



# **bolivia**

FSD Pre-Departure Program Guide



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## letter from the FSD staff

Congratulations again on your choice to work abroad on sustainable development projects in conjunction with the Foundation for Sustainable Development and Northwestern University's Global Engagement Summer Institute. For many of you this experience will be an event that sparks a lifelong interest in development. For others, it will be a chance to gain insight to other cultures that can only be obtained through direct experience. For all of you it will be a chance to make a lasting impact on people and communities in your host country and an opportunity that will make a lasting impression in your life.

There are many challenges that await you. It is likely that the most difficult obstacles you face will not be the ones that put your technical skills or knowledge to the test. More often it will be the difficulty of gaining the cultural competencies necessary to do successful work in a community. It will be learning to see the problems facing a region from the eyes of a community member rather than through the eyes of an outsider. Try and remember throughout your experience that the information about culture, community and language you learn should guide your work as much as your other knowledge.

It is important to remember that during your program you will represent both yourself and FSD in your community. Many people in the region that you will work in have had very little experience with people from outside their country. As such they will develop opinions of you and the work of FSD through their interactions with you or what they hear about you. We ask that you take your visibility into consideration when you make decisions about your actions in your host country.

It is the intention of FSD to provide you with a broad support network to best position you for success, but at the end of the day, it is your effort that will most influence the success of your experience with FSD. You will need to take initiative and put yourself in situations that stretch your comfort levels. You will have to work within cultural contexts that can cause extreme frustration. Many other challenges await. At the same time you face these challenges you also have an incredible set of opportunities. Go into the experience with the willingness to listen and learn. You will find that through this willingness you will increase your ability to give to your community.

This guide has been developed to help make clear what FSD expects of our interns and volunteers and what you can expect of us. We look at your internship or volunteer program as a partnership. It is our hope and belief that clear expectations are the foundation for a solid working relationship. Please read this guide thoroughly as it contains information that is crucial to the success of your experience and our partnership.

Above all, be aware that you should feel comfortable contacting us in the San Francisco office if you need additional support or questions answered.

**Good luck!**

# FSD's vision, values and mission

At the center of the internship experience are the core values, vision, and mission that make FSD the organization that it is. We ask that our interns understand and remember these tenets of FSD throughout their time abroad, in order to make their internships meaningful experiences for both you and the communities in which you serve.

## **Vision**

To enhance our partners' abilities to support sustainable community-based development work that is participatory and shaped by community-defined opportunities and needs.

## **Core Values**

*Transparency*

*Accountability*

*Participation*

*Community*

*Responsiveness*

*Sustainability*



## **FSD's Mission**

FSD supports the efforts of grassroots development organizations in the developing world that are working to better their communities, environments, and the economic opportunities around them. We believe economic development begins with community development and is only sustainable if it comes from and is supported by the members of these communities. Also, through our programs, we aim to raise international awareness of the economic challenges in developing countries and support cross-cultural communities in finding more effective solutions to development issues.

# web of support

FSD is a key partner in your experience. Below are the three main players on FSD's team, with a description of exactly how they will support you.

## **San Francisco Office: Headquarters**

- **Program Arrangements:** FSD San Francisco communicates and confirms your program location, host organization and host family with our international Site Team. The San Francisco staff collaborates with GESI faculty and staff on the program curriculum and participants in the pre-departure seminar and final summit in Chicago.
- **Pre-Departure Materials:** We provide support materials prior to your departure. This includes information about host organization and country-specific pre-departure packets,.
- **Emergencies:** In the case of emergency, at home or abroad, FSD San Francisco is available at all times to support you and your family, and to ensure your safety, security, and well-being.
- **Re-Integration Support:** Upon your return, the San Francisco Office will connect you to a network of other alumni and offer opportunities and incentives to share your experience with others.

## **FSD San Francisco International Programs Staff**

### **Mireille Cronin Mather**

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### **San Francisco Office:**

**415-283-4873**

**Office Hours: 9am – 6pm PST**

### **Emergency Cell Phone:**

**415-828-8414**

## site team abroad

**a. Program Director: Resident Expert and Advisor** - Your Program Director is a development professional from your host country and has extensive community contacts and local knowledge. They manage and develop FSD's relationship with our Host Organizations in addition to fulfilling the following roles:

- **Local Expert:** to your host country and community, current events, local culture and customs, food, language.
- **Placement Counselor:** Your Program Director mediates your relationship with your host organization and host family. They will check in with you, your host organization, and family and do everything within their power to ensure that you and your host are comfortable with the match.
- **Project Advisor and Guardian:** Your Program Director will draw upon their extensive community development experience to help you design and implement a successful project. In addition, your Program Director will hold you and your host organization accountable for reporting on your project and the funds used to complete it. After you leave, your Program Director will continue to follow up on your project.
- **In-Country Emergency Contact:** If you fall ill, are robbed, or find yourself in any other type of emergency, the Program Director is available to support you and to move forward with securing medical attention for you, seeking legal support, and otherwise ensuring your safety, security, comfort, and well being.

**b. Program Coordinators: Resident Expert and Cultural Liaison** - Your Program Coordinator provides the necessary support to you, FSD's host families and our partner organizations.

- **Bridge:** Your PC is there to bridge the communication gaps that often times open up between different cultures and languages.
- **Culture Shock Lifeline:** Your PC has experience dealing with culture shock, and can help you to move through it as smoothly as possible – she is there to listen to your frustrations, to help you work through challenges, indulge you in some comforts from home, and to offer some perspective and guidance.
- **Project Development Advisor:** As you plan, implement, and develop a project, your PCs will offer feedback and advice on how to carry out a successful and sustainable development project.
- **Local Expert and Cultural Bridge:** Your PC is a key resource for understanding your host country and community, current events, local culture and customs, food, language. He is there to bridge the communication gaps that frequently arise between different cultures and languages.
- **Placement Advisor:** Your PCs help mediate your relationship with your host organization and host family. They will check in with you, your host organization, and family and do everything within their power to ensure that you and your host are comfortable with the match.

### bolivia site team

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# your fsd bolivia site team

*¡Saludos y bienvenidos!*

## **Program Director: Mauricio Ramírez Parra**

A native Bolivian with extensive experience with the international community, Mauricio Ramirez has been the Director of FSD in Bolivia since it was initiated in 2000. He is also involved with various projects in agriculture and the environment. He has been the coordinator for Farmer to Farmer, financed by USAID in Cochabamba since 1996, developing projects to assist agricultural producers with technical assistance in the areas of beekeeping, livestock, and the production of fruits and vegetables. He is the former president of Partners of the Americas in Bolivia, an organization that works with volunteers from North Carolina and Bolivia in the areas of health, agriculture, art and culture, search and rescue, women's issues, rehabilitation, and justice. He has over ten years of experience with volunteers.



## **Program Coordinator: Patricia Sweeney**

Tricia Sweeney is a native of the San Francisco Bay Area, and got her first taste of travel during high school, spending her summers in the Dominican Republic with a small group of volunteers dedicated to building homes. She attended UC San Diego and received a B.A. in International Studies and Literature, and spent a year living and studying in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Back at UCSD, she worked as a research assistant for the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, traveling to Jalisco, Mexico to research the connection between migration and health. She's continued to return to the Dominican Republic, and has spent the last few months helping to grow Liga Masiva, a direct trade social enterprise, launching with organic coffee grown in the Dominican Republic. Tricia has discovered a belief in the power of business to create social change, and a passion for connection through community. Her experiences abroad have been some of the most profound in her life, and she can't wait to share this experience as program coordinator in Cochabamba.



