's most important archaeological site: Tiwanaku, a ceremonial location on the southern shore of Lake Titicaca used by a pre-Inca civilization reaching back to 600 BC. The people of this ancient city were excellent artisans and left behind a series of mysterious monoliths, mostly in granite; as well as a pyramid, temple, and aqueducts. This was a well-planned city, seat of one of the Americas' most powerful and organized civilizations, and today it is designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

We'll begin our discoveries of Tiwanaku at the site's two museums, the Lytic Museum—which houses several large stone objects, including a monolith representing *Pachamama*, or Mother Earth—and the Ceramic Museum, home to the surviving art and artifacts of the lost culture of this ancient city. Then, we explore the monumental ruins of Tiwanaku.

Lunch: At a local restaurant near the site.

Afternoon: We continue our discoveries at the Pumapunku temple complex, the massive stone slabs of which provide a vantage point for looking out over the surrounding plains.

Later this afternoon, we return to La Paz.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 7 La Paz • Fly to Bogotá, Colombia

- Destination: Bogotá
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Hotel de la Opera or similar

Activity Note: Our flight to Bogotá departs at around 3am today.

Early Morning: We'll transfer to the airport after midnight to board our very early morning flight to Bogotá. Once we arrive at around dawn, we will transfer to our hotel, where a day room has been prepared for our convenience.

Breakfast: An included breakfast will be provided today.

Morning: Meet your fellow travelers as they arrive at the hotel, and begin your discovery of *Colombia's Colonial Jewels & the Coffee Triangle*.

POST-TRIP

Riobamba, Cuenca & Quito: Cultural Treasures in the Ecuadorean Andes

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » Air transportation from Cartagena to Quito; and from Guayaquil to Quito
- » Accommodations: 1 night in Riobamba at the Hacienda Abraspungo, 3 nights in Cuenca at Santa Lucia Hotel or similar, and 3 nights in Quito at the Mercure Alameda Quito or similar
- » 18 meals—7 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 5 dinners
- » 6 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers
- » **Please note:** Travelers purchasing their own international flights will be responsible for additional internal flight costs.

POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Experience the Andean side of Ecuador, a region of snowcapped volcanoes, traditional cultures, and a dramatic rail route. From local markets in the countryside to Spanish colonial Cuenca, you'll meet the people who call this scenic region home. Join us to discover more of South America's cultural and natural diversity.

Day 1 Fly to Quito, Ecuador

- Destination: Quito
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: Mercure Alameda Quito or similar

Morning: After concluding your *Colombia's Colonial Jewels & the Coffee Triangle* adventure, you'll transfer to the airport and fly from Cartagena via Bogotá to Quito, Ecuador.

Lunch: On your own. You may like to pick something up at the airport to enjoy during your flight.

Afternoon: We arrive in Quito mid-afternoon and transfer to our hotel. You'll have some free time to settle in, and then our group will gather for a Welcome Briefing at the hotel.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: You are free to spend your first evening in Quito exploring independently.

Day 2 Travel to Riobamba • Visit local folk artist & rose cultivators • Conversation about the last iceman in Ecuador

- Destination: Riobamba
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hacienda Abraspungo or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We depart Quito for Riobamba, following the Pan-American Highway along the Avenue of the Volcanoes. Here we'll see rushing rivers descending from snowcapped Andes peaks to water the farm fields of the local people. This part of Ecuador is home to more people of pure Incan and pre-Incan descent than any other part of the country.

We stop along the way at the home of a local folk artist. In this region of Ecuador, folk art is characterized by colorful depictions of life in the Andes. During our visit, we'll not only learn more about the artist's creations, but we'll also have a chance to make our own. You might take inspiration from the artist's home, including his garden filled with fruit trees and his pet llamas. Following our visit, we'll make our way to a local rose plantation, which cultivates top-quality Ecuadorian roses for the international market.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Our next stop today is Urbina, where we'll meet relatives of the late Baltazar Ushca, who, until his passing in October 2024, was the last remaining *hielero* (iceman) in Ecuador. Several times per week, Mr. Ushca made the five-hour trek to the ice mine on Mount Chimborazo, where he harvested large blocks of ice to sell in Riobamba. We'll learn more about his life and bygone profession during a conversation with his family before continuing on to Riobamba, arriving around mid-afternoon.

The city's pastel-colored buildings and cobbled streets linking elegant squares give it a colonial charm. The towering Chimborazo Volcano, Ecuador's highest mountain, is visible from the city on clear days.

Dinner: At the hotel in Riobamba.

Evening: On your own. Perhaps you'll take an evening stroll through Riobamba to get acquainted with the city.

Day 3 Overland to Cuenca • Visit Andean village of Pistishi Tolte

- Destination: Cuenca
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Santa Lucia Hotel or similar

Activity Note: Today's drive to Cuenca will take about 4 hours, with stops along the way. The roads may at times be bumpy and winding.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Set off in the morning for Colta to explore Balbanera Church, the first church ever built in Ecuador in 1534. Built in the baroque style from the surrounding volcanic rock and adobe, this church is a true blending of cultures. After, you'll set off for Pistishi Tolte, a small Andean community located in the province of Chimborazo, to meet the locals. On your way, stop at a local bakery to discover the local technique to making bread. You'll be greeted at Pistishi Tolte by a cultural dance, before meeting the locals and learning about their lives and livelihoods.

A little more than a decade ago, Pistishi Tolte was considered one of the poorest communities in Ecuador, with villagers working the fields day and night and barely able to make ends meet. We'll learn about the steps they've taken in recent years to lift themselves out of

poverty and become a thriving, self-sustaining community while preserving their local traditions and culture.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Stop to take in views of the Devil's Nose mountain before continuing our drive to Cuenca, arriving in the late afternoon. You'll have a couple of hours of free time to relax or begin exploring on your own.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 4 Explore Cuenca • Pottery workshop

- Destination: Cuenca
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Santa Lucia Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we discover Cuenca and its traditions during a tour of the city, which is 8,200 feet above sea level. Cuenca has been recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site because of its well-preserved Spanish Colonial architecture. The skyline is dotted with church domes, and four rivers wind through the charming cityscape of gardens, cobblestone streets, and ironwork balconies. We'll explore the Abdon Calderon Park, the outside of the New Cathedral (begun in 1885), a local flower market, and the "El Barranco" area in this bustling city of more than 500,000 people. We'll also pay a visit to the arched stone Puente Roto, literally a "broken bridge" that once connected the two banks of the Rio Tomebamaba.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: We'll drive to the workshop of Iván Encalada, a well-known potter in Ecuador. Mr. Encalada will tell us a bit about his craft before inviting us to try our hand at traditional pottery making. We return to our hotel in Cuenca afterwards, and the remainder of the afternoon is yours.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations.

Evening: Yours to do as you please. Perhaps you'll enjoy the hotel's amenities.

Day 5 Visit Cajas National Park

- Destination: Cuenca
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Santa Lucia Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll drive from Cuenca into the mountains to visit Cajas National Park (*Parque Nacional Cajas*), where we'll experience the Andean *páramo*—a diverse set of ecoregions. Here, we'll take in the sites and sounds of Llaviucu Lake's serene landscape—perhaps we'll have some time to bird watch as we explore. The park offers vistas of pristine mountain scenery including 270 glacially formed lakes and lagoons, and is home to birds and wildlife characteristic of the heights of the Andes. Before making our way to lunch, we'll visit Tres Cruces, a high mountain overlook that offers sweeping views of the surrounding landscapes, and also serves as a memorial to those who have succumbed to altitude sickness in the high Andes.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: We'll return to Cuenca, and you'll have some free time to explore independently.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 6 Panama hat factory tour • Fly to Quito

- Destination: Quito
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Mercure Alameda Quito or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Late this morning, we'll drive to a *toquilla* factory, where Panama hats are made. Despite their name, these iconic hats were originally created in Ecuador, where they were woven by hand. We'll have a chance to learn about the craft of making Panama hats during our tour of the factory.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Cuenca.

Afternoon: Following lunch, we'll make our way to the airport for our flight to Quito. We'll arrive in Quito in the late afternoon and transfer to our hotel.

The balance of the afternoon is yours to do as you please.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations.

Evening: Enjoy the freedom to explore Quito independently this evening.

Day 7 Discover Quito

- Destination: Quito
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Mercure Alameda Quito or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we'll explore Quito, beginning with visits to the equator and the Intiñan Museum. Then we'll explore the city's historic center, a UNESCO World Heritage Site filled with well-preserved Spanish Colonial architecture including the La Basilica church. We'll walk through Independence Plaza and La Compania church.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: We'll immerse ourselves in the local culture during a stroll down La Ronda Street, a cobblestoned street brimming with colonial charm. Then, we'll return to our hotel, and you'll have a few hours of free time to rest or to continue exploring on your own.

Dinner: We'll gather a final time as a small group for a Farewell Dinner.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend your last evening in Quito as you wish—you may choose to retire to your room early to pack, or to have a nightcap at a nearby bar with your fellow travelers.

Day 8 Depart for U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to the airport for your return flight to the U.S.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this adventure.

