

# INSTANT BOLIVIA



Travel and Tourism Information



# Instant Bolivia

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Photo Credits: Rubén Darío Azogue, Bolivianet.Com, Carlos Jalil, Paul Legros, Kristof Prensini, José Luis Rodrigues, Rosemarie Ruessler, John Santiago, Phil Torney, Vice-Ministro de Turismo de Bolivia

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## Publisher BoliviaNet.Com

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# ***Chapter I***

## ***Introduction***

### **Welcome**

Welcome to ***Instant Bolivia***, a comprehensive and current, annotated directory of travel information for international visitors. The purpose of this directory is to compliment information provided in major tour guides such as such as Lonely Plant, Footprint, and Rough Guides.

Bolivia is a developing country. In other words, it is third world. Uniquely, it is one of the most indigenous nations in the world with more than 80 percent of the population made up of Aymara, Quechua, Guaraní, and other native peoples. Bolivia is concurrently the poorest country in South America and its tourism infrastructure is underdeveloped.

These circumstances make traveling in Bolivia more challenging than in the developed countries of North America, Europe, and industrialized Asia. At the same time, lack of economic development has allowed Bolivia to maintain much of its natural areas in pristine condition including rain forests, Andean mountains and valleys, high plateaus, pampas, and the lowland Amazon basin. In addition, Bolivia's native peoples tend to maintain their languages, cultures, and traditions more authentically than anywhere else in Latin America. Andean folklore consisting art, handicrafts, dance, song, and music is among the most impressive in the world. In most towns and cities, colonial architecture has not given way to modern development. All of this makes for an exciting, interesting and unique travel experience.

To deal with the challenges of travel in Bolivia, we suggest that visitors obtain one of the travel guides mentioned earlier in this introduction. It's helpful but not necessary to obtain the latest edition. Buy a used edition or even check out a copy from the library. Country background information and details on the major tourist attractions tend to remain constant. The opposite is true for travel related businesses. Airlines, buses, trains, hotels, and restaurants experience frequent change.

### **Overview of Instant Bolivia**

Beyond this overview, the directory is divided into five major sections: hotels, restaurants, shopping and entertainment, tourism and travel services, and a final section on health care and safety. Each part is organized according to Bolivia's major cities, towns, and regions such as La Paz, Lake Titicaca, Cochabamba, Santa Cruz, Potosí, the Uyuni Salt Flats, and so on.

To assist the traveler, all entries are annotated. Besides the location and contact information for a business, there is also a brief description of the services provided. In the case of hotels, each property is rated on a five-point scale as an indication of the overall quality of the establishment. Other businesses that are listed in **Instant Bolivia** are either considered adequate or are the only resource available in a particular category. Those establishments that provide superior services or products, as in the case of some restaurants, are designated as “recommended”.

## Hotels

Bolivia Today rates hotels as a way of providing general guidance to international travelers. By considering our rating system, hopefully visitors will be better able to match their idiosyncratic needs, *gustos*, and budget to the type of accommodations available.

**Instant Bolivia** uses a hotel rating scale from zero to five, with five being the highest rating, to describe the quality of hotels.

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Indicator</u>
[5]	Excellent
[4]	Superior
[3]	Good
[2]	Average
[1]	Poor
[0]	Not Recommended
[NR]	Not Rated

Ratings have been developed for application in the Bolivian context. These ratings do not necessarily correspond to similar ratings used in a traveler’s home country or to the star ratings used by the Bolivian tourism industry to classify hotels.

A rating of zero or *Not Recommended* implies that the establishment does not meet the minimum standards for patronage by most international visitors. It means that there is a distinct possibility that a traveler could have an unsafe or unpleasant experience.

A designation of *Not Rated* simply indicates that a hotel has not been evaluated by **Instant Bolivia**. It may mean that the establishment is relatively new, that it is located in close proximity to a similar (duplicate) hotel or restaurant that has already been rated and included in our directory, or that it is located in an area that has not been visited by our staff.

Hotels are rated by taking into consideration the adequacy of each of the following features:

- Comfort. Rooms are practically designed with sufficient space allocation. There is provision of acceptable furnishings and operational heating, air, lighting, and plumbing.
- Cleanliness. Bedding and linens are laundered. The flooring is properly vacuumed, swept, and mopped. Furniture is maintained well. Bathroom fixtures are sanitized.
- Safety. The doors and windows have adequate locks. The exits are marked and operational. Personnel are available at the front desk 24/7. The lobby entrance is properly monitored.

- Service. Staff is polite, helpful, and competent. Front desk clerks are bilingual. Maid service is efficient. Concierge and porters are available.
- Dining. There is a complimentary American style or continental breakfast. Lunch and dinner service is available for purchase.
- Reservation Process. Reservations may be made online or via e-mail. Response is timely and a written confirmation is provided. If a deposit is required, it is for the first night only. The cancellation policy is reasonable.
- Value. The quality of the lodging services correspond fairly to the prices charged.

### **Restaurants**

Restaurants are recommended along the following dimensions:

- Menu. The menu has an adequate selection of dishes. It is easy to read and understand. Prices are indicated.
- Food. The ingredients are of high quality and fresh. Cooking, preparation, and presentation are satisfactory. Proper sanitation standards are maintained.
- Service. Waiters are polite and helpful. They are able to describe the dishes on the menu. Service is timely.
- Ambiance. The environment is welcoming and comfortable. Tables and seating are adequate. The temperature is maintained within the comfort zone.
- Value. Prices are consistent with the quality of the meal provided.