## location overview

### Fast Facts:

- *Area:* 1,098,580 sq km (slightly less than three times the size of Montana)
- *Population:* 8,989,046 people
- *GDP:* 27.21 billion
- *Poverty rate:* 64%
- *Literacy rates:* 87.21%
- *Administrative Divisions:* 9 Departments—Beni, Chuquisaca, Cochabamba, La Paz, Oruro, Pando, Potosí, Santa Cruz, Tarija
- *Religion:* Roman Catholic 95%, Protestant (Evangelical Methodist) 5%
- *Language:* Spanish (official), Quechua (official), Aymara (official), Guarany (official)



### Introduction to Bolivia

A country of statistical extremes, landlocked Bolivia is the highest and most isolated country in South America. It has the largest proportion of indigenous people, who make up around two-thirds of the population, and is the world's largest producer of tin.

Bolivia is also one of the poorest countries in South America. Whereas wealthy city elites, who are mostly of Spanish ancestry, have traditionally dominated political and economic life, the majority of Bolivians are low-income subsistence farmers, miners, small traders or artisans. Today, about 60% of the population lives in urban areas and 40% in rural areas.

An incredible amount of diversity is packed into Bolivia's

424,164 square miles – from the Andean region in the west to the lowland tropical "oriente." Bolivia's land and population of 8.9 million hold claim to many superlatives – highest navigable lake in the world (Lake

Titicaca), highest commercial airport in the world (El Alto/La Paz airport), highest city in the world (Potosí), most indigenous population in South America (about 55%), and poorest country in South America.



### Historical background

As a Spanish colony, the area that is today Bolivia (then called Alto Peru) largely financed the extravagance of the Spanish monarchy and its expansion throughout an entire continent. Spain's wealth was in large part due to the mining of a single hill – silver from Cerro Rico in Potosí, where millions of indigenous and African slaves died. Bolivia's post-independence area was much larger

than its current boundaries. However, Bolivia has lost every war it has fought in, and every one of its neighbors (Chile, Peru, Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina) has hacked away at its borders at one point or another. Over one hundred years ago, Chile left Bolivia landlocked after it seized its territory in the Atacama Desert (including the port of Antofagasta) during The War of the Pacific. This is still a sore point in Bolivia, as many argue that access to the Pacific would help the flagging economy. Many Bolivians still harbor resentment



towards Chileans, and Bolivia has retained its navy for more than 100 land-locked years, patrolling Lake Titicaca.

### **Bolivia Today**

On December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2005, Evo Morales, a coca farmer of indigenous descent, was elected President of Bolivia, representing the political and indigenous party Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS). "Evo," as he is popularly called, won the election with 54% of the vote and was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 2001 and again in 2007. Evo's election is an important symbolic and real achievement for indigenous Bolivians, who have long faced discrimination and political and economic exclusion. The landslide election also marked a potential opening for widespread political changes. In the first few years of Evo's presidency, his government has made several structural changes in the country, such as negotiating more favorable contracts with trans-national corporations on the extraction of hydro carbons, advancing the rights and legitimacy of rural and indigenous populations in Bolivia, and approving a new Constitution. While these changes have provoked social clashes at times, they signify a dramatic transformation in the way politics are conceived and carried out in Bolivia. On December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009, Evo Morales was re-elected with nearly 63% of the popular vote, ushering in five more years of leadership under the MAS.



### **Cochabamba**

Cochabamba is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest city in Bolivia and unites the country with its centric location. The city sits at 9000 feet and has a diverse climate; the department of Cochabamba hosts the jungle region of el Chapare, the large mountain ranges of the Altiplano, is the center of agriculture production and offers diverse hikes and outdoor activities.

The city of Cochabamba is characterized by fountain and flora filled plazas; theatres; a tree-filled Prado; the Aurora/Wilsterman soccer stadium; a thriving night life; the largest Jesus Christ statue in South America (yes, larger than Rio de Janeiro); and

the biggest open-air market in South America, La Cancha, a dazzling maze visitors are sure to get lost in every time they enter. The Southern Zone is also a huge part of the city and reflects some of the major contradictions that can be found in Bolivia. , Developed somewhat spontaneously in response to processes of migration from rural to urban areas, the Southern Sone is characterized by higher rates of poverty and limited access to social services such as potable water and health care.

The department of Cochabamba also boasts a semi-tropical region, the Chapare, where Evo Morales began his political career as a coca famer and labor leader. (In recent years, Cochabamba has been the site of several important social mobilizations, such as the Water Wars of 2001 that reversed the privatization of water in the city and political tensions that resulted in violence in January of 2007. These clashes were a product of the transition to democracy and the search for a common vision of the country that historically was not representative or inclusive of all Bolivians. While major obstacles still lay ahead for the Bolivian government - such as addressing narco-trafficking in the country, high rates of poverty, and the management of natural resources - no major social clashes have taken place since 2007 and the Bolivian people hope that a sustained period of peace lies ahead.



## Rural Locations

### *Anzaldo*

Anzaldo is a small village about two hours outside the city of Cochabamba. With the main industry of corn and potato farming, it is slow growing, having recently installed a main plaza and a few new bridges. The town has running water and electricity, but has not yet gained internet and telephone land line services.

The village is the center for education and health in the Municipality of Anzaldo, housing two equipped hospitals and the large San Jose de Calasanz School high school. The municipality of Anzaldo is characterized by small communities that are poverty-stricken and lack basic services such as clean water and electricity. Due to this, the city of Anzaldo serves as a hub for children who attend school and community members that need health treatment. The San Jose de Calasanz School has a shelter where students from other villages can sleep during the week. Specifically Anzaldo has a great urgent care facility and recovery center for malnourished children.

### *Asinquire:*

Asinquire is a very small village within the Municipality of Arampampa. Even more isolated than Anzaldo, it is located about four hours from Cochabamba by truck. There are no telephone services, no electricity and running water is very rare. Arampampa is primarily an agriculture subsistence farming community; unfortunately the lack of water and difficult location in the tops of the rough Andean mountains make farming a tough venture. Asinquire hosts a school that trains local farmers in agriculture strategies, licensing them as agriculture engineers at the end of the term. Due to the lack of roads in Arampampa, many surrounding communities, where students live, are 4-9 hour hikes away. Transportation is another huge barrier for the communities, as there is one dirt road that leads to the main city of Arampampa, but transport only arrives a few days a week. Moreso, there are no roads leading to the majority of the other communities in Arampampa.



### *Tarata and Punata:*

The rural towns of Tarata and Punata are located 29 and 58 kilometers from Cochabamba, respectively. The zone in which both municipalities are located is known as the *Valle Alto*, or Upper Valley, located southeast of Cochabamba, and is said to exhibit the more traditional character of Bolivian society. Tarata, originally an indigenous village, became important to the Spanish crown as an agricultural region to feed the miners of Potosí. Its attractions include the Cathedral, as well as monuments such as the Iglesia and Convento de San Jose. Today, Tarata retains much of the colonial architecture from the Spanish colonization period. The town of Punata is known for its strong union tradition during the period of Agricultural Reform. Every Tuesday, Punata is the sight of one of the largest animal trading fairs in the region. FSD interns can choose internships in these towns to gain a more rural experience in Bolivia, for instance in Hospital Punata, an organization very popular among past interns.