- **Main trip only:** If you are taking only the main trip, you will need 2 blank passport pages.
- **Pre-trip extension to La Paz & Lake Titicaca:** You will need an additional page, for a total of 3.
- **Post-trip extension to Ecuador:** You will need an additional page, for a total of 3.
- **Both a pre- and a post-trip extension:** You will need 2 additional pages, for a total of 4.

Visas Required

We’ll be sending you a detailed Visa Packet with instructions, application forms, and fees about 100 days prior to your departure. In the meantime, we’re providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. This information is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change

- **Colombia: No visa needed.** For U.S. citizens, no visa is required for entry into Colombia for stays of up to 90 days.

- **Bolivia (pre-trip extension): Visa needed.** As of February 8th, 2021, U.S. citizens are required to have a tourist visa and a Yellow Fever Vaccination certificate (or waiver) when visiting Bolivia. We recommend you obtain the visa in advance, but it can be obtained on-site upon entry.
- **Ecuador (post-trip extension): No visa needed.** U.S. citizens do not need a visa for stays of less than 90 days in Ecuador.

Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **www.pvsinternational.org**.

Traveling With a Minor?

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency). If applicable, you will receive a list of these fees with your Final Documents.

Hotel Letter for Minors

Colombia in particular is *very* strict about traveling with minors if you are not their parent. Not only will you need documentation to enter the country, but also a permission letter from a parent for hotel stays. If you will be traveling with a minor who is not your child—such as a grandchild, niece/nephew, or ward—you must contact both us (so we can document your relationship to the minor in question) and the embassy of Colombia (to be advised on exactly what documents are need).

RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

Is This Adventure Right for You?

Please review the information below prior to departing on this adventure. We reserve the right for our Trip Experience Leaders to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their condition would adversely affect the health, safety, or enjoyment of themselves or of other travelers.

PACING

- 4 locations in 12 days with one 2-night stay; 3 or 4 internal flights (depending on the season); early mornings

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Not appropriate for travelers using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids
- You must be able to walk 3 miles unassisted and participate in 6-8 hours of physical activities each day including stairs
- Our activities include exploring Bogotá at an 8,000-foot altitude on Days 2 and 3; and a 4-mile uphill hike with uneven terrain and steep hills on Day 8 in Cocora Valley.
- We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience
- You may encounter animals on this trip. We make every effort to keep these encounters safe, however animals may behave unpredictably or dangerously at times. Please use caution when interacting with animals on this trip: Keep a safe distance, stay alert, and respect the animals

ALTITUDE

- 3 full days at altitudes between 8,600-9,000 feet

CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures range from 40-60°F in Bogotá, 70-80°F in Medellín, and 80-90°F with high humidity in Cartagena and Pereira
- Wet seasons are April-May and October-November in Bogotá and Medellín; Cartagena receives a fair amount of rainfall year-round

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Travel on city streets, rugged paths and trails, cobblestone roads, and uneven ground
- You must be able to walk up and down steep hills and stairs unassisted in high altitude areas
- Agility and balance are required for boarding carriages

- Travel by 20-passenger minibus (no toilet on board), horse-drawn carriage, Jeep, aerial tram, local bus, and moto taxi
- 3 or 4 internal flights of approximately 1 hour each

ACCOMMODATIONS & FACILITIES

- Hotel standard accommodations with hot showers and Western-style toilets
- Stay at a hacienda with limited services (including limited internet access) and no air-conditioning in the Coffee Triangle & Bogotá
- All accommodations feature private baths

Steps to Take Before Your Trip

Before you leave on this adventure, we recommend the following:

- Check with the CDC for their recommendations for the countries you'll be visiting. You can contact them online at www.cdc.gov/travel or by phone at **1-800-232-4636**.
- Have a medical checkup with your doctor at least 6 weeks before your trip.
- Pick up any necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- Have a dental and/or eye checkup. (Recommended, but less urgent)

Vaccines Required

Yellow Fever Vaccination—Documentation Needed

The yellow fever requirements vary depending on if you are taking the pre-trip extension to Bolivia.

- **Travelers who are going to Bolivia must bring EITHER proof of a yellow fever vaccination OR an official vaccination waiver (doctor's letter).**
- Travelers who are *not* taking the extension to Bolivia are also encouraged to bring one of these two documents, but it is a *suggestion* rather than a *requirement*.

While the CDC offers a wide range of vaccination and medication suggestions, there is one in particular that we'd like to draw your attention to—the yellow fever vaccine. For some countries, a yellow fever vaccination is a legal entry requirement, like a passport. For other countries, it is a health recommendation to protect you from getting sick. On this adventure, a yellow fever vaccination is a health recommendation for Colombia but can be a legal requirement for Bolivia. **Fortunately, both Bolivia and Colombia will accept an official doctor's waiver in place of the actual shot.**

You should discuss the vaccine with your doctor to see if he or she recommends it and if your health allows for it. (He or she can offer a suggestion tailored to your personal medical history.) We recommend that you research costs before making a decision as the yellow fever vaccination

can be expensive and is not covered by most insurance plans. If you and your doctor decide the vaccination is right for you, then he or she will issue you a Yellow Fever Card, also called an International Certificate of Vaccination. This is your proof of vaccination; you should bring it with you on the trip.

If you and your doctor decide the vaccination isn't right for you, then have your doctor issue an official vaccination waiver. An official waiver is a letter that meets these requirements:

- It must be on business letterhead paper or on the Yellow Fever Card itself. (Some versions of the card have a space for this purpose.)
- It must be signed by a doctor.
- It must be stamped using the same stamp that the doctor uses on a Yellow Fever Card.
- It must state the reason for the waiver. (For example: “patient has compromised immune system” or “patient is at high risk for severe side effects”.)

Remember, you may not be asked to show any documentation at all in Bolivia or Colombia—it all depends on the local official. But if you are asked, you must be able to produce EITHER your Yellow Fever Card OR your waiver. In theory, the local officials should not ask you for any documentation because you will be arriving from a country that is not a yellow fever risk (the U.S.). However, our regional office reports that many Bolivian passport control officers ask anyway. Plus some airlines will ask to see this before they will let you board the plane to Bolivia. You are more likely to be asked in Bolivia than in Colombia, but having the documentation is still suggested for Colombia.

Medication Suggestions

- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- Prescription pain medication in the unlikely event of an injury in a remote location
- Altitude sickness medication: Bogotá, is at 8,530 feet and La Paz—which we visit on the extension to Bolivia—is at over 11,000 feet above sea level. Quito, Ecuador and Cuenca, Ecuador are both over 8,000 feet. At these altitudes, almost everyone feels some of the symptoms of Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS), including headache, nausea, loss of appetite, trouble sleeping, and lack of energy.
- Anti-malaria medication is recommended but you should check with your doctor first because these medications can have strong side effects.

Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.

- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: **travel.state.gov** (Go to “Find International Travel Information”, select “Country Information”, then enter the country into the search bar; if you don’t see any medications specifically mentioned under the “Health” section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

***TIP:** At time of writing, the State Department did not have any special warnings about American over-the-counter medications for altitude sickness, but did warn that although coca-leaf tea is a popular beverage and folk remedy for altitude sickness in the Andes Mountains, possession of these tea bags is illegal in the United States.*

Staying Healthy on Your Trip

Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don’t push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

Water

- Tap water is not safe to drink.
- Bottled water or treated drinking water is readily available. Inspect each bottle before you buy it to make sure the cap is sealed properly. Carry a bottle in your daypack at all times.
- Bottled drinks and juices, and hot drinks that have been boiled, are safe to drink.

- Avoid drinks with ice in them.
- Carry a handkerchief to dry the tops of bottled drinks before and after opening.

Reminder: Our Trip Experience Leaders would like to remind you that you'll need to stay hydrated even at higher elevations where the temperatures are cooler. Drinking plenty of liquids is not just for warm weather.

Food

We've carefully chosen the restaurants for your group meals.

Be very careful with food sold from vendors on the street, and with uncooked fruit and other foods. Fruit that you peel yourself is usually safe—avoid lettuce and other unpeeled produce.

Altitude Illness

Bogotá, Colombia is at 8,530 feet above sea level. La Paz, Bolivia—the world's highest capital city—is over 11,000 feet above sea level. And Quito, Ecuador and Cuenca, Ecuador are both over 8,000 feet. At these elevations, you will probably feel some effects of altitude when you first arrive. Even if you've been to high elevations previously, you could have a different reaction this time. For most people, the symptoms are mild and will pass in a day or so.

The most common symptoms of altitude sickness are lightheadedness, shortness of breath, headache, nausea, sleeplessness, and loss of appetite. You should take it easy, avoid smoking and alcohol, and drink plenty of fluids. Some people take an altitude medication, starting when they arrive or one day before. Don't take sleeping medications, as they suppress respiration. Even though you may experience a decreased appetite, force yourself to eat soups and some foods.

If these normal altitude symptoms become unmanageable, it is critical that you inform your Trip Experience Leader. Please let him or her know if you experience any of the following: serious difficulty breathing, mental confusion, a severe and unremitting headache, continued difficulty breathing after a period of rest, or poor physical coordination (ataxia).

MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended** as they can be difficult to exchange and are rarely accepted in shops and restaurants.
- **Consider exchanging about \$100 per person into Colombian currency at the airport when you arrive.** Some of the ATMs at the airport and near the first hotel don't work with U.S. cards.

Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like www.xe.com/currencyconverter, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

Colombia: Peso (\$)

Bolivia: Boliviano (Bs)

Ecuador: U.S. Dollar (\$)

How to Exchange Money

U.S. dollars are not widely accepted in Colombia like they are in Bolivia and Ecuador, so you will need local currency for this trip. However, there is no need to obtain local currency before you leave. In fact, your U.S. bank may not carry it. You can change money when you arrive at the airport, or at most hotels, and money exchange offices. Torn, dirty, or taped U.S. bills may not be accepted for exchange or payment. We suggest that you bring a variety of small and large bills—large bills tend to have a better exchange rate, but smaller bills are easier to use in shops (especially if you are taking one of the extensions where U.S. dollars are more readily accepted).

Our Trip Experience Leaders suggest changing about \$100 per person into Colombian currency at the airport when you first arrive. They have found that some of the ATMs at the airport and near the first hotel don't work with U.S. cards. Your Trip Experience Leader will advise you on ATM availability and locations during the trip. An ATM is the simplest way to exchange money as the machine will dispense local currency.

ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card.

Many banks charge a fee of \$1-\$10 each time you use a foreign ATM. Others may charge you a percentage of the amount you withdraw. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart.

Lastly, don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM.

Colombia: Typically ATMs are widely available in the larger cities like Bogotá and Medellín, but may be hard to find in smaller towns or rural villages. Our Trip Experience Leaders suggest changing about \$100 per person into Colombian currency at the airport when you first arrive. They have found that some of the ATMs at the airport and near the hotels don't work with U.S. cards.

Bolivia: ATMs are usually only available in larger cities, like La Paz. For rural and remote areas, plan to carry enough cash for your expected expenses, plus a small reserve, and then use your credit card as backup.

Ecuador: ATMs are available in larger cities, such as Quito, but become harder to find in remote locations. We recommend that you bring enough cash to cover your expenses for your travel in more remote areas.

Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. Even if you don't plan on using a credit card during your trip, we still suggest that you bring one or two as a backup, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, because not every shop will take every card. For example, although Discover and American Express cards are accepted in some countries outside the U.S., they are not widely adopted, so other brands will work at a much larger range of stores, restaurants, etc.

If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

Colombia: Credit and debits cards are widely accepted in Colombia, though you may still run into some smaller shops and restaurants that will not accept them.

Bolivia: Payment by credit card is limited to hotels and shops that caters to tourists; other than these exceptions, it is not common practice. Shops and businesses in Bolivia may charge you a small percentage of the purchase price as a fee for using your card.

Ecuador: Credit and debit cards are more likely to be accepted in cities like Quito. But even inside a large city like Quito, cards of any kind are more commonly accepted in the modern shops of the New Town district than in the "hole in the wall" places in the Old Town.

Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines:

- **O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Trip Experience Leader at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$10-\$14 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Trip Experience Leader is with them. *Please note that these tips can only be in cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Trip Experience Leader during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*
- **Housekeeping staff at hotels:** \$1-\$2 per room, per night
- **Waiters:** Your Trip Experience Leader will tip waiters for included meals. If you are dining on your own, bear in mind that it is common for restaurants in this region to add a service charge (usually of about 10%). If so, there is no need to tip.
- **Taxi drivers:** If you are taking a taxi by yourself, keep in mind that tipping is not common practice, but many people simply let the driver keep the change by rounding up the fare to the next whole number. It is considered polite to give a \$1 or so to the driver if he/she carries a bag or parcel for you.

Please Note: Your tour price includes gratuities on the main trip and optional extensions for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters that may assist you during the scheduled activities on your adventure. All tips are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency or in U.S. dollars. Please do not use personal or traveler's checks for tips.

AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

Land Only Travelers & Personalized Air

Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Arrive Early or Stopover (select adventures only):** If you chose one of these Personalization options and purchased air through O.A.T, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose one of our Personalization options, but did not purchase air through O.A.T., accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose one of our Personalization options, and purchase air through O.A.T. but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Personalization on Your Own:** If you have not purchased air through O.A.T. and decided to arrive early, stay longer, or stop in a connecting city on your own, you are responsible for airport transfers and accommodations. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner under "My Reservations" to help you with selecting a hotel for your additional time.

Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with us, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **U.S. Departure:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who depart the U.S. from your international gateway city, it is our goal to have an O.A.T. Representative assist you at the U.S. airport with the check-in of your flight. Unless there are extenuating circumstances beyond our control, the Representative will be at the check-in counter three hours before your departure time. If you are flying domestically before your international flight, the representative will be stationed at the check-in counter for your departing international flight, not at the domestic arrival gate.
- **U.S. Return:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, an O.A.T. Representative will meet you as you exit Customs and help you find taxis, buses, hotel accommodations, or connecting flights. Again, it is our goal to have our Representative waiting to assist your group. In rare instances, unforeseen circumstances may prevent this service.

- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.
- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45-30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as O.A.T. travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.
- If you are arriving early, you must have arranged the hotels through our Arrive Early personalization option

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: www.rome2rio.com

Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your adventure by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)

- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as “OPT Boston”.
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you’re on the trip. But if you’d like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner).

Communicating with Home from Abroad

Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one.

Calling Apps

We recommend you use WhatsApp while abroad to communicate home and with your Trip Experience Leader while onsite. You will need a Wi-Fi connection if you do not have international coverage. Other calling options include smartphone apps such as Skype or FaceTime. You will need a Wi-Fi connection for these apps and the calls may count towards your phone plan’s data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.).

One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

Internet

Internet access on this adventure will be mostly limited to computers in the hotel lobby or business center; most hotels do not offer WiFi in the rooms, and the ones that do charge for the service.

How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

Colombia: +57

Ecuador: +593

Bolivia: +591

PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on per person.
Weight restrictions	Up to 50 lbs for checked luggage and 17 lbs for carry-ons
Size Restrictions	Standard airline size: Checked luggage should not exceed 62 linear inches (length+width+depth) and carry-on should not exceed 45 linear inches.
Luggage Type	Duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Please do not bring a hard-sided (clam shell) suitcase.

TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS
Bolivia pre-trip extension: Same as main trip.
Ecuador post-trip extension: Up to 44 lbs for checked luggage and 15 lbs for carry-ons

REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS
<p>Luggage rules: Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.</p> <p>Luggage storage during the extension in Ecuador: If you are taking the post-trip extension in Ecuador, you'll have a flight from Cuenca to Quito that limits how much luggage you can bring on the extension. But you have a couple of options in regards to the weight limits for this flight. If you can keep your checked luggage under 44 lbs, you can bring all of it with you for the whole extension. Or you can bring as much luggage as the main trip allows but leave the extra at your hotel in Quito. If you chose to take advantage of this storage service, please bring an extra bag that can be locked and left behind. You will be able to pick up your stored luggage when you return to Quito at the end of the extension.</p>

Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.

- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.
- The luggage limits above are based on your regional flights, which may be less than your international flights. Even if your international airline offers a larger weight limit, you will need to pack according to the lower restrictions.

Your Luggage

- **Checked luggage:** One duffel bag or suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy-duty lockable zipper. Please do not bring a rigid (plastic shell) suitcase.
- *TIP: When traveling with a companion we recommend "cross-packing," i.e., pack 2 outfits of your clothing in your companion's luggage and vice-versa, in case one bag is delayed.*
- **Carry-on bag:** You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during driving excursions and walking trips. Consider a backpack or waistpack that keeps both hands free and distributes the pack's weight onto your back or hips.
- **Locks:** For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

- **Layering:** As you will experience a wide range of temperatures and weather conditions, we suggest several layers of clothing
- **Lightweight fabrics:** If you like to hand-wash your clothes, look for fabrics that will dry out overnight. You can buy clothing designed especially for travel, with features like wrinkle-resistant fabric or built-in sun protection.
- **Footwear:** You'll be on your feet a lot during the trip, and walking over some rough and slippery surfaces. The soles of your shoes should offer good traction.

Style Hints

- Dress on our trip is functional and casual.
- You might want to bring one slightly dressier outfit for dining on your own at nicer restaurants, but that is totally up to you.

