B O L I V I A

UYUNI HIGHLANDS EXPLORER

Essential Bolivian Salt Flats & Andean Culture

DURATION: 10 days / 9 nights
SEASON: May through November
DEPARTURES: Guaranteed with a minimum of 4 participants
TRIP RATING: Easy/Moderate Natural history, Cultural & Archaeological Tour, Grade (II) – This expedition style soft adventure is an activity-oriented program. It includes scenic overland travel up to 7 hours on a day, walking tours and day hikes of 2-3 hours. It takes place at high elevations reaching a maximum of 13,420' at Potosi. To allow for gradual adjustment to the altitude, we begin the program touring Sucre (9,215')

2026 DATES: On request any week during the season

INTRODUCTION:

Bolivia, one of South America's most colorful, natural and insulated nations, captures the imagination of adventure travelers. It comprises the most intact indigenous culture on the continent, with dozens of native languages still spoken alongside Spanish. Bolivia is home to the world's most high-altitude capital city, La Paz (11,930' feet above sea level!). World-famous Salar de Uyuni – the planet's biggest salt flat – has become an iconic landscape, with its vast otherworldly whiteness. Visitors who venture into landlocked Bolivia are warmly received in its pleasant Spanish-colonial cities. The history-rich mining town of Potosi and vibrant local markets give a snapshot of traditional Andean life. A visit to the mythical Lake Titicaca, a crown jewel of the region, completes the Bolivian highland experience.

Accompanied by an expert local guide, we begin in Sucre, Bolivia (9,215'), where we walk the cobbled streets of the city's colonial section, visit other historical monuments and tour the colorful native market at Tarabuco. The next three days are spent exploring the Altiplano (high desert plains) and the spectacular vastness, surreal landscapes, unique wildlife, ancient history and native culture of Uyuni. From La Paz, we visit the pre-Inca site of Tiahuanaco, one of the oldest civilizations in the Americas (1,580 BC-1,000 AD), spend two nights in the lake community of Huatajata, meet the reed boat builders of Lake Titicaca, and hike ancient trails on the Sun Island.

DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY:

DAY 01 (FRI): USA
Depart on an overnight flight to Santa Cruz, Bolivia, with a stop at the Altiplano capital, **La Paz**.

DAY 02 (SAT): LA PAZ / SUCRE
Reception at the **El Alto airport** outside La Paz. At 12,850' this is one of the highest commercial airports in the world. After collecting luggage and passing through customs, meet a Southwind representative providing assistance for your 1-hour connecting flight to **Sucre** (9,215'). Arrive to Sucre, drive to the city with your local guide and check-in to our boutique hotel, conveniently located in the historical center and near the main square (Plaza 25 de Mayo). Take some time at leisure for a light lunch on your own and to begin acclimating to the invigorating elevation. In the afternoon, we join our guide for a city tour of Sucre, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and quaint colonial city that is in fact the constitutional capital of the country. During Spanish colonial times, Sucre was the administrative, political and religious center of the country. Nowadays it showcases well-preserved Spanish architecture from the 18th and 19th century – elegant churches, mansions, and museums. We will see the most prominent landmarks that show the splendor of Colonial Bolivia, visiting The Recoleta Convent and San Francisco Church, the House of Liberty where Simon Bolivar signed the declaration of Independence of Bolivia on August 6th 1825, stop at the Textile and ethnographic Asur Museum and drive by the second-oldest university of the continent, the University of Saint Francis Xavier of Chuquisaca. This evening we join our guide for a welcome dinner at the traditional El Solar restaurant. Overnight at Parador Santa Maria La Real. (D)

DAY 03 (SUN): TARABUCO / SUCRE
Today we'll set off on a day excursion to the famous Tarabuco fair, hosted by the indigenous Yampura people in the town of **Tarabuco**, located 41 miles southeast of Sucre. On Sundays, Tarabuco displays a very picturesque market, one of the most authentic in the country and well-known for its wonderful weavings. Local people, preserving the traditions and customs of the past, still wear leather helmets similar to those used by the Spanish Conquerors. Their clothing patterns and colors represent each of their communities. Farmers and weavers from the countryside join together in a colorful atmosphere to trade foods, fine weavings, agricultural products, and clothing while catching up with friends and relatives. We also visit the small church where occasional wedding ceremonies take place, and take advantage of the good shopping opportunities to find tapestries, shawls, sweaters, ponchos, bags and other handicrafts. Lunch today will be in a traditional restaurant, the Awasi. This afternoon another fun excursion awaits. Sucre has one of the largest collections of dinosaur footprints in the world! Over 5000 footprints are set into the **Cal Orck'o cliff**, just three miles from the city. Discovered on the grounds of the local cement company, the footprints have been preserved as an attraction for travelers, with the creation of a dinosaur-themed park and museum. See a collection of life-size dinosaur sculptures, including the enormous Titanosaurus. Called **Parque Cretácico**, the park can easily be visited from Sucre in a couple of hours. Overnight at Parador Santa Maria La Real. **Driving distance:** 100 miles or 3 hours. (B,L)