# safety and security

FSD will do our utmost to provide a safe environment and provide a support system to you throughout your experience. To ensure a safe and successful experience for everyone involved we depend upon the following:

- **our site team:** to assess our (FSD's) ability to ensure that your environment is safe and secure.
- **our local community networks:** to serve as a barometer of the local political, social, and economic climate.
- **you:** to adhere to instructions and tips regarding your safety and security, and to act prudently.

## a. fsd's responsibilities

- **Ensure a safe and secure host community.**

Our host organizations and programs are run by FSD staff and trusted colleagues who live locally and often have years of experience with FSD. While the political climate varies by location and timing, we feel that our extensive local networks of host families and partner organizations provide us with a good barometer of the climate in relation to the safety of foreign volunteers. We would never place you in a highly dangerous location.

FSD monitors the political, economic, and social climate in each of our host communities. In the event that FSD determines it cannot ensure your safety or security in a given location, we will either place you with another FSD program in the region, or offer a refund for the program.

- **Inform you about safety and security in your host community.**

Through literature and resources disbursed to you prior to your arrival, and presentations during your program orientation, we equip you with the information and tools to be aware of the realities of your host community, to avoid situations that would put you at risk, and to manage uncomfortable or risky situations in the event that they arise.

- **Direct you to a preferred medical facility in the case of an emergency**

During orientation, your Program Director and Program Coordinator will identify a preferred medical facility in your host community.

- **Support you logistically and emotionally through any medical or emergency situation.**

FSD will support you in addressing your needs during any medical or emergency situation, whether it is securing medical attention and medications, filing a police report, or re-scheduling your flight.

- **Contact your emergency contacts in the case of a major emergency.**

FSD will only contact your emergency contacts upon request or in the case of a major emergency when you are not able to contact them.

## b. your responsibilities

- **Inform yourself.**

Research the history and current events of your host country and community prior to your arrival. Talk to your Site Team and host family about safety in your host community and follow their tips.

- **Register your living/traveling abroad status with the US Department of State**

FSD highly recommends that all program participants register with the US Department of State prior to embarking on their journey. More information can be obtained on <http://travel.state.gov/>.

- **Minimize risk:**

- Secure all recommended vaccinations, and take precautions to remain safe and healthy.
- Avoid volatile or risky events, locations, and situations.
- Carry as little money and valuables as possible.



- Hold your bag close to you or in front of you, and never leave it unattended.
  - Travel with someone you know at all times, and avoid being out alone after dark.
  - Know where you are going, or at least look like you know where you are going. If you are unsure, ask someone for directions. If you need to pull out a map, do so somewhere sheltered and discreet.
  - Avoid dressing in a manner that gives an appearance of wealth
- **Be aware of your surroundings:**
    - Observe your environment with great care and attention, and adapt your behavior accordingly.
- **Be prepared - Carry with you:**
    - A copy of your Proof of Insurance card - you will need the card as proof of insurance in case of an emergency.
    - Any pertinent prescriptions
    - A card that lists all of your local and emergency contact numbers and addresses. We suggest that you keep this card apart from your wallet.
- Keep apart:**
- Keep emergency contact information, and any other important documents, in your email account.
  - Keep a copy of your passport and credit cards apart from your wallet and passport.
- **Notify FSD.**  
In the unlikely, but always possible, event that you are mugged, are involved in an accident, fall seriously ill, or run into any other type of "incident" please notify your Site Team immediately. The Site Team will help you to resolve the situation to the best of their ability.

# bolivia: visa and health preparations

## Visas for Bolivia

As of December, 2007, the requirements for entering Bolivia as a US citizen have changed. If you visit the Bolivia Embassy's website you will see that it is now required that you obtain a tourist visa for travel in Bolivia (including participation in the FSD program.) To obtain your tourist visa you can apply by mail or in person at a Bolivian consulate in the US, **or** you can apply upon your arrival into any of the international airports or land border crossings. Previous FSD participants recommend the latter process as it is more efficient, so for your ease and convenience, plan on applying for your visa *upon arrival*.

- Visit the State Department and Bolivian Embassy websites (listed below) to review the information you will be required to provide upon arrival, as well as any new information regarding travel in Bolivia.
- We advise that you print and fill out the visa application (found online) to bring with you to the airport.
- The fee for the tourist visa is \$135 USD and must be paid in cash to the immigration authorities upon your arrival. The money should be in crisp, new bills and exact change.
- You must also provide a color passport photograph, proof of your Yellow Fever Vaccination, a copy of your credit card (you should be carrying a copy for yourself regardless), and, to avoid hassle, proof of exit (i.e. a roundtrip ticket or copy of your itinerary for travel beyond Bolivia.)
- The site team suggests going through the La Paz or Santa Cruz airports before Cochabamba. Recent volunteers that went through customs/migration in Cochabamba had more difficulty getting their visas, although they did get them.
- Compile all the requirements and have them readily available in your carry-on baggage.

Whether you complete your visa application prior to your flight or upon your arrival in Bolivia, it is very important that you indicate the intent of your visit to Bolivia is travel. Do NOT make mention of "working" or "volunteer work" or anything along those lines. Participants in the FSD program maintain the status of "visitor," as indicating you are "working" causes undue questioning. If you have any questions or concerns about this point, please contact your Program Director.

## Resources:

### US State Department: Information for U.S. travelers to Bolivia.

[http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1069.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1069.html)

#### Bolivian Embassy in the United States

3014 Massachusetts Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20008  
t: 202.483.4410 | f: 202.328.3712  
<http://www.bolivia-usa.org>

#### Bolivian Main Consulate in the US

2120 L Street NW Suite 335  
Washington DC 20037  
t: 202.232.4827  
f: 202.232.8017

The Bolivian Embassy website has a complete directory of all their consulates in the United States; for in-depth inquiries regarding visa issues it is recommended to call or visit your nearest Bolivian Consulate.

## FSD Recommendation:

*\*\*\*Please note: the recommendation provided here is subject to change at any time. Please check with a Bolivian Consulate or Embassy for the most up to date information.*

# health preparation and FAQ

As an FSD Participant, it is your full responsibility to identify and take all necessary health precautions prior to, during, and following the Program. Providing detailed medical advice is beyond the expertise of FSD so it is very important to consult the resources below as well as medical professionals such as your doctor or local travel health clinic.

## Resources

### Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

Recorded information about health risks and precautions for international travelers:  
1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747)

**Malaria Hotline:** 404-332-4555.

## FSD Recommendations:

- **Rabies** is a problem in several of the countries FSD works in. Please speak with your doctor for more information and if a vaccine is recommended for your host country. However, be aware that a vaccine does not completely protect you from contracting rabies. Also, be aware that rabies can be contracted not only through animal bites but also through saliva (ie. a dog lick) and animals in the early stages of the disease may not be aggressive or seem sick. For this reason, please avoid petting stray dogs and other animals that may have contracted rabies.
- Make sure your food and drinking water are safe. Food and waterborne diseases are the primary cause of illness in travelers. Participants should be careful to eat in places that have been recommended to them, and to drink only treated water.
- Familiarize yourself with the symptoms of the most common illnesses contracted by travelers, and the appropriate treatment.
- Bring medicines and supplies for preventing and treating common illnesses and maladies (diarrhea, dehydration, sunburn, food poisoning).
- Bring a stainless-steel water bottle to ensure that you have a safe supply of water at all times and can remain hydrated.