Suggested Packing Lists

We have included suggestions from Trip Experience Leaders and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. We recommend using www.weather.com and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

And don’t forget a reusable water bottle—you’ll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

Recommended Clothing Checklist

- Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts in a breathable fabric
- Trousers and/or jeans: Comfortable and loose fitting is best.
- Walking shorts
- Shoes and socks: Light hiking boots or trekking shoes that offer good traction are key. A pair of sport sandals with secure ankle strap (such as Tevas or Merrell) may be useful. For socks, consider bringing a couple heavy pairs for hiking and a couple pairs that can get wet.
- Light wool or fleece sweater and/or a Polartec fleece jacket
- Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood or poncho.
- Wide-brim sun hat or visor for sun protection
- Underwear
- Sleepwear
- Optional: Swimsuit, for visits to the beach or hotel pools, if available (our regional office suggests you bring two for when the first is drying)

Essential Items

- Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc. Our hotels will provide the basics like soap and shampoo but usually not washcloths.
- Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses; sunglasses
- Sunscreen: SPF 15 or stronger
- Insect repellent with DEET (30%–35% strength)

- Light folding umbrella
- Moisturizer and sun-blocking lip balm
- Pocket-size tissues
- Moist towelettes and/or anti-bacterial “water-free” hand cleanser
- Ear plugs, if you are a light sleeper or are bothered by the noise of traffic
- Reusable water bottle
- Electrical transformer & plug adapters
- Camera gear with extra batteries or battery charger

Medicines & First Aid Gear

- Your own prescription medicines
- Travel first aid kit: Band-Aids, headache and pain relief, laxatives and anti-diarrhea tablets, something for upset stomach. Maybe a cold remedy, moleskin foot pads, antibiotic cream, or allergy medication.
- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- Optional: A strong prescription pain medication for rare emergency purposes
- Optional: Altitude sickness medication
- Optional: Anti-malarial medication—discuss with your doctor first
- Optional: Allergy medication or cough suppressant

Home-Hosted Visits

Many of our adventures feature a visit with a local family, often as part of the *A Day in the Life* experience. It is customary, though not necessary, to return your hosts' generosity with a small gift. If you do bring a gift, we recommend that you bring something the whole family can enjoy, or something that represents your region, state, or hometown. Get creative and keep it small—peach jelly from Georgia, maple sugar candy from New England, orange blossom soap from California; something that can be used or used up is best. When choosing a gift, be certain to consider the local culture as well. For example, we do not recommend alcohol in Muslim countries because it is forbidden in Islam, and your hosts may be religious. Not all O.A.T. adventures include a Home-Hosted Visit; please check your final itinerary before you depart.

Electricity Abroad

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

Voltage

Electricity in Colombia and Ecuador, is 110–120 volts—same as the U.S.—but in Bolivia is it 220 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220. But you should check the item or the owner’s guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

Plugs

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you’ll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Even though you’ll only need one adapter on this trip, it may be a good idea to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo if you plan to do a lot of international travel in the future. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

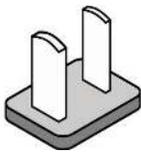
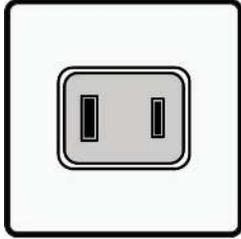
Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

Colombia: A and B

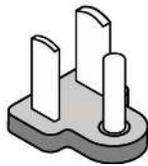
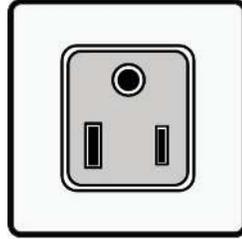
Bolivia: A, B, and C

Ecuador: A and B

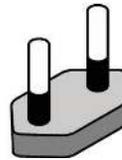
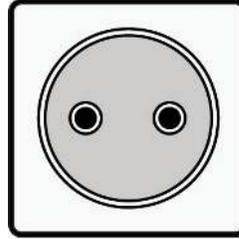
Type A



Type B



Type C



Availability

A constant electricity supply cannot be guaranteed during overnight stays. In some places a generator may supply electricity and lighting may not be as bright as you are used to. Travelers dependent on electricity supply (as in the case of those with sleep apnea) should consider a different adventure or ensure their apparatus has back-up battery power.

CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

Bogotá, Colombia: Bogotá's setting in a high plateau in the Andes means that hail is just as likely as a sun. The average yearly temperature is 57 degrees F, with highs rarely going above 85 degrees, and lows sometimes dipping to below freezing. The highest high temperatures are usually in March or April, while the lowest lows are usually in January. December through March, July, and August are the driest months. Rainfall is more common April through June and October to November. Morning humidity can be quite high, but generally the afternoon is better. Overall, Bogotá's weather can be unpredictable and subject to sudden changes.

Medellin, Colombia: Medellin may be squarely in the tropics, but its elevation (almost 5,000 feet above sea level) offsets the tropical heat and gives the city a pleasant spring-like climate. Temperatures don't vary much throughout the year—the high is almost always in the 70s or 80s; the low is usually in the 60s. Rainfall is possible any day of the year, but is more common during spring (April and May) or fall (October and November).

Coffee Triangle, Colombia: The Coffee Triangle has a temperate climate. While the average temperature is about 62 degrees F, there can be a lot of variation during the day. A daytime high in the 80s can give way to a nighttime low in the 40s. Rain falls almost daily.

Cartagena, Colombia: Cartagena sits on the Caribbean Sea, on the northern coast of Colombia. Most days are typically tropical—hot and humid days with highs in the upper 80s or 90s. However, because of the high humidity, it can often feel hotter. The dry season runs from December to April and the rainy season is between October and November.

La Paz, Bolivia: Bolivia's altitude keeps its climate fairly temperate, with temperatures in La Paz (the world's highest capital at 11,910 feet above sea level) seldom rising above the 50s. Evenings tend to be quite cold. Most days are bright and sunny here, but from November to March, Bolivia's summer months, rain showers are common in the afternoon.

Quito and the Highlands, Ecuador: Quito, located in the Ecuadorian Andes, has a climate that is often described as one of “perpetual spring,” with warm days and chilly nights and little variation of temperature around the year. Much of the rainfall in this mountainous region comes in the afternoon and evening as clouds build up over the mountains and thunderstorms develop.

Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use www.weather.com for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	BOGOTA, COLOMBIA			MEDELLIN, COLOMBIA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	66 to 43	95 to 67	1.9	79 to 64	87 to 48	2.1
FEB	66 to 45	94 to 68	2.0	80 to 65	86 to 49	2.6
MAR	67 to 47	93 to 70	3.2	80 to 65	86 to 52	4.0
APR	66 to 48	93 to 73	4.7	79 to 65	88 to 58	7.1
MAY	65 to 48	92 to 72	4.0	79 to 65	88 to 60	7.6
JUN	64 to 48	91 to 69	2.4	80 to 65	87 to 51	5.4
JUL	64 to 47	90 to 66	1.8	80 to 64	86 to 45	4.7
AUG	64 to 46	91 to 65	1.9	80 to 64	86 to 48	5.5
SEP	65 to 46	92 to 68	2.3	79 to 64	88 to 56	6.2
OCT	65 to 47	92 to 74	5.6	78 to 64	89 to 64	8.0
NOV	65 to 47	93 to 76	4.5	78 to 64	89 to 62	5.8
DEC	66 to 45	94 to 73	2.7	78 to 64	89 to 58	3.3

MONTH	PEREIRA, COLOMBIA			CARTAGENA, COLOMBIA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	80 to 62	--	5.4	85 to 75	88 to 70	0.2
FEB	81 to 63	--	5.3	85 to 76	87 to 70	--
MAR	80 to 63	--	8.0	86 to 77	86 to 70	0.1
APR	79 to 63	--	8.0	86 to 78	86 to 73	1.0
MAY	79 to 63	--	9.8	87 to 79	87 to 76	3.8
JUN	79 to 63	--	7.3	87 to 79	88 to 75	4.2
JUL	80 to 62	--	4.9	87 to 79	88 to 74	3.4
AUG	80 to 62	--	5.1	87 to 79	88 to 76	4.7
SEP	79 to 62	--	7.5	87 to 78	89 to 77	5.2
OCT	78 to 62	--	10.6	86 to 78	89 to 78	8.8
NOV	78 to 62	--	10.7	86 to 78	90 to 77	5.3
DEC	79 to 62	--	7.0	86 to 76	90 to 73	1.3

MONTH	LA PAZ, BOLIVIA			QUITO, ECUADOR		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	55 to 39	92 to 63	5.1	66 to 50	88 to 59	4.5
FEB	56 to 39	92 to 60	4.1	66 to 50	87 to 61	5.1
MAR	56 to 38	92 to 58	2.8	66 to 50	88 to 63	6.0
APR	57 to 36	89 to 50	1.4	66 to 51	89 to 67	6.9
MAY	57 to 32	76 to 35	0.5	66 to 51	88 to 64	4.9
JUN	55 to 28	72 to 32	0.2	67 to 49	80 to 55	1.9
JUL	55 to 27	71 to 30	0.3	67 to 49	75 to 50	0.8
AUG	56 to 29	76 to 33	0.6	67 to 49	73 to 49	1.0
SEP	57 to 32	81 to 38	1.2	68 to 49	79 to 56	3.1
OCT	58 to 36	84 to 43	1.6	67 to 49	85 to 64	5.0
NOV	59 to 38	86 to 45	2.0	67 to 49	86 to 63	4.3
DEC	58 to 38	89 to 53	3.7	66 to 50	87 to 62	4.1

MONTH	CUENCA, ECUADOR		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	69 to 50	75	2.0
FEB	70 to 51	76	1.8
MAR	69 to 51	76	3.2
APR	69 to 50	77	4.3
MAY	67 to 49	77	4.3
JUN	66 to 47	75	1.7
JUL	65 to 47	73	0.9
AUG	66 to 46	75	1.1
SEP	69 to 48	74	1.6
OCT	70 to 49	76	3.1
NOV	71 to 46	74	1.8
DEC	71 to 49	74	2.5

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

O.A.T. Trip Experience Leaders: A World of Difference

During your adventure, you'll be accompanied by one of our local, Trip Experience Leaders. All are fluent in English and possess the skills, certification, and experience necessary to ensure an enriching adventure. As locals of the regions you'll explore with them, our Trip Experience Leaders provide the kind of firsthand knowledge and insight that make local history, culture, and wildlife come alive. Coupled with their unbridled enthusiasm, caring personalities, and ability to bring diverse groups of travelers together, our Trip Experience Leaders ensure that your experience with O.A.T. is one you'll remember for a lifetime.

