

SANBA IN SOUTH AMERICA - 29 DAYS

HIGHLIGHTS

- La Paz - exciting Bolivian city
- Salar de Uyuni - Salt lakes and blue green and red lagoons
- Silver mining town Potosi - UNESCO heritage site
- Sucre - Bolivia's capital and full of history
- Santa Cruz - Bolivia's 2nd largest city
- Animals of the Pantanal wetlands - guided tour
- Jungle and beaches of Bonito
- Iguassu Falls
- Curitiba - Lively Brazilian city
- Paratay - Brazilian heritage site and optional boat trip to beautiful beaches and islands
- Rio de Janeiro - party capital

INCLUSIONS

- 13 nights simple hotels
- 7 nights camping,
- 5 nights multi-share rooms/hammocks,
- 28 breakfasts 14 lunches 14 dinners
- All relevant transportation
- All touring as specified
- English speaking tour leader to provide information and assistance in booking optional activities and accommodation

Please note: departure tax of US \$36 not included

TOUR MAP



GO GUIDE

Your guide to on the ground...

VISA REQUIREMENTS

UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and USA passport holders don't require a visa for Bolivia for a stay of less than 90 days. SA do require one for Bolivia. UK, SA and New Zealand passport holders do not require visas for Brazil, but Australia Canada, USA do and visa fees apply - please check with your local embassy.

This info can change regularly and at short notice, so we recommend that you check with each embassy individually. Visa procurement is your responsibility and not that of GOBUS. Visas cost money so be sure to budget for them! Please ensure that you have at least one blank page per visa and that your passport is valid for at least six months from the end date of your trip. Visas are your responsibility. Don't forget to check!

TIME

Bolivia is 4hrs behind GMT. There are 3 time zones in Brazil. The time in most of Brazil visited by foreign tourists is three hours behind GMT.

VOLTAGE

Plug types and voltages vary so you will need a universal adapter. Check www.kropla.com/electric2 for more info.

INSURANCE

Travel insurance is compulsory on our trips and you will not be allowed to travel without it. Please ask a member of our reservations team if you would

like us to book this for you. Please ensure that your insurance covers you for trekking at altitude and any optional activities you may like to do.

MONEY

Visa cards are the most widely accepted cards. While ATMs are widely available, there are no guarantees that your credit or debit cards will actually work in Latin America. Check with your bank. If purchasing products or services on a credit card a fee of 5%-10% usually applies. A combination of US dollar cash, travellers cheques (for emergencies only) and cards is best, although you will usually be charged a high commission fee or given a less-favourable exchange rate for travellers cheques.

Please note that only local currency can be withdrawn from bank machines in Brazil. When bringing USD banknotes, they should be in denominations smaller than 100,

CURRENCY EXCHANGE TIP: Slightly torn, faded or heavily marked notes may be difficult to exchange. It is best to bring notes in fairly good condition, in denominations lower than US \$100 (or equivalent) as they can be hard to exchange or to break into smaller denominations. 100 dollar bills of certain series (e.g. CB B2) can be especially hard to cash!

TIPPING

It is customary in Latin America to tip service providers such as waiters, at approximately 10%, depending on the service. Tipping is an expected - though not compulsory - component of your tour program and is of considerable

significance to the people who will take care of you during your travels.

Recommendations for tipping local guides range from US \$5-10 per day depending on the quality and length of the service; ask your tour leader for specific recommendations based on the circumstances and culture.

Also at the end of each trip if you felt your Tour Leader and driver/cook did an outstanding job, tipping is appreciated. The amount is entirely a personal preference, however as a guideline US \$20-25 per person, per week can be used.

EXTRAS

- Allow US \$400 for meals not included.
- Please also make sure you have access to at least an additional US \$200 (or equivalent) as an 'emergency' fund, to be used if circumstances outside our control (eg. a natural disaster) require a change to our planned route. This is a rare occurrence!
- See the end of this goguide for optional activities

GOOD ADVICE

- Take a money belt
- Bring a small daypack for your day-to-day needs.
- Bring a first aid kit
- Bring a travel pillow for camping
- Keep a photocopy of your passport data pages and your yellow fever certificate
- Bring cutlery and bowl/plate for the days you would like to cook for yourself

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FREESTYLE ADVENTURE

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SANBA IN SOUTH AMERICA: ITINERARY

JOINING INSTRUCTIONS

El Alto International Airport is a spectacular drive from the centre of La Paz, where our joining hotel is located. The easiest way to get there is via taxi. You can pay for the car at set rates (approximately US \$8), from an official uniformed taxi driver. The trip takes approximately 30 minutes and is very scenic. The money exchange desk is open 9am to 7 pm.