## ***What happens if I get sick?***

For serious illness that may occur during the trip, there are public and private clinics and hospitals available in all of the host cities in Bolivia. If you should become sick and need to see a doctor, please alert your supervisor, your host family and the FSD Site Team immediately.

# weather and packing FAQ

## What kind of luggage should I bring?

Don't overdo it — pack lightly so you can travel more easily and store your bag in small places. Think in terms of a backpack, duffel bag, or moderate-sized suitcase and a daypack. Bags with shoulder straps are preferable to suitcases because they're easier to carry. Backpacks are a plus to have for easy traveling and weekend excursions once you're in Bolivia.

## What should I bring in my carry-on luggage?

We recommend that you carry all valuables (money, credit card, passport, identification, immunization booklet, insurance card, etc.) and a complete set of clothes (change of shirt, pants/skirt, underwear) in your carry-on luggage in case your checked bag is temporarily lost or delayed.

## What kinds of weather should I expect?

Cochabamba is located in the central valley region of Bolivia and is known for its pleasant year-round climate, reaching few extremes throughout the year. The seasons are the opposite of those in the Northern hemisphere, with winter being from June to August and summer beginning in September. The average winter temperature is about 61 degrees Fahrenheit, with warm days and cool nights. Summer days tend to be hot (around 85 degrees Fahrenheit), even with the arrival of the rainy season in November – but the ensuing showers help cool down the air. Surrounding rural areas such as Punata and Anzaldo tend to be cooler than Cochabamba.



As for other regions of Bolivia, La Paz and the altiplano regions of Bolivia are significantly cooler and require warm clothes year round. As you head east of Cochabamba into the tropical region of Chapare, and beyond to Santa Cruz, the climate becomes warmer and more humid.

## What documents should I bring?

You should bring your passport, vaccination booklet, insurance card, and list of FSD contacts in Bolivia and two copies of each. During the program, keep the originals and one copy safe in your

suitcase and keep the other copy on your person at all times.

## How are clothes washed?

While some families have washing machines, it is most common that your host family will hand-wash your clothing. In both cases, clothing is line-dried.

Please keep in mind that since your clothes will be hand-washed and line-dried they will definitely endure some wear and tear. Please also note that there is some social stigma surrounding thong underwear, and so it may be more comfortable with some families to bring non-thong underwear, or to dry thong underwear out of public view



## What should I wear?

To avoid uncomfortable stereotypes and feel safe (this is especially important for women), dress conservatively. For women, it is typical for clothes to fit snugly but not show much skin.

### At work

Bolivian men and women generally wear business casual attire to work, making nice jeans or khakis appropriate. Knee-length or longer skirts are also appropriate for women, and short-sleeved dress shirts are fine for men. For both genders, comfortable, sturdy, closed-toe shoes or nicer sandals are appropriate for work. For both genders shorts and rubber flip-flops are inappropriate.

### At home

Comfortable clothing and sandals are commonly worn for lounging at home and informal activities. Please bring a pair of modest pyjamas to sleep in.

## What type of clothes should I pack?

Bring cool clothes for hot summer temperatures, a lightweight waterproof jacket for showers, and warm layers for the winter and cooler nights. Keep in mind that darker colors are easier to keep clean, and that your clothes will endure a lot of wear and tear from being washed by hand. Also consider clothes that will breathe in the heat and dry quickly. You may also want to bring a nice, formal outfit, as interns are often invited to celebrations such as weddings or baptisms by their host family and friends.

## Recommended Packing Lists

### clothes:

- Underwear
- Sturdy cotton socks
- Light waterproof jacket and/or umbrella
- 2-3 long-sleeved warmer shirts/tops
- 3-4 short-sleeved tops/t-shirts
- 3-4 blouses/dress shirts for work
- 2 sweaters or a lightweight jacket for layering
- A warm jacket for winter nights
- 2-3 pairs of nice pants or jeans for work
- 1-2 pairs of casual pants/capris for home and travel
- 1 pair of shorts or sweats (for around the house and sports)
- 1-2 skirts, knee-length or longer, for women (optional, but comfortable for summer)
- At least one nice outfit for special occasions: e.g. church, going dancing, festivals, special functions at your host organization
- A pair of comfortable, sturdy shoes for work
- A pair of running/basketball/baseball/soccer/hiking shoes
- Sandals: "nice" sandals can be worn everywhere; flip flops can be worn around the house and double as slippers.
- A bathing suit
- Modest sleepwear
- Sun hat

### health and hygiene:

- Sunscreen
- Strong insect repellent
- Aspirin and/or non-aspirin pain reliever
- Antibiotics for travelers' diarrhea – can also be bought under local brand names at reduced prices in Bolivian pharmacies
- Any medications you use in their original containers and a copy of your prescriptions
- A supply of hand wipes/Sea Breeze wipes/Wet Wipes and anti-bacterial hand lotion such as Purel (some places won't have restrooms with running water)
- Vitamins (especially for those with special health or dietary needs)
- Personal hygiene products: soap, shampoo, toothpaste, tampons, floss, etc. All products may be purchased in-country, but there is less selection.



- Sunglasses, glasses (extra pair if you have a prescription or contacts), copy of your prescription, saline solution
- Eyedrops, allergy medications, lotion, etc. in consideration of Cochabamba's dry climate

#### **practical supplies:**

- Reuseable water bottle
- Travel alarm clock (with extra batteries)
- Quick-drying towel or two smaller towels
- Medium-sized backpack for day trips and weekend trips
- Flashlight
- Re-chargeable batteries and battery charger (cheaper than buying new batteries)
- Lock for luggage
- Camera and extra film or memory cards, cord for uploading photos
- Money belt (waist is more secure than around the neck)
- Army knife
- Notebooks, pens, paper
- A reusable shopping bag

#### **documents and money:**

- Airline ticket
- Passport
- Vaccination booklet
- Insurance Card
- ATM card
- Visa or MasterCard
- Photocopies of all Documents
- Cash (US dollars are accepted in large stores in Bolivia)

#### **sentimental valuables:**

- Novels, reading materials
- Pictures of your family, friends, school, neighborhood, work
- Small gifts for your host family

#### **What items will be especially difficult to get in country?**

- Books in English
- Comfort foods

#### **Should I bring my laptop?**

Personal computers and especially laptops are not common in Bolivia. Access to computers at your host organization is likely to be limited, and only a handful of families have a computer in their home.

The advantage of bringing a laptop is the ability to work on documents at home without paying for internet/computer time. You can then save your work to a USB drive and email/print it at a *cíber*. If you do decide to bring your laptop, please take the necessary precautions! It should be in your carry-on bag to take on the plane and you should keep it at your host family's home. Please understand that bringing a laptop entails the risk that it could be lost, stolen or damaged – FSD is not responsible in these scenarios.

Instead of a laptop (or in addition) it may be a good idea to invest in a cheap USB drive. You can get low volume USB drives for \$20 or up to several Gigs for more money. These are an excellent way to cart around your documents and email, print or fax them from a *cíber*.

The FSD office in Cochabamba has an extra laptop with internet connection for interns to use.