Colombian Culture

A large majority of the Colombian population can trace some portion of their heritage back to Spain. This includes those of strictly Spanish heritage and mestizos who claim mixed Amerindian and European or African blood. In keeping with the mostly Spanish dominant norms, here you will find a relaxed attitude about punctuality, but not one when it comes to fashion: in the large cities, people dress carefully, and well.

However, unlike their Spanish cousins, people here tend to be casual and informal. They are polite, but warm and friendly and not afraid to show emotion. They are also quite open, so don't be surprised (or offended) if people ask you personal questions about your family, your marital status, your career, or financial status. People in Colombia are thought to be more boisterous than some of their more reserved South American neighbors. But you can put that to the test when the subject of soccer (fútbol) comes up, about which everyone seems to have very passionate opinions.

One other trait is the remarkably heavy emphasis on family, which includes extended family and close friends. All other groups, including workplaces, churches, and especially the government (which is usually eyed with skepticism or outright mistrust) pale in comparison to the role that family loyalty plays.

Accommodations

Many hotels were once private homes, so the rooms may be smaller, darker, or noisier than you expect. In some areas, hotels will have fans but not air-conditioning.

Hotels & Land Only Travelers

If you are taking the optional pre-trip extension and have made your own international air arrangements, please note that on this adventure the first included hotel is on the night of Day 1 of the pre-trip extension. Check in times will vary, but tend to be after 4pm.

Expectations in Colombia

Colombia has long been a closed destination for Americans, and is slowly opening for American tourism. The most important things for you to pack are your sense of adventure, an open mind, and an understanding that service and standards will not be what you are used to. While the people are friendly and the country's beauty is vast, there will be some things that surprise you. There are few people in Colombia who speak English, including at hotels and restaurants. (Come prepared to practice your Spanish.) Many hotels were once private homes, so the rooms many be smaller, darker, or noisier than you expect. In some areas, hotels will have fans but not air-conditioning.

The locals will love to help you, but service is not up to American standards. The staff will be friendly, but, again, will most likely not speak English and may be slower than expected. Be prepared for a leisurely meal, and allow extra time if you have a specific request. Patience with this developing country is important. Our advice is: When in Colombia, do as Colombians do.

Taking Photographs

The etiquette of photographing people in most countries is about the same as it would be on the streets of your hometown. You need permission to take a close-up, but not for a crowd scene. Be especially polite if you want to photograph children or older women. If you want to shoot a great portrait, show interest in your subject and try to have a bit of social interaction first. Then use sign language to inquire if a picture is OK.

Please do not take photographs of military personnel, military compounds, or other official institutions/personnel (such as police). This may result in the confiscation of your camera.

In museums or at archaeological sites, there may be restrictions on using your flash. Please obey any signs or directions by staff; the no-flash rule protects the fragile artifacts and artwork from damage by repeated exposure to light. Occasionally, there may also be a small fee levied by the museum or site for the privilege of taking photos.

Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Don't be overly nervous or suspicious, but keep your eyes open. If you are venturing out after dark, go with one or two other people.

Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don't leave valuables unattended in your hotel room. Most hotels will offer use of a hotel safe at the front desk or an electronic in-room safe (for which you can set your own personal number). Please utilize this.

Pickpockets may create a sudden distraction. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt. If an encounter with a local turns out to be long and complicated and involves money or your valuables, be very careful.

Colombian Cuisine

If you want to understand the national cuisine, **bandeja paisa** is essentially Colombia on a plate. This is a hearty platter filled with red beans, ripe plantain, white rice, pieces of **chicharrón** (crispy pork rinds), avocado, chorizo sausage, **carne en polvo** (a finely ground flank steak), and a fried egg. This traditional, filling meal would sustain workers all day. Other popular dishes include:

- **Sancocho:** A hearty soup that includes large pieces of chicken with chunks of corn on the cob, plantains, and herbs served with **salsa de hierbas**, a spicy cream and herb sauce.
- **Sancocho de pescado:** A delicious seafood chowder made from chunks of local fish simmered in coconut milk.
- **Aborrajados:** These are plantains that are stuffed with cheese and deep fried.
- **Carimañolas:** *These are yuca fritters and served as an appetizer.*
- **Arepas:** Similar to tortillas, these are fried corn flatbreads topped with anything from shredded beef to roasted goat to grilled seafood, cheese, fruits, veggies, and more.

Bolivian Cuisine

Bolivia grows over two hundred varieties of potatoes; therefore, you will find a potato in almost every dish. You will also find dishes with ingredients containing corn, quinoa, and beans. Here are some dishes to look for:

- **Salteñas:** Pastries filled with beef, pork, or chicken in a sweet and slightly spicy sauce with olives, raisins, and potatoes.
- **Tucumanas:** A fried pastry filled with beef, chicken, boiled eggs, potatoes, and vegetables.
- **Sandwich de Chola:** Great for lunch or a snack is this roasted pork sandwich with pickled vegetables and spices that is a popular street food in La Paz.
- **Sajta de pollo:** A popular dish consisting of boiled chicken cooked in a sauce with onions, tomatoes, peas, and yellow chiles, and flavored with parsley cumin, celery, pepper, and garlic.
- **Silpancho:** Breaded ground beef shaped into a large thin patty (the size of a plate) topped with rice, potatoes, onions, tomatoes, and a fried egg.
- **Plato Paceño:** This simple and traditional meal is from Bolivia's highlands. It is a thin steak, fried cheese, boiled corn, potatoes, and fava beans.
- **Trucha:** (trout) Found in Lake Titicaca is a common dish, often cooked in lemon juice, garlic, or tomato sauce.
- **Sopa de mani:** A peanut soup cooked with beef broth, vegetables, noodles or rice, and thinly sliced potato from the lowlands of the Bolivian Amazon.

- **Chairo:** A dehydrated potato soup with beef broth, vegetables, corn, and wheat from the Andean valleys.
- **Sopa de quinua:** A quinoa soup with vegetables and potatoes found in the Andean Highlands.
- **Llajwa:** (pronounced yak-wa), A spicy salsa featuring tomatoes and onions made with a grinding stone and served as a condiment.

Ecuadorian Cuisine

Here, you can find a wide variety of fruit due to Ecuador's diverse climate and fertile soil. This fruit includes several types of bananas, passionfruit, and tree tomatoes. You will also find plenty of seafood options. Some dishes to look for are:

- **Mani:** A sauce based on peanuts and often served with fried seafood.
- **Hornado:** Ecuador's national dish. A whole, spit-roasted pig, usually served with salad, fried plantain or cheesy fried potato pancakes called *llapingachos*.
- **Cuy:** Or guinea pig. This dish can be found in the highlands of Ecuador (and Peru). It is a staple source of protein. Many families raise them (not as pets, but for food) and then grill or roast them with herbs till the skin is crispy. Many have compared the taste to that of suckling pig.
- **Fritada de chancho:** A piece of pork shoulder that's been boiled and then fried and served with a spicy red sauce. It is accompanied by *llapingachos* (potato pancakes), corn, and fava beans.
- **Ceviche:** Here, the seafood of choice is shrimp. It is usually served in its marinade, which includes tomato, and with a corn-nut *tostado* for crunch. If you are a vegetarian, try the veggie-based *ceviche* called *cevichocho* that is made with lupini beans. You can also find mango *ceviche*, mushroom *ceviche*, heart of palm *ceviche* and many others.
- **Humitas:** A great dish if you are looking for something on the go from a pushcart vendor. These are like *tamales*—steamed *masa* (corn meal) and corn kernels in a banana leaf. They are either salty or sweet and can also contain onions, cheese, or eggs. When you crave something crunchy, grab a bag of
- **Habitas:** If you are craving something crispy, *habitas* are it. They are crispy fried and salted fava beans
- **Dulce de leche:** A dessert that is a caramelized dairy confection.
- **Alfajores:** Flaky layers of dough filled with sweet cheese or gooey caramel or molasses.

Travel in South America

Part of the adventure of this trip is the possibility that things may change. Local influences may make it impossible for us to follow the planned itinerary exactly and the sequence of sites visited may change. Rest assured that we have considerable experience at responding to changing circumstances on the spot. Our goal is always to offer you the best travel experience and the most memorable explorations of this intriguing land.

Complex, multi-layered cultural traditions and stunning natural geography make South America a fascinating destination. To get the most enjoyment out of your trip, remember that many South American countries are still considered developing nations, and be aware that you may be approached to buy crafts or solicited by children to take photographs.

In restaurants, hotels, and at cultural sites, everything works according to a slower sense of time than what you are used to. It's best to wind down and adjust to the local pace and philosophy.

Regional Flights in South America

In South America, it is simply a fact of life that schedules for internal flights often change on short notice. When this happens, our air travel experts strive to get you on new flights as close to the original schedule as possible, but limited availability of seats may require us to use early-morning flights or change the day of the flight. If schedule changes make it necessary, we may have to rise before dawn on some days where early-morning wake-ups are not mentioned in your printed itinerary.