DAY 04 (MON): POTOSI / UYUNI
Start an early overland journey to **Potosi** (13,420'). The drive is about 3 hours on a paved road, gaining altitude as we go. Take in spectacular views of mesas, canyons and agricultural lands en route. Founded in 1546, Potosi was once the largest city in the Americas and one of the most important urban centers in the world during colonial times, renowned for its silver mines. According to historic records, 45,000 tons of silver were mined from Cerro Rico from 1556 to 1783. The metal-rich mountain towers over the city. Visit the main square, a local mine and the miner's market. UNESCO has declared Potosi a "historical and cultural legacy of mankind". Lunch is at the Tenendor De Plata, one of the city's finest restaurants. Continue overland to Uyuni for 3.5 more hours on a paved road, traveling through canyons and past adobe villages where time seems to stand still. We cross a pass reaching over 15,000 feet of altitude before arriving to the rustic and remote **Uyuni town** (11,995') at the edge of the salt flats. We begin to see native people extracting salt using well-preserved ancient methods. A short distance further is the community of Colchani, where the majority of Bolivian salt is produced. Our hotel is located on the edge of the salt flats – a very unique rustic abode constructed mainly of salt. Dinner and overnight at Hotel Luna Salada. **Driving distance:** 235 miles or 7 hours. (B,L,D)

DAY 05 (TUE): UYUNI
Today is dedicated to exploring the expansive Uyuni region. Enjoy a full day excursion in a 4X4 expedition-style vehicle to the small **village of Tahua**, located at the foot of the extinct **Tunupa Volcano** (17,457'), a sacred mountain of the Aymara people that is located on a peninsula of the Uyuni salt field. Tunupa is one of the most important pre-

Hispanic sanctuaries, containing some 24 identified archaeological sites. In the lagoon at the base of the mountain we may spot some flamingos. Every November, Uyuni is also the breeding grounds for three species of South American flamingos (Chilean, James's and Andean). Drive across a section of the immense salt flats, perhaps stopping for pictures and noticing the piles of salt in pyramidal shape (this is part of the harvesting process). Uyuni is the largest salt flat on earth, covering a total of 4,635 square miles. The Bolivian Andes offer a stunning backdrop along the horizon. The flats inspire poems and art, described as "an area of magnificent beauty. It looks like an ocean of salt, impressive in its vastness and pure white surface." Arriving in Tahua, stroll through the village and encounter locals who grow quinoa and raise herds of llamas. Hike to the cave of the **Coquesa Mummies**, then see pre-Columbian ruins and burial sites to learn about the ancient process of mummification. We'll stop for a picnic lunch amidst the dazzling scenery. In the afternoon we'll make the return trip overland to our hotel. This afternoon we have a sunset tour to see the spectacular Salar at dusk. Dinner and overnight at Hotel Luna Salada. **Driving distance:** 135 miles or 3.5 hours. (B,L,D)

DAY 06 (WED): UYUNI

For another full day dedicated to the salt flats, we'll be picked up from the hotel for an excursion to the **Isla Pescado**. We'll have stops along the way to take in the sound of still silence, the surreal polygon shapes of crystalline salt, the pure sky, the cacti and the rare flamingos. It certainly makes you feel that there is no other place like this on the planet. After visiting "Ojos de Agua" on the border of the salt flats (holes where the water from underneath this ancient lake still bubbles up through geothermic pressure), we drive to Isla Pescado, located in the middle of the salt flats. Also called **"Incahuasi"**, it is an oasis with formations of algae and fossils (fossilized seaweed known as Estromatolites). The island is covered by thousands of giant columnar cacti, which live to be more than a hundred years old and grow to a height of over 40 feet. The landscape against the background of the salt makes it an ideal place for photography. A scenic picnic lunch is included at Isla Pescado. Further explorations reveal indications of pre-Hispanic culture in the area, nearby large sculptures of eroded rocks. We keep an eye out for flamingos, flightless rheas, vizcachas, llamas and vicuñas. Dinner and overnight at Hotel Luna Salada. **Driving distance:** 140 miles or 3.5 hours. (B,L,D)