#### **Should I bring my iPod?**

iPods are very rare here – you should generally not walk around listening to your iPod; they automatically advertise your wealth and set you apart. Keeping it at home and listening to it with your family is perfectly fine. MP3 players are also great for long bus rides, but you should exercise the utmost caution when traveling with items of value.

If you do decide to bring your laptop or other American electronic devices you will need a voltage converter that converts to 220V with a "C" plug. Converters can be bought in Bolivia, however to be safe you may consider purchasing one before departure.



*Type "C"*

### **How should I approach photography?**

You should always ask permission before you take someone's photo. People may ask you to send copies or to give them a tip ("propina") for taking their photo. Please oblige them by keeping track of addresses to send copies to and/or giving a small tip. It is prohibited to take photos of military or security zones.

### **Should I bring donations?**

Donations are welcome, but totally optional. If you choose to bring donations, please think about the practicality, sustainability, and durability of those items. Email your Site Team to find out the best types of donations to bring with you.



# food and water FAQ

## Can I drink the tap water?

NO. Do not drink the tap water. You are only to drink bottled water or water that has been boiled.

## Where can I get safe water?

Cochabamba is at 9000 ft in altitude, so please pay close attention to your hydration at all times and be sure that you're getting plenty of (safe) water.

Your host family will make purified water available to you. Bring your own bottled water with you at all times; when visiting other families or communities, and when in doubt, drink a bottled beverage.

The most sustainable way to ensure that you always have a supply of purified water available is to bring a reusable water bottle and re-fill it each morning from your host family's supply (most families will buy a large jug that is refilled each week). You may also consider bringing water treatment tablets for backup. Bottled water is available in any "tienda" or grocery store. However, when spending time in rural areas it isn't odd to find *tiendas* that don't have bottled water, since drinking water isn't a big priority to most Bolivians. It is always recommended to bring large bottles of water with you before traveling to rural areas.



## What is typical food?

The main staples of the Bolivian diet are potatoes and rice, usually accompanied by meat and *llajwa*, a spicy *locoto* (Bolivian chili pepper) salsa. Meat soups are also very popular. It is likely that you will have rice, potatoes and bread at least once a day. Other principal foods include plantains, fava beans, salty fresh cheese, eggs, meat, corn, fruit, pastries and *mates* (tea). Bolivian food tends to be very greasy with very little use of vegetables and even less use of raw vegetables.

Breakfast is normally a small meal that consists of tea or coffee and fresh juice, accompanied by bread with butter and jam. Lunch is the most important meal of the day and is eaten together with the entire family at around 1 p.m. It is usually a very heavy meal, eaten at a very slow pace and accompanied by much conversation. Dinner depends on the family; some Bolivians eat big meals similar to lunch while others typically have a *mate* and a pastry such as an *empanada*.

## What do most people drink?

Many host families will make juice from fresh fruit – these are delicious. Soda, or "gaseosa" is very popular, usually the substitute for water in most homes, and drank much more than North Americans are accustomed to. Milk is safe to drink in Bolivia, as it is almost always pasteurized. Likewise, when coffee is available it is usually Nescafé, although fresh coffee may be purchased from local producers. Beer, *Singani* and *Chicha* are the popular alcoholic drinks in the Cochabamba region. *Singani* is an alcohol fermented from grapes and usually mixed with juice as a *trago* (cocktail), while *Chicha* is a corn fermentation, consumed in its pure state and an absolute core of Cochabamba social events and culture.



### **How vegetarian-friendly is the local cuisine?**

Meat is a big part of Bolivian culture and celebrations. However, families can always accommodate to a vegetarian diet. Please be specific as to your preferences (i.e. whether you eat chicken but no red meat, or no animals, no dairy whatsoever) and let the FSD staff know beforehand so they can alert the family. There are also various vegetarian restaurants where the raw vegetables are safe to eat and taste delicious. The FSD site team will advise you where to find these restaurants. Fresh fruit, such as papaya, mango, pineapple, oranges, avocados, peaches, and bananas are common in Bolivia, as well as delicious and cheap!

### **What foods should I avoid?**

- Avoid uncooked food, street vendors and restaurants that have not been recommended by FSD Site Team.
- Do not eat fruits or vegetables that have been washed with water unless they are peeled or the water was treated beforehand.
- Other foods likely to be offered that you should avoid, unless your host family prepares them properly, are juices, *quesillo* (fresh salty cheese), salad, milk drinks and anything raw.
- To prevent parasites and diarrhea, you will want to eat lightly upon arrival and stay away from raw vegetables and street food.



### **Can I eat fresh fruit from street stands, and trees?**

In Bolivia you are likely to encounter an abundance of fresh fruit. As a rule, *if you can peel it, you can eat it*. Avoid peeled fruit served on the street unless you watch the vendor peel it.

### **How should I express my preferences, or turn down unsafe food that is offered to me?**

In many places food is an important form of hospitality and it is cultural practice to offer food and drink as a welcoming, friendly gesture. Never put yourself at risk, but please be diplomatic in expressing your needs. Take care not to offend your hosts with negative comments or facial expressions.

Your host family will be notified of what you can and cannot eat or drink, but you should also be sure to tell your family what you do and do not like to eat. You should feel comfortable politely asking your family for food to be less greasy or salty, to put salt on the side, to mention that you like fruits and vegetables, or to be given more or less food.

Families understand that your body is simply used to a different diet, so the best thing to do if there is a food bothering you is to say that, *although it is delicious you are not used to eating like that in your country and it is making you ill*. Most Bolivians know that foreigners are generally more susceptible to getting sick from the change in diet and are accustomed to being more cautious with the food they serve them. We discuss eating with your host family further in the Homestay Family section later.

### **Are there any US-style restaurants?**

In Cochabamba, the only US chain is Burger King, however, there are many restaurants that serve US style food. There are restaurants called *Dumbo's* and *Globos* that is very similar to a Denny's or IHOP and there are hamburger and pizza joints everywhere.

# communications

## **What is the best way for friends and family at home to reach me?**

Email is probably the most reliable way to be in touch with your friends and family at home. We also suggest that you call your friends and family from an internet café or a phone company office. If your host family has a phone, you can ask them if it is all right for your family to call you on that line.

Realize that phone communication is often interrupted by bad weather, local technicalities or overloaded circuits, and sometimes lines are cut in the middle of a call. Please ensure that your friends and families are aware of this with the understanding that it is best not to schedule international calls at exact times. In case of an emergency, your family can call the FSD Site Team and leave a message for you.

## **Is there access to internet and email?**

You can find an internet café (*cíber*) anywhere in Cochabamba. Many are open late, and most all have the capacity to call home to the US for much cheaper than other methods. Internet access costs about US \$0.50 per hour. Additionally, FSD's Cochabamba office has free internet access and an extra laptop for interns.

## **Can I make and receive phone calls at my host family's home?**

All host families have a telephone. Never make any long distance calls from the phone of your host family or that of your employer, and ask permission from your host family before making any local calls on their phone. It is also best to check with your host family before receiving long-distance calls on their phone.