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your adventure. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. O.A.T. is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

Crafts & Souvenirs

Colombia

You can find many local crafts in Bogotá—even if you fall in love with a design from another region, you can find it here. Traditional *mochilas* (woven bags with indigenous textile designs) are both practical and typically Colombian. Hats like the *sombrero vueltiao*, which is made from

cane fibers by the Zenu tribe, or *sombrero aguadeno* (a version of the Panama hat) are also popular. Lastly, if you are in the market for a high-end purchase, Colombia is known for gold and emerald jewelry.

Bolivia

Bolivian handicrafts tend towards Andean-style weavings, pottery, and jewelry. Traditional games—often carved from wood—or woven baskets make nice handmade souvenirs. Also look for items made from alpaca wool.

Ecuador

Traditional souvenirs include jewelry and sculptures created from Tagua vegetable ivory (using the nut of the Tagua palm tree), ceramics, Tigua paintings, Panama hats, and items with images of Galapagos animals.

U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, www.cbp.gov has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Colombia

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 439,736 square miles
- **Capital:** Bogotá
- **Languages:** Spanish is the official language.
- **Ethnicity:** Mestizos (mix of European and Amerindian) 58%, White 20%, Afro-Colombian 21%, Amerindian 1%
- **Location:** Colombia is bordered by Brazil, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, Venezuela, the Pacific Ocean, and the Caribbean Sea.
- **Geography:** Colombia is the fourth largest country in South America—roughly the size of Texas and California combined. In the west, low peaks rise over the flat Pacific lowlands. Moving inward, these give way to the three mountain chains that run across the center of the country. Mountain peaks of up to 13,000 feet soar over these central regions. Moving further east, the countryside descends to grassy lowlands, and then to the coastal areas on the Caribbean Sea.
- **Population:** 46,736,728 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Roman Catholic 90%, other 10%
- **Time zone:** Colombia is in Eastern Standard Time. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 6am in Bogotá

National Holidays: Colombia

In addition to the holidays listed below, Colombia celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Epiphany, Feast of the Sacred Heart, and Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

03/25 St. Joseph's Day

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

June Corpus Christi (moves each year)

07/20 Independence Day

08/07 Battle of Boyaca Day

10/12 Columbus Day (usually observed on closest Monday)

11/05 All Saint's Day

11/12 Independence of Cartagena

12/08 Feast of the Immaculate Conception

12/25 Christmas Day

Colombia: A Brief History

Among the cultures scattered in Colombia's Andean region before Europeans arrived were the Tayrona, Sinú, Muisca, Quimbaya, Tierradentro, and San Agustín, known for intricate goldwork, pottery, and rock paintings. The first recorded Spanish visit occurred when Alonso de Ojeda, an officer of Columbus' second voyage, stepped ashore in 1499. He sought the mythical land of El Dorado, and the Amerindians' gold made him think he'd found it. Several expeditions followed and short-lived settlements arose; the oldest, established in Santa Marta in 1525, still stands.

At first, local tribes tolerated the visitors, but they rebelled when it grew clear that the colonists meant to enslave them. They were no match for Spaniards' advanced weapons. Colonial towns prospered for 200 years, including the port of Cartagena (founded in 1533). It was a prosperity borne on the backs of enslaved Africans, who soon outnumbered indigenous people. Through the 18th century, there were sporadic rebellions, but the fight for independence gained strength when Napoleon abolished the Spanish monarchy. This divided Colombia, but a great liberator arose: Simón Bolívar of Venezuela, who defeated the Spanish at the Battle of Boyaca in 1819.

Colombia joined Venezuela and Ecuador to form the Republic of Gran Colombia, but it dissolved after ten years due to political differences. By 1849, these coalesced into two political parties. The Conservadores had centralist views, believed government should align with the Catholic Church, and favored a limited voting pool. The Liberales wanted a decentralized government, separation of church and state, and broad voting rights. This division set the tone for numerous wars until 1899. Colombia was relatively quiet from 1902–1947, but conflict between the Conservadores and Liberales boiled over in 1948 during "La Violencia," which killed 300,000. A 1953 coup by General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla did not result in reforms. In 1957, both parties united as the National Front, overturning the general and agreeing to share power for 16 years.

The National Front ended in 1974. Meanwhile, left-wing guerrillas were surfacing, such as the National Liberation Army (ELN), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), and the April 19 Movement (M19). They had complicated relations with the growing drug cartels in Medellín and Cali. Some guerillas used the drug trade to fund their activities, while others rejected the

cartels, going so far as to kidnap cartel members. Many cartels started death squads, ostensibly for protection. In reality, many death squads were paramilitary groups used to terrorize civilians into cooperating with the cartels. By 1990, violence threatened to paralyze the country.

By 1992, government control was strengthened by the death of Pablo Escobar, the head of the Medellín cartel. In the late 90s, conservative Andres Pastrana accused President Samper's campaign of being financed by drug money. He won the 1998 presidential election with a plan to combat drug trafficking, strengthen democracy, and improve Colombia's human rights record. Vowing to continue Pastrana's "Plan Colombia," right-wing hardliner Alvaro Uribe was elected president in 2002. Uribe had studied at Oxford and Harvard, and his father had been killed by FARC. For the first months of his presidency, the war grew intense. But a breakthrough occurred in 2003 with a peace treaty between the government and the right-wing paramilitary AUC. Uribe was re-elected in 2006, and succeeded by Juan Manuel Santos in 2010, who surprisingly began peace talks with FARC, signing an accord in 2016. Santos won the Nobel Peace Prize, and his administration improved human rights policies. Relations with Venezuela have fluctuated due to ideological differences. Still, Colombia has provided Venezuela with food and medicine to mitigate shortages as presidential control of Venezuela remains disputed.

Bolivia

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 424,164 square miles
- **Capital:** Sucre
- **Languages:** Spanish, Quechua and Aymara are the official languages
- **Location:** In central South America, bordered by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Peru.
- **Geography:** Despite that it is a landlocked nation, Bolivia is home to an incredible diversity of ecological zones. The rugged Andes in the west surround an arid highland plateau, or altiplano. In the north lie the tropical lowland plains and rainforests that stretch into the Brazilian Amazon. Bolivia's capital, La Paz, is the highest capital city in the world at 11,910 feet above sea level. The city rests in a geological bowl-like formation, with many of its streets climbing to great heights. Bolivia shares Lake Titicaca, the highest navigable lake in the world at 12,507 feet, with Peru.
- **Population:** 11,428,245 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Roman Catholic 76.8%, Evangelical and Pentecostal 8.1%, Protestant 7.9%, other 1.7%, none 5.5%
- **Time zone:** Bolivia is 1 hour ahead of Eastern Time. When it is noon in New York, it is 1:00pm in Bolivia.

National Holidays: Bolivia

In addition to the holidays listed below, Bolivia celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Corpus Christi. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/22 Plurinational State Foundation Day

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

06/21 Aymara New Year Day

06/22 Aymara New Year Day holiday

08/06 Independence Day

11/02 All Saints Day

12/25 Christmas Day

Bolivia: A Brief History

The earliest settlers of Bolivia were members of the Aymara tribe from Peru. By 1200 BCE, the Aymara founded a series of villages in western Bolivia, and for the next thousand years, they farmed the Lake Titicaca Basin, and traded with other tribes. By the 1st century CE, the village of Tiwanaku (or "Tiahuanaco") was advanced civilization, its prosperity based on an innovative system of artificially created ecosystems called *suka kollus*. These were earthen farm mounds built between canals stocked with fish. The canals irrigated the mounds, the crops fed the fish, and the fish waste fertilized the mounds. But around 1000 CE, some event—possibly drought—caused the system, and Tiwanaku, to collapse. Bolivia then broke into seven Aymara kingdoms.

In 1438, the Inca arrived and by the 1520s, they ruled most of present-day Bolivia. Their subjects had to perform *mit'a*, or public service labor, for a set number of days each year. When Spain invaded in 1532, the Incas fell quickly. During the colonial era, Spanish coffers were kept full by Bolivia's Potosi silver mines. To run them, Spain adopted the Inca *mit'a* labor practices. Now called "*mita*," this was no longer public service for few days, but slavery. Nearly six million *mita* workers died—under the mountain or from mercury exposure. Continual uprisings flared up.

As Spanish power waned during the Napoleonic wars of the early 19th century, independence came. The Bolivian republic was born in 1825, named for its leader, Simón Bolívar. When silver increased in value in the early 1900s, Bolivia gained wealth and stability—but only for the elite. A class system of dramatic extremes left indigenous people no choice but to work the mines. The National Revolutionary Movement promised change, but once it took over by force in 1952, leadership crumbled. Weak government, military coups, and crises marked the next decades, albeit with some economic improvements in the '90s under President Sanchez de Lozada.

A major problem in Bolivia was the drug trade. As silver mines closed, many indigenous people turned to coca farming. This ancient crop has cultural, medicinal, and household uses beyond being the source of cocaine. Under U.S. pressure to end coca production, Bolivian troops burned crops and beat farmers. This galvanized *cocaleros* (growers), who resented the U.S., the world's largest cocaine consumer, for bullying Bolivian farmers instead of focusing on America's drug problems at home. They joined other grassroots groups to form the Movement for Socialism (MAS), described as "an indigenous-based political party that calls for the nationalization of industry, legalization of the coca leaf ... and fairer distribution of national resources."