Please note that Day 1 is an arrival day and no activities have been planned, so you may arrive at any time.

Your Tour Leader will contact you at the hotel on Day 1 and make sure you are settled comfortably. If you arrive late, s/he will leave you a message detailing what time and where you should meet the next morning. Your Tour Leader will organize a short meeting soon after arrival, during which you will meet other tour participants and receive information about general and specific aspects of the trip.

DAY 1: LA PAZ

Welcome to La Paz, the highest capital city in the world. Today is an arrival day so you've free time to explore. Highlights include visits to museums, and excursions to Tiahuanaco ruins (cradle of Inca civilisation), the world's highest ski resort and the incredible Valley of the Moon named for its crater like formations.

Check out the Mercado de Hechicería (Witches' Market), where Paceaños and visitors may purchase potions and incantations made from all sorts of herbs, seeds, and secret ingredients to remedy any number of illnesses (real or imagined) and protect from evil spirits. There is also a thriving black market and a Carnaval market, where locals purchase carnival costumes. You'll also find a wealth of shops selling all sorts of handicrafts, mainly alpaca wool products, silver jewellery, woven textiles and leather goods.

Although Sucre is the official capital, La Paz is the Bolivian centre of commerce, finance and industry, and the de facto capital. This is a busy modern city, with its centre at the base of a canyon 5 km (3 miles) wide and sprawling impromptu housing all the way up the surrounding hillsides. The city is at nearly 4000 m (13,120 ft) above sea level, so visitors should be prepared for cool evenings and mornings.

DAYS 2 - 5: SALT LAKES

We travel to Uyuni and spend the next three days exploring the stunning landscapes between the Salar de Uyuni and Chile's Atacama Desert by four-wheel-drive vehicle. Piercing blue skies contrast with blinding white salt as you drive across the flat lakebed. The area's unusual landscape of mountains, active volcanoes, and geysers is like nowhere on earth.

Despite its isolation and challenging climate (cold and blustery most of the year), Uyuni has earned the nickname of Hija Predilecta de Bolivia (Bolivia's Favourite Daughter). Most of its hardy residents are either public sector workers or salt miners in the dried

out lake-beds, with tour operators a close third. The main attraction in town is the Train Cemetery, a collection of rusting railway relics just southwest of the present train station.

Uyuni is the starting point for our 3-night excursion through the spectacular Salar de Uyuni. Twice submerged by a large high-altitude lake, the salt flats now cover a total area of over 12000 square km (7440 square miles) and today serve as one of the country's main salt mining centres.

We absorb stunning views of the salt-encrusted lake-bed surrounded by golden-hued mountains, snow-capped peaks and see an endless azure horizon that will forever engrave itself in your memory. The tour takes us through Laguna Colorada (4278 m/14,031 ft), a large red lagoon whose colour is the result of algae & plankton growth in the mineral-rich waters, and Laguna Verde (5000 m/16400 ft), a lake that owes its striking blue-green colour to high concentrations of lead, sulphur, copper and other minerals.

The numerous geysers, boiling mud pools, thermal baths and Licancabur volcano (5960 m/19549 ft), which looms just behind the lagoon, are clear evidence of the region's volcanic activity. Surprisingly, both wildlife and flora manage to survive and even thrive in the desolate landscape, including vizcachas (of the rodent family), flamingos (3 varieties), and assorted varieties of cacti. We return to Uyuni to spend the night before embarking on our journey to Potosí.

DAY 6: SILVER MINING TOWN

A days travelling takes us to Potosí, declared the UNESCO World Heritage site in 1987 in recognition of its tragic history as a silver mining centre during the time of Spanish colonization. Working conditions for miners were appalling, and the indigenous population was decimated. African slaves were brought in to replace the native workers, and it is estimated that as many as eight million indigenous people and Africans died in the mines during the first three centuries of Spanish colonial rule. Though sometimes distressing and uncomfortable because of the harsh working conditions, the optional trip underground into the mines of today is an experience that should not be missed.