DAY 07 (THU): UYUNI / LA PAZ / TITICACA LAKE

Early in the morning and before breakfast, those interested can catch the **sunrise** over the salt flats and enjoy one last photo opportunity. Afterwards, we may visit a salt factory and receive an explanation from one of the residents about the economy of the salt industry, which governs the life of the people in this area. Also, we may stop at a quinoa processing plant. Sacred to the Incas and revered as the "mother of all grains", quinoa is a high-protein relative of spinach and beets. Then we drive towards **Uyuni town** to enjoy lunch at a nice local restaurant. This afternoon, transfer to the airport for your **flight to La Paz** (11,930'). On arrival reception at the airport by your local Southwind guide and overland transfer to Huatajata, on the shores of **Lake Titicaca** (12,505'), the highest navigable lake in the world. After check-in, visit the hotel's Andean Roots Eco Village, the mud igloos and the mortuary towers of the Urus Chipayas. Meet the Limachi family, builders of the RA II and Tigris rafts, learn about the typical totora reed rafts – vessels which are still built and occasionally used by the local Aymara fishermen. Take in an audiovisual experience of "The Mystic World of the Kallawayas", natural healers of Bolivia. They believe that you first have to heal the soul in order to heal your body. Tata Benjo, our Kallawaya, will bless visitors and answer questions by casting his sacred coca leaves. Overnight at the Inca Utama Hotel & Spa. (B,L)

DAY 08 (FRI): LAKE TITICACA

This morning an exciting **Hydrofoil boat ride** on Lake Titicaca allows us to enjoy the beauty of this highland region. The Lake covers an area of 3,240 square miles and has an average depth of 350 feet, making it the largest lake in South America by volume of water. We navigate first to the mystical **Moon Island** to visit the Sun Virgins Temple Iñak Uyu. Here the most beautiful maidens were chosen to become the wives of the Inca nobles. The Virgins of the Sun were responsible for maintaining an eternal fire in devotion to their Inca God, Viracocha. Continue to the sacred Island of the Sun. According to Andean mythology, the Sun God Viracocha sent his son and daughter to earth to found the Inca Empire. Visit the Inca "Grand Stairs" and the Sacred Fountain, and taste the water believed to give eternal youth and happiness. After a short walk, lunch is at the Uma Kollu archaeological Restaurant with panoramic views of the Lake. After a brief visit of a small handicraft market, continue cruising on Lake Titicaca. Afternoon arrival in the pleasant port town of **Copacabana** (12,600'). This area has been a pilgrimage center since it was established by the Incas in honor of the Sun and his first children. In town we tour The Basilica, the shrine and the Dark Indian Virgin of the Lake – a statue of the Virgin Mary sculpted by a native craftsman in 1576. Believed to work miracles, this is one of the most important pilgrimage destinations in Bolivia. Overland or lake journey to back to Huatajata. After dark, opt for a visit of the Native Observatory Alajpacha to learn from the Aymara vision of the cosmos and watch the southern

hemisphere's constellations. Overnight at the familiar Inca Utama Hotel & Spa. (B,L)