Two events empowered MAS. In 2000, Bolivia privatized the Cochabamba Water Supply, and prices soared. Massive protests forced the government to retract. Outrage recurred three years later when the government tried to privatize gas reserves, and sell them to U.S. companies below market value. U.S.-backed president Sanchez de Lozada resigned. His most vocal critic, indigenous MAS leader (and former cococalero) Evo Morales, ran for president in 2006. When the U.S. ambassador declared that U.S. aid to Bolivia would be cut if MAS won, it infuriated voters and had the opposite effect: Morales won 53.7%, Bolivia's first absolute majority in 40 years.

Morales served three terms, and supporters cite his success in reducing poverty and driving indigenous initiatives. Critics on the right call him a narco-trafficker. Critics on the left attack him as a capitalist. Morales resigned in 2019 amidst charges of election fraud. Other accusations surfaced, including charges of statutory rape. He sought asylum in Mexico, but triumphantly returned to Bolivia in November 2020. He remains a popular, yet polarizing figure.

Ecuador

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 109,484 square miles
- **Capital:** Quito
- **Languages:** Spanish is the official language; Quechua is also spoken.
- **Location:** Ecuador is bordered by Colombia and Peru.
- **Geography:** Ecuador is roughly the size of the state of Washington and straddles the equatorial line. Because of this geographical feature and combined with its different altitudes, Ecuador has a striking diversity of landscapes for a country of its size. Tropical rainforests in the Amazon Basin dominate its eastern section, the Oriente. The Eastern and Western Cordilleras of the Andes make up the Sierra region that bisects the country, topped by the towering peaks of Cotopaxi (19,347 feet) and Chimborazo (20,702 feet). The costa is the Pacific tropical coastal plain, which constitutes about one-quarter of the country. Ecuador and the Galapagos are known as the country of four worlds due to its diversity.
- **Population:** 17,684,536 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Roman Catholic (95%), Other (5%)
- **Time zone:** Ecuador is on Ecuador Time, which is the same time as U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 6am in Quito. The Galapagos is 1 hour behind continental time (Ecuador time).

National Holidays: Ecuador

In addition to the holidays listed below, Ecuador celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Carnival and Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

05/24 The Battle of Pichincha

08/10 Independence Day

10/09 Independence of Guayaquil

11/02 All Soul's Day

11/03 Independence of Cuenca

12/6 Foundation of Quito

12/25 Christmas Day

Ecuador: A Brief History

There is archaeological evidence of settlements established by hunter-gatherer groups as early as 10,000 BCE along Ecuador's southern coast and in the central highlands. Agricultural societies that followed produced the famous Valdivia ceramics, the oldest pottery in the Western Hemisphere. These ancient peoples traded with others in Peru, Brazil, and the Amazon Basin, building a civilization sophisticated enough to construct large coastal cities by 500 BCE. These city dwellers worked metal and had navigational skills sufficient for them to trade with cultures as far away as the Maya in ancient Mexico.

The Inca ruler Tupac-Yupanqui invaded from the south in 1460 CE, but could not conquer the territories of three strong groups in Ecuador—the Canari, Caras, and Quitu. It fell to his son Huayna Capac to accomplish this in the next generation. The Incas brought their language, Quechua, to Ecuador, where it is still widely spoken. Huayna Capac celebrated by building the monumental city of Tomebamba, whose ruins near Cuenca remain impressive. This city in Ecuador became as important as Cuzco in Peru.

On his deathbed in 1526, Huayna Capac split the empire between his sons Atahualpa and Huascar. Atahualpa defeated Huascar in a civil war that weakened the empire just before the Spanish arrived—and just enough for them to overtake it. Francisco Pizarro conquered the Incas in 1532, and made his brother Gonzalo governor of Quito, Ecuador. A few years later, Francisco Pizarro was killed in a dispute with his former comrades. Gonzalo rebelled against Spain, but was left to rule Ecuador until Spanish forces finally showed up seven years later and killed him.

Spanish governors ruled Ecuador from Lima, Peru; and then from Bogotá in New Granada (now Colombia). Life for the colonists was prosperous, but for the indigenous and *mestizo* population, it was miserable. Impressed into servitude, they staged several failed rebellions. By the early 18th century, the Spanish were importing enslaved Africans from the Caribbean to work their sugar and cocoa plantations. In 1822, Simon Bolivar's chief lieutenant, Antonio Jose de Sucre, brought an end to Spanish rule in the area, though it was not until 1830 that Ecuador gained autonomy. Following independence, civil war broke out between the conservatives of Quito and more liberal elements in Guayaquil, initiating a pattern of conflict that persists today.

Ecuador's 20th-century history has been a series of democratic and military regimes. Between 1930 and 1940, there were 17 duly elected presidents, but not one completed his term due to military coups. President José María Velasco Ibarra was elected five times between 1934 and 1972, and was ousted by the military before he could complete any of his terms. Throughout the 20th century, bananas were the country's most important export—until oil was discovered in 1967. This boosted the economy, but the wealth remained in the hands of a privileged few.

After years of staggering inflation, in 2000 then-president Mahaud dumped the national currency (the sucre) in favor of the US dollar. Dollarization did not hurt the wealthy, as they'd already invested in US dollars. But ordinary people struggled to convert their near-worthless sucres to dollars, amidst rigid austerity measures. In 2006, the social democrat economist Rafael Correa was elected president; he was re-elected twice, and had some success in delivering on his promises to reduce poverty, increase the GDP, and develop social programs. Accused of overreaching power, Correa chose not to seek a fourth term when the economy declined in 2015. He was succeeded in 2017 by his former vice president, Lenín Moreno. Moreno was expected to continue Correa's "21st century socialism," but has since moved more to the center.

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

Colombia

One Hundred Years of Solitude (1967), ***Love in the Time of Cholera*** (1985), and ***Of Love and Other Demons*** (1994) by Gabriel Garcia Marquez (Literature) Reading anything by this Nobel Laureate will provide tremendous insight into Colombian life, along with lyrical passages that mix the real with the magical, and plenty of humor. *Years* is the sprawling tale of a family that founds a town and their subsequent relations with the inhabitants. *Cholera* is a sometimes-difficult tale about the complicated diseases that we call love and romance. And *Demons* is the tragic story of a girl who may have rabies and her romance with the priest who was hoping to cure her.

The War of Don Emmanuel's Nether Parts (1990), ***Señor Vivo and the Coca Lord*** (1991), and ***The Troublesome Offspring of Cardinal Guzman*** (1992) by Louis de Bernières. (Fiction) These three novels (“The Latin American Trilogy”) take place in an unnamed country, but were inspired by the author’s experiences in Colombia. Here, the stories of mystical indigenous deities, corrupt politicians, idealistic philosophers, hardened guerilla fighters, and lovestruck peasants are woven together in a web of magical realism and that is at once terrifying, hilarious, and affectionate.

The Sound of Things Falling by Juan Gabriel Vasquez (2011, Fiction) This tale charts the dissolution of a flawed professor, his marriage, and the entire city of Bogota as even law-abiding citizens become entrapped in the pervasive drug trade.

Colombia: A Comedy of Errors by Victoria Kellaway and Sergio J. Lievano (2014, Humor/History) Want to know about Colombian history? Everyday customs? Influential politicians? Pop culture? This book presents it all in incredible detail, and with a lighthearted humor and 160 illustrations.

Bolivia

Bolivar: American Liberator by Marie Arana (2013, Biography) The sweeping biography of Simon Bolivar, South America’s “El Libertador.” Bolivar was the brilliant military and political leader who is considered a founding father of six modern South American nations, and the writer of the Bolivian constitution.

The Fat Man from La Paz edited by Rosario Santos (2000, Anthology) These 20 short stories explore the past 50 years through the lens of poverty, love, fantasy, politics, mysticism, and all things Bolivian.

Valley of the Spirits: A Journey Into the Lost Realm of the Aymara by Alan L. Kolata (1996, Nonfiction) From 400–1100 CE, before the rise of the Aztecs or Incas, the Aymara people thrived along the shores of Lake Titicaca in a highly advanced city called Tiahuanaco (Tiwanaku). Their unique culture was based on a spiritual connection with nature, where time and space merge. While the Aymara power structure vanished, their ancestors still live here and Kolata describes their efforts to revive the irrigation and other technologies that once brought them glory.

City of Silver, A Mystery by Annamaria Alfieri (2011, Mystery) Set in the 17th century, a catholic nun tries to solve a complex mystery in the silver mining city of Potosi.

Ecuador

Voyage of the Beagle by Charles Darwin (1839, Natural History/Exploration). The adventurous account of a young scientist on a five-year sea voyage that changed his life—and our understanding of life on earth. First published in 1839, this book is still essential reading.

The Beak of the Finch: A Story of Evolution in Our Time by Jonathan Weiner (1994, Natural History) An accessible take on the ongoing debate over evolution that garnered the 1995 Pulitzer Prize.