## **Where can I make and receive phone calls?**

Local phone calls to fixed lines can usually be made from your host family's telephone. Phone calls to cell phones are more expensive and should be made from telecommunications offices (such as Entel, Viva, etc.) for about US \$0.06 per minute. For long distance calls there are several options:

- Call from a telecommunications office. These can be as expensive as 4 bolivianos (US \$0.50) per minute, but are usually a reliable connection.
- Call from a booth at a call center or internet café using an internet phone connection. This is a fairly reliable and quite cheap option, at as low as US \$0.06 a minute.
- Buy a prepaid phone card in the U.S. or in Cochabamba to use with landlines (check with your host family to make sure they won't be charge for the call).
- Use internet services such as Skype for \$0.02 per minute or for free with other Skype users.

## **How do I make a call within Bolivia?**

From one landline to another in Cochabamba, you can simply dial the 7-digit number. To call a cell phone, all you have to do is dial the 8-digit number anywhere in the country. From a cell phone or a landline outside of Cochabamba to another landline, you must dial Cochabamba's city code (4 or 04).

## **How do I call the U.S.?**

To call the U.S. from a call center, dial 001, the area code, then the 7-digit number. From other phones or using a calling card, there are several different possible prefixes, some of which are cheaper than others depending on promotions – if you plan to call this way, you should research your options. There are direct numbers to call AT&T and Sprint to make calling card or collect calls to the US, which you should verify before your arrival. Some call centers in Cochabamba will give you the office's number so that whoever you are calling can call you back.

## **Are cell phones available?**

Cell phones that don't require a contract can be purchased in any city. You can also bring your cell phone from the US if it utilizes a chip (contact your current cell phone service to make sure the phone model is compatible to Bolivia and to find out the code to unlock it for use with other services). You can purchase a card to recharge the phone credit at your convenience. Calls to cell phones can be relatively expensive (2-4 bolivianos/minute, US \$0.25-0.50). FSD will provide a cell phone if you do not want to purchase your own. You will be required to pay a security deposit for the return of the phone at the end of your program.

## Monetary Unit: **Boliviano/Peso**

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### Exchange Rate:

The current exchange rate is approximately  
**7 Bolivianos (Bs) to the US Dollar**, but confirm this before you  
leave: <http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic>

### **How much cash should I bring with me?**

You should plan on bringing about US \$200 in cash when you arrive, an ATM card and a credit card for emergencies (however there are very few places to use credit cards). You can exchange money at the airport or upon arrival in Bolivia. **Note:** All cash that you bring to exchange should be in near mint condition because most banks will not change imperfect bills.

### **How much money should I plan on spending in country?**

FSD covers all of your necessary expenses, including room and board, in-country transportation, trip expenses (if applicable), orientation and debriefing sessions, etc. You may want additional money, however, for entertainment, snacks, books, gifts, newspapers, weekend excursions, additional transportation and health emergencies. You should budget for about US \$3/day and about \$50 for a weekend trip. Bring more if you plan to go out often or buy gifts.

Never carry a large sum of cash or your passport on public transportation; if you must, please do so with caution. Bring only what you need for the day and use a nondescript bag to carry books or papers.

### **How can I get cash?**

ATM machines are recommended because they are available, secure, and get a good rate of exchange.

Traveler's checks are not recommended: they do not get a good exchange rate (cash is much better) and are not widely accepted. Do not exchange money with street dealers; banks or exchange bureaus are much more secure.

### **Are credit cards accepted?**

It is very difficult to find places that accept credit cards, as they are only accepted in the more expensive shops and restaurants. Do not plan to rely on your credit card for the majority of your transactions in the country; if you choose to bring a credit card, we advise bringing no more than one for emergency purposes, and bringing a VISA or MASTERCARD since they are the most commonly accepted.

### **What is the local attitude towards bargaining?**

Bargaining is part of the culture and expected at local markets.

# transportation and travel information

## Flight Guidelines FAQ

### ***Is international airfare and travel to the program site included in the program fee?***

The GESI and FSD Program fee does not include the cost of international airfare nor in-country airfare to the program site. GESI will organize group tickets for which the student will be financially responsible.

The Program fee does cover transportation to and from the airport. The program fee also covers any other group transportation required for group activities (with other FSD interns and staff).

*Please be sure to keep your site team's contact information with you at all times so that you can reach them in case you are delayed or have any problems or questions.* It is also strongly advised that you pack in your carry-on luggage a change of clothing, toiletries and other essentials in case your luggage is lost or delayed.

## **Flying through Santa Cruz Viru Viru Airport (VVI)**

### *Upon your arrival at VVI:*

After your international arrival, you will be required to collect your checked luggage (no transfer is organized by the airlines), acquire your visa and pass through customs before checking in for your domestic flight. To check in for your domestic flight, turn right after exiting the baggage area and look for the signs for Domestic Departures. The domestic and international terminals are part of the same airport, so no shuttle is needed to go between them, although one is available. You can always ask airport security guards if you have any questions.

### *Layovers at Viru Viru Airport:*

The airport is fine to stay in for a few hours while waiting for a connecting flight during the day. However, it is not the most comfortable airport to remain at for extended periods or overnight. Although it is a major airport in Bolivia, VVI is not busy 24 hours a day, and thus tends to be quiet in the late evening and especially after midnight. Nighttime temperatures can get cold and there may not be any heated facilities, so if you must spend part or all of the night there, bring sufficient clothing. The airport does not have an excess of lounges, bedrooms, internet facilities or shops, and while there are some bars/cafes that stay open and sell refreshments all night, these are not the most comfortable for overnight stays. Passengers are also not allowed to sit inside the check-in area overnight, as it closes for a few hours for cleaning, etc.

If your travel plans include a long or overnight layover and you wish to spend that time outside of the airport, please contact your site team for tips and recommendations.

## **Flying through La Paz El Alto Airport (LPB)**

### *Upon your arrival at LPB:*

If you choose to fly with American Airlines, you will most likely fly into El Alto Airport in La Paz. Just like flying into Santa Cruz, to catch a domestic flight to Cochabamba, you will have to collect your checked luggage, get your visa and go through customs before returning to the domestic departures check in. Take note that travelers cannot stay at this airport overnight.

# Your Arrival: FAQ's

## **How should I contact my site team if my flight is delayed, canceled, etc?**

As mentioned above, prior to your departure you should print a copy the site team contact information sheet sent to you by the San Francisco office. *Keep it in your carry-on luggage at all times.* In the event that you need to contact your site team while in transit, we recommend text message or calling from your US cell phone, emailing from a kiosk in the airport, or using a pay phone to call the site team on their cell phones.

## Transportation within Bolivia

The most common forms of transportation within Bolivia are taxis, local buses (called *trufis*), and long distance /regional buses, sometimes called *buscamas*.



### Buses

In Bolivian cities the most common form of public transportation are *trufis*. There are three types of *trufis*: Micro-trufi, trufi, or a trufi taxi. All work the same, having a fixed rate of 1.5 bolivianos and a specific route depending on their number. However, the difference between the *trufis* lie in their size — Micros are comparable to a bus, regular *trufis* are much like a mini-bus, and trufi-taxis look like a taxi (a compact car).

### Payment

With some public transport you pay when you get on and with others as you get off; the best is to ask and you will learn as you go. For longer bus trips, it is advised to go to the bus station and buy your ticket with some anticipation.

### Safety

It is easy to get robbed on a bus so be vigilant about your possessions. However, appearing nervous about your possessions makes you a target so try to be calm and composed. Don't travel with more money than you'll need and don't carry important documents like your passport unless you have to. It is preferable to choose a seat next to a female or child.