### **Shopping and Entertainment**

The stores listed in the directory are of two types. *Artesanías* or handicraft shops are those establishments that sell souvenirs or other articles of particular interest to tourists. Native weavings, woodcarvings, ceramics, artifacts, jewelry, and metal work are a few examples. Clothing made from llama, alpaca, and vicuña wool is another. Fine arts such as paintings, sculptures, and music are a third category.

Other shopping categories include those shops that carry goods that support travelers during their stay in Bolivia. For example, in this category we list book and map stores, supermarkets, bicycle shops, camping and mountaineering equipment outlets, stationary, and wine and liquor stores.

### **Travel and Tourism Resources**

Here the reader will find information on a wide variety of services including airlines, buses, trains, car rental agencies, embassies and consulates, Bolivian immigration service, tourist offices, and travel agencies, among many others such as money exchanges, couriers, laundry, photography, and urban transport.

## Health Care and Safety

Hopefully travelers will not need to consult this section, but in case of a minor or major health issue, *Instant Bolivia* provides a listing of health care providers including physicians, clinics, dentists, optometrists, optical stores, and pharmacies. There are even entries regarding emergency medical transportation. The chapter ends with a list of important safety tips.

## Using Instant Bolivia

The directory is organized into seven chapters. Each chapter can be viewed, downloaded and saved to file, and/or printed separately.

Chapter I	Introduction
Chapter II	Preparation for Your Trip
Chapter III	Hotels
Chapter IV	Restaurants
Chapter V	Shopping and Entertainment
Chapter VI	Travel and Tourism Services
Chapter VII	Health Care and Safety

Each chapter is organized alphabetically by major topics and then, when appropriate, by major cities and regions (e.g., La Paz, Lake Titicaca, etc.) and finally by the name of particular business or government agency, all in alphabetical order. Each item will be entered with the name, address, telephone, FAX, e-mail, and Web address and then a brief annotation, which includes the days and hours of operation.

## Bolivian Time

For most business and government purposes, a 24-hour, military clock is used. 8:00 A.M. is written 8:00 or 08:00 (*horas*) and 8:00 P.M. as 20:00. All of Bolivia is -4 hours Greenwich meantime. Bolivia does not observe daylight savings time.

On weekdays, a few offices and stores open as early as 8:00 with the majority beginning the day at 9:00. Some open as late at 10:00. Establishments that follow the traditional lunch/siesta close between the hours of 12:30 and 15:00 and then re-open until approximately 19:00. Recently, some government offices adopted the *horario continuo*, where workers are given thirty minutes for lunch and then work until 17:00.

Many but not all businesses open on Saturday mornings from about 9:00 to 12 Noon. Few government offices are open on the weekends.

## Street Language

Commonly, streets are named after places, important events, and famous persons. Both long and short names are used (e.g., Avenida Aniceto Arce or Avenida Arce). Common vocabulary associated with street names includes:

<i>Anillo</i>	Beltway	<i>Camino</i>	Road	<i>Manzana</i>	Block
<i>Avenida</i>	Avenue	<i>Carretera</i>	Highway	<i>Peaje</i>	Toll Road
<i>Boulevard</i>	Boulevard	<i>Cuadra</i>	Block	<i>Parada</i>	Bus Stop
<i>Calle</i>	Street	<i>Edificio</i>	Building	<i>Pasaje</i>	Passageway
<i>Callejón</i>	Alley	<i>Esquina</i>	Corner	<i>Piso</i>	Floor

## Numbers and Numbering

House numbers are generally but not always in sequential order. In some places a previous (*antes, anterior, antiguo*) numbering system has been replaced with a new (*nuevo, actual*) system but some houses may still be marked with both numbers.

Telephone numbers are inconsistently written using the city prefix. For examples, Bolivia Today's number in La Paz may be written alternatively 2-243-1973, 243-1973, or 2243-1973. For international purposes it may be written 011-591-2-243-1973. In this case, it indicates that calling from the USA requires an international access (011) and country code (591). Bolivia uses a system of area codes (e.g. La Paz, 2, Cochabamba 4, and Santa Cruz 3). Landlines have seven digits while cell phone numbers have eight.

Like most of the world, Bolivia relies on the metric system, which alternates the use of periods and comas. For example, ten and a half kilometers is written 10,5 km and one thousand five hundred pesos and twenty-five cents is written \$1.500,25 British ounces, pounds, inches, feet, and yards as well as liquid ounces, and gallons are infrequently used. These measures are replaced instead by grams, kilos, centimeters, meters, centiliters, liters, etc. In the native markets, some archaic Spanish measurements, *leguas* (5 km), *arroba* (25 lbs) and *quintal* (100 lbs) are still used.

## Money Talk

The monetary unit in Bolivia is the *boliviano* (BOB) commonly referred to as the *peso boliviano*. There are 5, 10, and 50 *centavo* coins as well as one and two *peso* coins. There are also 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, and 200 *peso* bills in wide circulation. The smaller bills are in short supply almost everywhere in Bolivia. Don't be surprised when a merchant informs you that he or she does not have change for a large note.

For the purposes of this directory, most prices are represented in U.S. dollars and abbreviated USD (e.g., \$100 USD). When prices are given in *pesos bolivianos*, the designation BS will be used. (e.g., \$100 BS). The current exchange rate is \$8.01 BS = \$1 USD (february 15, 2007).

## Map

On the next page there is a political map of Bolivia showing the major cities and towns, rivers, and neighboring countries. Bolivia is divided into nine sections called *departamentos*, departments:

Pando	Beni	La Paz
Chuquisaca	Oruro	Potosí
Sucre	Santa Cruz	Tarija

Each department is divided into a number of provinces, which in turn are subdivided into cantons. For example, the town of Carabuco on the shores of Lake Titicaca is located in the Cantón de Italaque, Provincia Camacho, Departamento de La Paz.





[Political Map of Bolivia]