DAYS 7 - 9: SUCRE

Relatively close by is Bolivia's White City, the country's official capital, Sucre. Before the conquest, military, religious and political leaders of the local indigenous population made their homes on the present day city site. Later, the city became the headquarters for the Spanish Royal Court, which by the late 1700s ruled over colonial Paraguay, parts of Peru, Argentina, Chile, and most of Bolivia. In 1825, in the wake of the Latin American independence movement, the city was renamed Sucre after Simon Bolívar's second-in-command, General Antonio Jose de Sucre.

The city's fine museums, colonial buildings and ties to the independence movement make it a city of great historical interest. Optional activities include visiting an old tin baron's mansion, a textile cooperative, mountain

biking, hiking or we can even visit some ancient dinosaur tracks!

DAYS 10 - 11: SANTA CRUZ

We continue on to Santa Cruz, located close to the Cordillera Oriental foothills. Once a backwater frontier town, it has now grown into Bolivia's second largest city. Spend a free day here exploring the city's sights, relax by the banks of the Pirai river or chill out with the sloths hanging from their trees in the Plaza 24 de Setiembre or take an optional excursion outside of the city - maybe opt for a spot of trekking, before getting ready to head east into Brazil.

DAYS 12 - 14: CHOCHI & CORUMBA

We stop for a night of camping near the small town of San José de Chiquitos. A little more than half of the distance between Santa Cruz and the Brazilian border, this popular travel stop is known for its Jesuit Mission and as a gateway to the area's two stunning National Parks. On day 14 we travel to the quiet border town of Corumbá, giving us the chance to rest up before hitting the Pantanal the following day and seeing how many animals we can add to our list.

DAY 15 - 17: THE PANTANAL

Venturing further east, we cross the border into Brazil, and later arrive at the world-famous and biologically diverse Pantanal. Less well known outside of Brazil and South America, the Pantanal, a largely flat, wetland area about half the size of France, is still one of the best places in the continent for observing wildlife. This vast alluvial plain, seasonally flooded by the Paraguay River from October to March, is all that remains from an ancient inland sea which began to dry out 65 million years ago. Today it is an area rich in bird life such as macaws and Jabiru storks. With luck and appropriate weather we may spot cute capivara (capybara), howler monkeys, caiman, giant river otters, anacondas, anteaters and gauchos also known as the Brazilian cowboy.

The area is sparsely populated and what few roads exist are in poor condition. Most people use small airplanes, 4-wheel-drive vehicles and motorized canoes to get around, so expect some rough travel and more rustic accommodation while visiting the area. The area's Transpantaneira, an elevated dirt road, which extends 145km's (91 miles) from outside Pocone to Porto Jofre, becomes an island during the wet season. We take a two-day wildlife excursion to fully appreciate the area's beauty and bounty.

Unfortunately, as in other areas, poachers continue to do damage, and official government resources to protect the zone are scarce. This, combined with corrupt officials and a lack of commitment on the part of the government, have resulted in widespread poaching; latest estimates indicate that anywhere from half a million to two million animals are killed annually in the Pantanal.

DAYS 18 - 19: JUNGLE & BEACHES

From the Pantanal, our overland truck takes us south to the town of Bonito, an outdoor lover's dream. Some of

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the many options here include snorkelling down the Rio de la Prata, swimming in crystal-clear lagoons or visiting macaw nesting spots.

Bonito, as the name ("beautiful") implies, is a great place for nature lovers. Just outside the Pantanal area, this is water and jungle country with abundant colourful fish in the area's crystalline rivers. Explore nearby underwater caves and waterfalls, go rafting or snorkelling, or simply spend a lazy day by the river.

DAYS 20 - 22: IGUASSU FALLS

A long journey through the vast cattle ranches of Mato Grosso do Sul brings us into the Paraná province, and to the majestic Iguassu Falls area. Spend two full days experiencing the views and splendour of the falls from both the Argentinian and Brazilian sides. Sit back and soak in the stunning beauty and raw power that is Iguassu, or take a boat tour directly into the spray of the falls.