### Know where you are going

Always know where you are going and the name of the stop before you get on the bus. If you are going to an unfamiliar location always ask the *chofer* before getting on the bus. Transport *choferes* are very friendly and are always willing to help you find the right bus or trufi.

### Taxis

Taxis are ubiquitous and cheap in Bolivia, and are thus good for transportation to area buses do not travel or when you are traveling with luggage or with a group.

### Payment

Most taxi rides are under a dollar unless you are going long distances. Ask how much the fare will be before you get in the taxi. To ensure not being overcharged, always ask someone who is familiar with the city how much a taxi ride should be to your destination point before traveling somewhere for the first time.

### Safety

You should always use *radio taxis*. These are taxis that are run by a company and they will have this company logo on the door of the car, accompanied by the company phone number. You can always ask your host family to recommend a taxi company to use.

## family homestay

Living with a host family is consistently one of the most memorable parts of FSD interns' experience in Bolivia. Besides the comfort of an instant network of support and affection, a homestay also offers the opportunity to be continuously learning and to experience a familial environment sometimes quite different from what you're used to. That is not to say this comes without some minor difficulties, namely less independence than you're used to – but with a bit of sensitivity and a willingness to communicate, you will more easily develop an attachment to your family.

A typical Bolivian host family includes one or two host parents, children, and extended family members of various ages and relations. It is very common for movement in and out of the household of relatives, either as they come for a brief or extended visit, or if they need a place to live. All of the Bolivian host families that FSD works with are enthusiastic about receiving interns in their homes and will treat you like a member of the family. They like to include you in many activities such as cooking, birthday parties, weddings, and occasionally travel. They are concerned with your health and safety and will provide you with lots of advice and recommendations for what to/not to eat and where to/not to go. Be prepared for a fun, yet challenging, experience full of Bolivian *cariño*!



### homestay FAQ

#### **What will my host family provide?**

Your family is required to provide you with a private room, three meals a day, purified water and weekly hand or machine-washing of your clothes. Toiletries and a towel are not provided; you must bring your own.

#### **What are the living accommodations like?**

Living accommodations range depending on each host family's specific situation and the area where they live, but most are comfortable by U.S. standards. Families tend to be middle class, and family members are usually professionals or stay-at-home mothers.

Water is most often heated electrically in Bolivia as it passes through the showerhead. This results in variable water pressure and temperature – usually, water becomes hotter as less is let out of the showerhead. Never touch the showerhead or wires attached to the showerhead while in the shower, and be very cautious if you have to touch the lever to turn on the electricity in order to avoid being shocked.

Most neighborhoods are fairly quiet at night, although those concerned about barking dogs and occasional amplified house parties may want to bring earplugs.



#### **How are families structured in Bolivia?**

Bolivian households may consist of a nuclear family, a single-mother household, a retired couple, or multiple generations. It is common for children to live with their parents until they are married, and sometimes afterwards as well, so parents, grown children, and grandchildren may live in the same home. Children in Bolivia, like children anywhere, can be both adorable and annoying, but try to maintain your patience with them in order to integrate smoothly into the household. Sometimes young children will be afraid of you for the first few weeks because you are a stranger and you look and act differently than the people they're used to. Please don't take this personally - be patient and they'll warm up to you with time.

Some Bolivian families also employ a housekeeper, called an *empleada*. Common duties include cooking, washing laundry and general cleaning. An *empleada's* hours and relationship to the family vary -- *empleadas* may come once a week, every day, or work full-time and live in the house. Likewise, some *empleadas* may simply maintain a business relationship with the family, while others become more like adopted family members. These sorts of arrangements are much more common in Bolivia than in the United States.

### **Do I need to help out with chores?**

We ask families to treat you as another member of their family and we ask that you behave correspondingly. This means you will pick up after yourself, keep your area neat, and help out where appropriate. Some families may initially treat you as a guest, but offering to partake in activities like cooking and cleaning will help you to further integrate.



### **Is it safe to bring and store valuables at my host family's house?**

There is no need to bring many valuables. ***We require that you keep items of value locked in your luggage at all times.*** This is extremely important because friends and relatives are often in and out of the house. In the past, there have been incidents when an intern thought something was stolen only to find that s/he had misplaced it. This kind of "scandal" is hard on the host family who take great care to protect you and your things. If something unusual of this nature does happen, please speak with your host mother and/or the FSD Site Team immediately.



### **What are standard meal times?**

Meal times are a morning breakfast, lunch usually at 1 p.m., and dinner sometime between 6-9 p.m. Breakfast usually consists of bread with fresh cheese, butter or jam and coffee or tea. Lunch is the biggest meal of the day for which everyone returns home, and usually consists of a soup, a meat dish with rice and potatoes and fresh juice. Some families cook a smaller dinner in the evening, while others simply have a snack or bread with coffee or tea.

### **How should I tell my family that I'd like less food, or different kinds of food?**

Don't be shy about asking your family for particular foods or for the amount of food you want to eat. You should tell your family what you do and do not like to eat – ideally in your first week, when it's easiest to broach the subject. Vegetarian food is always available, but in order to avoid getting lots of eggs, it's important to explain your concept of vegetarianism to your family.

### **How much time should I spend with my host family? What should we talk about?**

One of the most rewarding, challenging, and meaningful experiences during your time in Bolivia is likely to be the time you spend living with your host family. You will learn a great deal about Bolivia through the people who live there, so cultivate a habit of listening and observing, rather than merely hearing and seeing.

Ask questions and share your perspective. Be sensitive to the feelings of others and embrace the different viewpoints, lifestyles, experiences and company your family provides. Host families are eager to get to know you and learn about your American life so be ready to talk about your interests, culture, family and plans. We encourage you to share pictures and stories from your life at home.



### **How often should I check in with my family?**

You are entrusted in your host family's care, and just like your own family, they will worry about you if you don't check in. Please advise your family in advance if you do not plan to be home for a meal. Likewise, be sure to notify your family in advance of any weekend excursions you take other than those in the scheduled program.

**Can I have visitors come over to the house?**

Please advise your family before you invite anyone to the house, especially someone of the opposite sex. Overnight guests are **NOT** appropriate and are unacceptable during the program. Protect your family's safety and privacy. Do not give out their home number. Remember: Even though you will be treated as part of the family, you are still a guest in their home and must be respectful of their rules.

**Will I receive my own set of keys?**

You should receive your own set of keys to the house so that you are free to come and go as needed.

**How do people spend their free time?**

Families in Cochabamba enjoy chatting with family and friends at the dining room table and other common areas for long hours. Extended family birthday parties and celebrations may be frequent, and some families may attend church or have religious traditions. Watching television, especially *telenovelas*, is another popular pastime. Bolivian youth have a nightlife similar to American youth – they often go to friends' houses, restaurants, bars, parties, movies or spend the evening at home with their family.

**Can I travel after dark?**

You should plan ahead, be cautious, and always know the areas you are traveling in at night. It is not advised to walk alone at night, especially in the dangerous areas of the city.

**Can I go out at night?**

Yes. If you do make plans to go out at night, please advise your family of your transportation, who will be accompanying you, your return time, and arrangements for getting home and into the house. Exercise good judgment: As anywhere, it is best to go out with family members, co-workers or friends that you meet. Simply being an American makes you more of a target for theft, harassment, etc.