Satan Came to Eden: A Survivor's Account of "The Galapagos Affair" by Dore Strauch (1936, Memoir) Perhaps Satan did not come to the Galapagos, but in 1929 the eccentric German doctor Frederick Ritter did, along with his mistress, the author. These naturists were soon joined by other, more prudish settlers who disapproved of their peculiar ways—and a mysterious, whip-wielding baroness and her two lovers. It was a bad mix, and the ensuing scandals and murder caused an international sensation in 1934. The mystery still reverberates today.

Traveller's Wildlife Guide: Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands by David L. Pearson and Les Beletsky (1987, Field Guide) A comprehensive, all-purpose field guide for your Galapagos cruise.

The Boy on the Back of the Turtle by Paul Quarrington (1997, Travel Narrative). Humorist, novelist, and family man on a quest, Quarrington offers an entertaining account of a Galapagos voyage in the company of his seven-year-old daughter and seventy-year-old father.

The Panama Hat Trail by Tom Miller (1986, Travel Narrative/History) Miller's entertaining and insightful social history of Ecuador revolves around its iconic hat and the story of its creation. It's a classic example of travel writing, and one of the best things written on Ecuador.

Suggested Films & Videos

Colombia

Love in the Time of Cholera (2007, Drama/Romance) A fanciful yet dramatic story about a 50-year love triangle, patience, magic, and (of course), cholera. Based on the masterful Garcia Marquez novel of the same name and starring Javier Bardem and Benjamin Bratt.

Maria Full of Grace (2004, Drama) A teenager becomes a drug mule to earn money for her family. This film deals with some difficult and controversial topics, but was acclaimed for its moving performances.

Embrace of the Serpent (2015, Docudrama) Two scientists search the Amazon for a sacred healing plant with the aid of Karamakate, a shaman and the last of his people. With its striking black and white cinematography and vivid portraits of Amazonian people, it was Colombia's first Oscar-nominated film.

Colombia: Wild Magic (2015, Documentary) A well-received wildlife documentary about the country's amazing biodiversity, with stunning wildlife and landscape shots.

Bolivia

Blackthorn (2011, Drama) Remember how at the end of *Butch Cassidy & the Sundance Kid*, the duo come to an uncertain end in their Bolivian hideout? This sequel picks up the story 20 years later, as Butch (Sam Shepard) embarks on an eventful journey through Bolivia to make his way back to the son he left behind in the States.

The Devil's Miner (2005, Documentary) In Potosi, workers at the notorious Cerro Rico mine worship the devil, el Tio, to beg his protection in his dangerous underground realm. This film depicts the harsh realities of life for two young miners forced to work in terrible conditions.

Our Brand is Crisis (2005, Documentary) A searing look at U.S. government interference in Latin American elections. In 2002, the Bolivian anti-imperialist candidate Evo Morales was defeated by the far less popular Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, thanks to a sleek U.S.-funded political marketing campaign engineered by the legendary consultant James Carville. Hollywood later offered a fictionalized (and far less damning) version of this story in a 2015 film of the same name, starring Sandra Bullock and Tommy Lee Jones.

Ecuador

Charles Darwin and the Tree of Life (2009, Documentary) This one-hour film explains Darwin's theory of evolution with panache. An extension of the "BBC Earth" series narrated by David Attenborough.

Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World (2003, Adventure). A seafaring adventure starring Russell Crowe. It's set during the Napoleonic Wars, when maritime battles determined the balance of power between England and France—even if those battles were off the coast of South America (as depicted in this movie). A few key scenes are set in the Galapagos.

Galapagos: The Islands that Changed the World (2007, TV Documentary). A beautifully shot documentary about the diversity of life in the islands, narrated by actress Tilda Swinton.

Useful Websites

Overseas Adventure Travel

www.oattravel.com

Overseas Adventure Travel Frequently Asked Questions

www.oattravel.com/faq

International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

www.cdc.gov/travel

Electricity & Plugs

www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets

Foreign Exchange Rates

www.xe.com/currencyconverter
www.oanda.com/converter/classic

ATM Locators

www.mastercard.com/atm
www.visa.com/atmlocator

World Weather

www.intellicast.com
www.weather.com
www.wunderground.com

Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

www.travlang.com/languages

Packing Tips

www.travelite.org

U.S. Customs & Border Protection

www.cbp.gov/travel

Transportation Security Administration (TSA)

www.tsa.gov

National Passport Information Center

www.travel.state.gov

Holidays Worldwide

www.timeanddate.com/holidays

History & Culture

en.wikipedia.org

Useful Apps

Flight Stats

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

LoungeBuddy

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

Timeshifter

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

GoogleMaps

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

Tripso

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

Rome2rio

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

Flush or Sit or Squat

Find a clean toilet anywhere

Uber

Ride sharing around the world

Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus

ATM locations

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

TunnelBear

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

What's App, Skype, or Signal

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

Duolingo, FLuentU, or Babbel

Learn dozens of foreign languages

Google Translate

Fast and simple translations

XE

Currency conversions

SizeGuide

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

Best Units Converter

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

Tourlina

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

Happy Cow

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

Eatwith

Dine with locals all over the world

Meetup

Connects you with locals who share your interests

Skyview

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

Travello

Find travel friends on the road

ALIX for One

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

TripWhistle

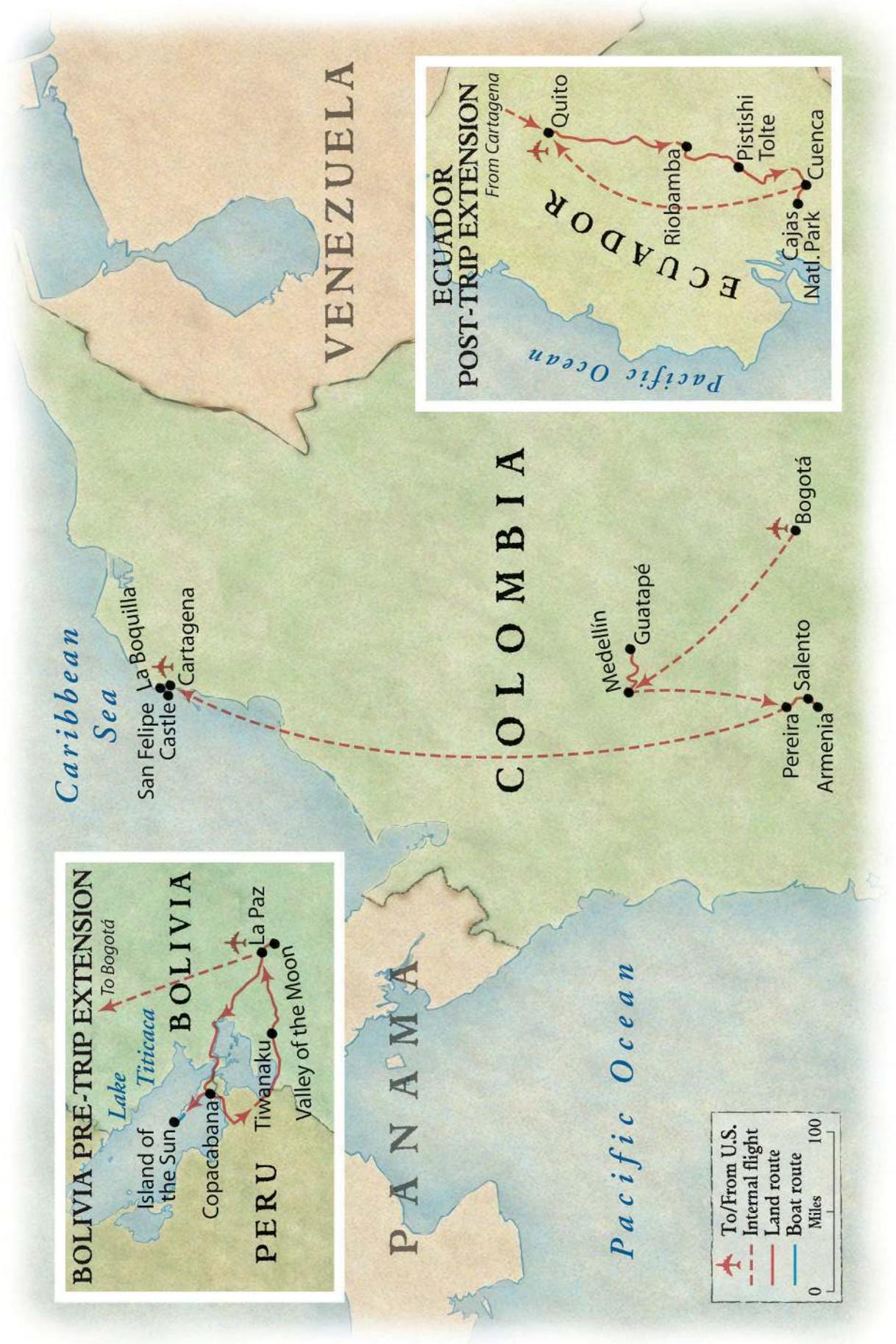
Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

GeoSure

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

Chirpey

For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more



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30-time traveler from Woodbury, NY



Submitted by Paul Stark, 17-time traveler
from Edina, MN



Submitted by David Fong, 16-time traveler
from Foster City, CA



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23-time traveler from Oakland, CA



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