At Iguassu there are 275 individual falls in all, spread over a 3-km (almost 2 mile) area. Some are over 80m (2642 ft) in height, making these cataracts both wider than Victoria Falls and higher than Niagara! UNESCO declared the region an International Heritage Area in 1986.

The best time of the year to view the falls is from August to November, as during rainy season flooding often prevents closer viewing from the catwalks.

DAYS 23 - 27: CURITIBA & BEACHES

A young, well-managed and vibrant city, Curitiba is the capital of the State of Paraná. It was once a major thoroughfare for Gauchos (the Brazilian equivalent of the cowboy) and their cattle; today its modern economy is centred on coffee culture. The city has a large university student population, and it is a youthful, energetic place, that retains its historic buildings. A handful of streets have been closed to cars and there are many parks, gardens and wide boulevards.

From Curitiba we head east to Paraty an architectural gem famous for its churches and a Brazilian Heritage site. Located in the Bay of Paraty there are endless hidden beaches and an optional boat ride is a great way to explore some of them.

DAYS 28 - 29: HELLO RIO!

A short drive up the coast, Rio de Janeiro awaits and signals the end of our travels. "God made the world in six days, the seventh he devoted to Rio," so say the Cariocas, residents of this beautiful city. This is a densely packed city of over 9 million inhabitants, whose economic foundations lie in the cultivation of sugar cane and in gold mining. Referred to as a "cidade maravilhosa" (Marvellous City), few cities enjoy such a dramatic setting as Rio. Brilliant, white beaches at Copacabana and Ipanema, deep blue waters of the Atlantic, the luminescent green of Guanabara Bay, the bare blue slopes of the

Sugar Loaf combine to make Rio unique. Standing over it all, atop Corcovado, is the huge statue of Christ the Redeemer, the best place from which to appreciate the city.

Although the Portuguese first sailed and entered the bay, it was the French who first established a settlement in the area, logging Brazil wood along the coast. Their first permanent settlement lasted a brief five years, when they were attacked and driven from the area by the encroaching Portuguese. A series of skirmishes ensued, with the Tomaio people allied with the French against the Portuguese.

In 1567 the Portuguese began construction of a fortified town to repel any invaders, naming it Sao Sebastiao do Rio de Janeiro. Amassing wealth with the gold rush of Minas Gerais, in the early 18th century Rio became Brazil's most important city and a great temptation to the French who, in 1710, waged war against the Portuguese and held the city for a sizeable gold ransom. Again in the 19th century, under threat of Napoleon's invasion, what remained of the Portuguese monarchy fled to Brazil where they set up court in grand style; many of today's older structures date from this period.

The gold rush was followed by a coffee boom in the mid-1800s and the wealth generated led to the city's initial modernization. Replacing Salvador de Bahia as the colonial capital in 1763, the city remained the capital until 1960, when it was replaced by Brasilia.

The city is a magnet for tourists who come to walk the beaches of Ipanema and Copacabana, and generally partake in the Carioca zest for life. Many ascend the Sugarloaf Mountain (Pao do Açúcar), whose image is nearly synonymous with Rio and Carnival. Modern Rio is perhaps best known for the contrasting images offered by the favelhas (shanty towns), and the glitz and glamour preferred by the Samba schools and their Carnival celebrations.

Enjoy the numerous optional activities available, such as visiting one of the many attractions such as the Corcovado (now one of the new 7 wonders of the world), Sugarloaf, and fantastic beaches. From the top of the Pao do Açúcar (Sugar Loaf), reached by cable car, superb panoramic views of the city and area unfold. Head to some of the famous beaches, and prepare yourself for an experience unlike anything else on Earth.

NOTE: Please be aware that as this is a trip that combines other tours, the leader, group members and/or vehicle may change throughout the trip.