DAY 09 (SAT): TIAHUANACO / LA PAZ

Following breakfast, we depart for a 45-mile drive across the Altiplano, or high plain, back towards the city of La Paz. With the towering peaks of Huayna Potosi (19,975') and Condoriri (18,557') as a backdrop, we enjoy expansive views as we approach the pre-Inca ceremonial center of **Tiahuanaco**, one of the oldest civilizations in the Americas (1,580 BC-1,000 AD). Tiahuanaco society excelled in agriculture, hydraulics, architecture, and medicine, as well as in social organization. We join our guide for a walking tour of Tiahuanaco's main center, built from some of the most imposing megaliths found among the Pre-Columbian cultures of South America. Our visit includes: the ritual platform of the **Kalasasaya Temple**; the 52-foot high Acapana pyramid; the 45-ton Gate of the Sun, whose surface is adorned with carvings of celestial bodies, indicating that it may have been used as a calendar to predict solstices and equinoxes; and the Puma Punku site where several other massive stone slabs (some weighing up to 120 tons!) have been unearthed. We'll have a boxed lunch and then continue to La Paz. This afternoon, we begin a guided tour of the city (combination of walking and private vehicle). On foot, we explore the steep cobbled streets of La Paz's colonial section, including the San Francisco and Murillo squares, and the Cathedral. Enjoy a cable car ride over part of the capital for unusual views. A visit to the **Archaeological Museum**, where the gold ornaments found at Lake Titicaca are displayed, gives us insight into Bolivia's ancient cultures. Next, if time allows, we drive to the Valley of the Moon at the lower end of the city and walk through bizarre formations of eroded clay and sandstone. Dinner is on your own this evening to try the hotel's Bella Vista restaurant on the 16th floor, featuring elegant and sophisticated cuisine and panoramic views of the city. Overnight at Hotel Presidente. (B,L)

DAY 10 (SUN): LA PAZ / USA

Early morning transfer to the airport of La Paz. (B)

NOTES ON THE ITINERARY: Although we do our best to adhere to the above schedule, this itinerary is subject to change for numerous reasons beyond our control including group, weather, trail/road/lake conditions and flight delays or train/plane schedules, etc. Additionally, the actual day-by-day activities in this program are subject to change to allow for the greatest opportunity to participate in the local markets, events or festivals that coincide with the various departures. On Day 08, the order of visits may change according to seasonal Hydrofoil schedules, but all visits will remain the same. Some activities may be shortened or eliminated, while others may be added as the schedule allows. Driving distances and altitudes are approximate, and times indicated are NET, not including lunch break, rest stops, time to explore the salt flats, ruins or villages, etc. This program is suitable for healthy, fit participants age 12 and up.

2026 LAND COST:

4-6 participants:	from $6,900 p.p.d.
7-12 participants:	from $6,500 p.p.d.
Single Supplement:	from $1,500

p.p.d.=per person based on double or triple occupancy not including airfare.

ESTIMATED AIRFARE:

The Land Cost for this trip DOES NOT INCLUDE international or in-country flights. Round-trip international airfare arriving to La Paz, Bolivia and departing from La Paz is about $500-$800 from the Latin America gateway city of Miami. Currently there is no direct service to La Paz from Miami. Avianca and Latam fly via Lima to La Paz (may require an extra night in Lima), American Airlines fly to Lima or Santa Cruz, Bolivia. The in-country La Paz-Sucre and Uyuni-La Paz flights are approximately $290 per person and can be booked locally through our office. For your convenience, our Latin American ticketing specialist will provide you with a quote for your international flights on request. You do have the option to purchase your international tickets or redeem award travel yourself. Upon receipt of your deposit, Southwind will send you more information about booking your flights to match your land itinerary. It is important to NOT purchase any airline tickets until Southwind sends you a trip confirmation to show that your trip is guaranteed.

SERVICES INCLUDED:

- Comprehensive **pre-departure planning packet** and expert travel advice.
- All in-country transfers as scheduled. **Ground transportation in spacious and comfortable private vehicles** minivan or minibus style, with professional drivers, unless noted as seat-in-car. In this latter case, Southwind guests will join with other travelers.

- Expedition style 4X4 vehicles for Uyuni (Toyota Land Cruiser, Nissan Patrol or similar vehicle equipped with fire extinguisher, bottle of oxygen and a first aid kit).
- Hydrofoil transportation where applicable on a shared basis.
- Local and return flight reconfirmation, in-country airport check-in and luggage assistance.
- All accommodations in **First-Class (4 star) hotels** as listed (or at similar hotels, the best available in smaller towns such as Uyuni) on a shared basis with private bath. Advanced bookings are recommended if you require double beds (King/queen) for couples, or plan to arrive early or extend your stay.
- Single Supplement provides single room accommodations in all hotels. Due to the limited number of rooms at the boutique hotels in Uyuni and Lake Titicaca, we recommend advanced reservations.
- All meals indicated on the itinerary (B=breakfast; L=lunch; D=dinner). **Vegetarian diets accommodated on request** (advance notification required). For other diets, consult your travel specialist before signing up.
- All guided tours (as listed) conducted on a private basis by knowledgeable, English-speaking local guides (includes applicable entrance fees).
- A local English-speaking guide/escort is provided for the Sucre-Uyuni segment (Days 02-07) and the La Paz/Lake Titicaca segment (Days 07-10).