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SAMBA IN SOUTH AMERICA: INFO

STYLE OF TRIP

When considering one of our South American expeditions, it is important to be aware that this choice of holiday is designed for people who have an adventurous spirit and understand that in developing countries things do not always run to plan. South America is a huge continent and so there will be some long days of travelling, but with the stunning scenery you won't be bored! To allow you to have total freedom and flexibility to explore, we've included just the basics. Travel around on anything that moves, be it bus, train, ferry or good old foot power. You will experience life like a local by staying in remote or rustic guesthouses, and in cities and towns it will be hotels. Expect your multi-shared room or campsite to be simple and clean, with the occasional cold shower and sporadic electricity. Our overland trips require some participation so expect a real hands-on experience as you set up camp, help out at meal times and team up with your fellow travellers as you cross rivers, plains, plateaus and mountain passes. This is South America, expect the unexpected!

TOUR LEADER AND STAFF

The trip is accompanied by one of our tour leaders and at least one driver/cook. They will provide information on the places you are travelling through, offer suggestions for things to do and see, recommend great local eating venues and introduce you to our local friends. While not being guides in the traditional sense you can expect them to have a broad general knowledge of the countries visited on the trip, including historical, cultural, religious and social aspects. We also use local guides where we think more specific knowledge will add to the enjoyment of the places we are visiting- we think it's the best of both worlds.

MEALS

Eating is a big part of travelling. You will experience the vast array of wonderful food that is available out in the world. Generally meals are not included in the trip price when there is a choice of eating options, to give you the maximum flexibility in deciding where, what and with whom to eat. It also gives you more budgeting flexibility, though generally food is cheap. Our groups tend to eat together to enable you to taste a larger variety of dishes and enjoy each other's company. There is no obligation to do this though. Your group leader will be able to suggest favourite restaurants during your trip. The amount of meals included as per the inclusions on page one. We recommend you allow approx US \$400 dollars for your other meals.

HEALTH

You should consult your doctor for up-to-date medical travel information well before departure. Proof of the yellow fever vaccine is often asked for upon entry to the Pantanal region. Please make sure you have this for this trip.

We recommend that you carry a First Aid kit as well as any personal medical requirements. Please be aware that quite often we are in remote areas and away from medical facilities. We reserve the right to exclude any traveller from all or part of a trip without refund if in the reasonable opinion of our group leader they are unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to themselves and/or the rest of the group.

SECURITY

The best advice is to stay alert. Don't bring any unnecessary, expensive jewellery with you. Keep an eye on your belongings at all times, listen to the advice of your tour leader and consider bringing a money belt. Although the cities visited on tour are generally safe during the day, there can be risks to wandering throughout any major city at night. It is our recommendation to stay in small groups and to take taxis to and from restaurants, or during night time excursions. We also recommend you photocopy all of your travel document and keep them separately from the originals.

CLIMATE AND THINGS TO BRING

Most people automatically assume that the weather is hot in South America, but because of the higher altitude in the Andes, the temperature can feel quite cold, especially at night. We recommend the use of a duffel bag or backpack, whichever is easiest for you to carry. A good size daypack is also essential.

Remember that although near the Equator, the higher altitude on some parts of the trip make for cool evenings and you will need a warm sweater or pullover and you should also think about bringing a warm hat, gloves, water/windproof jackets and thermal underwear. It's best to layer clothes rather than bring a heavy parka so that you can take layers off. For camping you should bring a sleeping bag. You will also need a very warm sleeping bag for sub-zero temperatures to be used on Salt Flats in Bolivia.

(NOTE: the latter possible to rent locally for US \$5-10)

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Prices in USD. To be booked and paid locally.

Rio de Janeiro:

- Corcovado \$20
- Sugar loaf \$20
- Football game \$10-\$25
- Hang gliding \$120
- Samba show \$50+

Iguassu Falls:

- Bird park \$10
- Jungle & Falls excursion \$40
- Boat ride, various tours \$20 -\$50

Bonito:

- Snorkelling - Rio da Prata \$50-65
- Blue Lagoon Cave entrance fee \$12-15
- Waterfalls tour \$25-30 • Rafting \$40
- Abismo (rappel and snorkel) \$250

Sucre:

- Dinosaur Footprints tour \$5
- Hiking \$25-35
- Mountain biking \$18-35

Potosí:

- Silver Mine Tour \$10
- Casa de la Moneda \$3

La Paz:

- Chacaltaya tour \$15
- City tour \$15
- Mountain biking \$45-\$60
- Tiwanaku ruins \$10-15

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