NOT INCLUDED:

- US Domestic, International flights, nor local flights within Bolivia
- Visa for entry to Bolivia (current cost $160).
- Tours, meals (at about $30-50 each per person) or other services not listed on the itinerary.
- Early arrivals, dayrooms or late check-outs at hotels.
- Alcoholic beverages, nor items of a personal nature; such as clothing, equipment, laundry and phone calls.
- Tips to the local staff.
- Expenses incurred in preparing for this program such as, but not limited to, non-refundable airline tickets or traveler's insurance, and additional expenses resulting from flight delays, schedule changes, cancellations, or missed connections.

UPGRADE OPTIONS:

Deluxe Airstream Camper

Airstream campers offer a unique way to experience the remote, sparsely populated region of Uyuni. The upgrade is in place of Day 5 and Day 6 at the Luna Salada Hotel. The two-night tour begins with one night at the Luna Salada Hotel, then reaches some of the farthest corners of Uyuni! These shiny new Airstream Campers cater for up to two guests or a family of three (includes a sofa-sleeper comfortable for kids up to 12 years of age), and include a personal chauffeur/guide and an experienced gourmet chef to prepare local cuisine. Fully equipped with surprising amenities like electric blankets, private bathroom with hot water and a shower, heating, air conditioned, and a well-stocked mini bar. The Airstream camper is pulled by a 4x4 vehicle. Simply the best way to enjoy in privacy this seemingly endless field of white.

Hotel room upgrades to Jr. Suites are also available at any hotel included on the itinerary. Please contact a Southwind Travel Consultant for details.

WEATHER: Much of this trip takes place in mountainous regions where the weather is subject to changing suddenly. The best policy for enjoying this capricious weather is to be prepared for all possibilities ranging from intense sunshine to rain, cold, wind and/or snow. Andean/Altiplano nights are cold (averaging about 34-40°F) while the days are pleasantly warm (averaging 60-70° F in the sunshine). On overcast days daytime highs may only be in the mid-50's and you'll notice a distinct difference in temperature (possibly as much as 15°F) between the sunny side of the street and the shady side, so a sweater or jacket should always be carried. Typically the weather during the Andean dry season, which lasts from May to November, is clear, dry, and cool. The months of June, July and August can be expected to be the coldest, with nighttime temperatures possibly falling to as low as 28°F. During the transitional months of May and October/November we may experience more variable weather patterns with a general buildup of afternoon clouds and rain (or hail) showers. Rain all day is uncommon but is possible, even during the dry season.

Weather note on Uyuni Salt Flats: In the dry season, from May to October, when the surface hardens. The surface of the flats is white and dry. Geometrical formations start appearing formed by salt particles conglomerating into polygons. This is the ideal season for an Uyuni visit. In the rainy season, November to February, the saline desert is covered with a shallow layer of water, transforming into a gigantic mirror that melts into the purest sky in South America.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: For peace of mind to help protect your travel investment, having coverage is important in case of unexpected trip cancellation due to illness or health/medical condition/injury requiring medical treatment by a physician. Other benefits can include tour delay/interruption from flight issues, weather events, strikes, medical quarantine or emergency accident/illness with evacuation to nearest treatment by US standards. Southwind recommends the **Worldwide Trip Protector Deluxe** from Travel Insured International. We can provide an eQuote on request tailored to your trip or a policy can be purchased directly from TII online or by phone at 800-243-3174. Coverage can also be done through any provider of your choice.

NEXT STEPS: Please contact Southwind to speak with a personal Travel Advisor to help fine tune your travel plans and to receive a custom itinerary with a land cost quote based on your travel dates. You can reach us by filling out our Private Trip Request form, by email at info@southwindadventures.com, by phone at 800-377-9463 or by text to 303-972-0701.

Reservations can be made up to 60 days before departure, provided tour services and hotels are available. Due to the popularity of Uyuni and Lake Titicaca, we recommend making reservations at least 4-5 months in advance for non-holiday or about 1 year prior for holiday departures. Once your trip is confirmed to operate, you will receive pre-departure planning materials, flight booking assistance and advice to help prepare for your exciting vacation in South America.

We look forward to having you travel with us in Bolivia!

Southwind Adventures, Inc

Your Latin America Travel Specialist since 1990
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