**How should I handle requests for money?**

FSD program fees subsidize all of your room and board expenses so there is no need for you to discuss money with your family. They should not ask you to borrow money and if this happens, tell them it is against your program rules to lend money. If children ask for money, gently remind them that it is against the rules, and let your Site Team know about the incident.

**What types of gifts are appropriate to bring for my host family?**

We suggest that you bring small and modest gifts for your host family as a token of goodwill and gratitude for their hospitality. Ideas: souvenirs of your hometown or state (photo calendars/books, university apparel, etc.), chocolates/candies, inexpensive jewelry, or school supplies for the children, etc. It is possible to purchase small gifts in Bolivia too, but regional gifts are special. Use your imagination!

# race, sexuality, and gender

How you interact with others (and they with you) will initially have a lot to do with preconceptions. You'll feel more comfortable once the inevitable "getting to know you" period is over, but keep some cultural norms in mind.

## **Race and Ethnicity**

In Bolivia, you may not encounter the same level and/or kind of awareness and sensitivity surrounding race relations and conceptualizations of heritage as you may be accustomed to finding in the U.S. If you have features associated with an Asian heritage, kids and adults may shout out, call or greet you as "Chino/a" or "Japones/a." If you have dark skin or features associated with an African heritage, people may refer to you as "Negro/a," or "Moreno/a." If you have fair skin, people may refer to you as "Gringo/a" or "Yankí". If you have features associated with a Middle Eastern heritage, you may be referred to as "Arabe". If you have features associated with an Indian or South Asian heritage, you may be referred to as "Hindu." In most cases, these names are not necessarily derogatory terms; many people use them simply because your skin color or features are unusual or intriguing within that context. Besides Bolivians using generalizations to refer to the appearance of foreign looking persons, they also refer to their Bolivian brothers and sisters with these racial "nicknames" if they have the look of what they think looks like an Asian, Middle Eastern, North American, etc.

In addition to "nicknames" for foreign looking people, there is also a strong language used for referring to Bolivians from different regions, from different classes and with different color skin. They refer to indigenous Bolivian women that still wear their traditional clothes as "cholitas" and indigenous looking men "campesinos." People from the Bolivian *oriente* or tropical regions that have fairer skin are called "cambas" and anyone else with darker skin is called "colla." Unfortunately, because of the class/racial tension in Bolivia, these last two terms are used derogatorily more often than not. However, all the aforementioned terms are used in regular conversation and you shouldn't be offended when hearing them, but should always be aware of the context that they are used in.

## **Sexuality**

Sexual orientation or preference is not a topic that is openly discussed in Bolivia. Please realize that any affiliation or experiences you have at home (especially in the LGBT community) may not be regarded with the same understanding or sensitivity in Bolivia. Please do your best to take this into consideration when discussing such issues with your host family or other members of the community.

## **Gender**

If you are a woman, expect to get a lot of unwanted attention. Men will whistle and talk to you in the street. Do not be surprised if men often try to start conversations with you on the street, on the bus, waiting in line, or shopping. Use your common sense. The best thing to do is to ignore them. Do not give out your phone number to people you don't know. You can explain that you are living in someone else's house and are not allowed to receive calls or visitors.

# common cultural practices and beliefs

## **How do people in Bolivia view time and/or punctuality?**

The concept of time is relatively flexible in Bolivia, and somewhat unpredictable. For example, everyone at your workplace might show up a half-hour late one day, or your bus to Sucre might be delayed 45 minutes. But don't count on this as a rule, because the next time you travel the bus will probably leave right when it's supposed to. Your best bet is to be on time and be prepared to have as much patience as possible when your surroundings aren't working on the same schedule.

## **Do people in Bolivia have different beliefs about privacy?**

While your physical privacy will be respected, you might be asked personal questions or find others more comfortable getting involved in your "personal" business than what you're used to. Likewise, be prepared for lots of advice on the right and wrong way to do things!

## **What are some common greeting gestures in Bolivia?**

Formalities are important in Bolivia, and it is customary to greet each and every person in a room when you enter. Between women as well as between women and men, this may be a kiss on the cheek, sometimes in combination with a handshake. On special occasions (for example, on birthdays) or in close relationships, a greeting might be a kiss on the cheek, followed by a hug, and finished with another kiss on the cheek. Greetings between men consist of a handshake, or in closer relationships, a handshake combined with a firm pat on the upper arm. Again, don't be surprised if people greet you or refer to you with characteristics like *gringo*, *gordito*, etc. – these terms, while possibly offensive in their English translations, are meant to be affectionate in Spanish.

When asking someone for information, or entering in rooms in formal situations, it is important to use the appropriate greeting – *buenos días* in the morning, *buenas tardes* in the afternoon, and *buenas noches* in the evening.

## **How are children treated in Bolivia? Is it common for children to be reprimanded physically at home or at school?**

Children are expected to unquestioningly respect their elders and authority in Bolivia. Expect parents to be strict with children when they disobey and to hear lots of threats about the *chicote* (whip). Usually this is just talk, but it is not taboo to physically reprimand children and may occur in certain households. It is neither common nor acceptable for children to be physically reprimanded at schools.

## **How are animals treated in Bolivia? Do people keep pets?**

Many families keep pets, especially dogs, in Bolivia – in almost all cases, they are kept outside and don't receive overwhelming care and attention. Many are considered a sort of house guard.



## **How do people in Bolivia socialize and how important is it?**

The most important element of socializing in Bolivia is simply talking, telling stories and listening to others, usually over food or drink. Games like *loba* (cards) and *cacho* (similar to Yahtzee) are also common in social settings. In bigger celebrations, be prepared for an amplified sound system, dancing to national music, and alcohol. There may be extreme pressure to eat and especially drink in these social settings, and you will find it hard to say no. Respect your limits and be firm when you don't want to consume anymore, but prepared for lots of protest on the part of the person treating you to food or drink!

## **What place does religion have in Bolivia?**

Approximately 95% of Bolivians will claim Catholic faith, but there are varying degrees of practice. Religious holidays play an important role in the country, and some families may attend church or special masses on the birthdays or anniversaries of the death of relatives who have passed away. You will probably be asked about your religious affiliation.

## in the workplace...

### What is a typical work day in Bolivia?



A typical work day (subject to variation depending on the field of work) is 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and 2:30-6:00 p.m., with a long lunch break. A common alternative is called *horario continuo* in which one works with a shorter break straight through 4 p.m. This is most common in public institutions such as government offices and banks, so that people can conduct business during their lunch hour.

### How is personal initiative viewed? Is it appropriate to voice my opinions?

Personal initiative is valuable in NGO work and is viewed positively in the organizations with which FSD works in Bolivia. However, at times you may have difficulties finding an audience for your unique ideas and will have to be persistent and well planned in order to effectively communicate them. It is important to above all observe and learn in your first weeks with your organization, before voicing strong opinions.

### What is the appropriate way to address colleagues and supervisors in Bolivia?

How you address colleagues and supervisors is highly dependent on the workplace and the individual. For example, some professionals prefer to be addressed with their title, such as *ingeniero* (used with engineers and technicians) or *licenciado* (referring to someone who has a college degree), while others might prefer to put these formalities aside. The best bet is to start out being very observant of your office dynamic and the relationships between coworkers, erring on the side of *usted* and feeling out the situation as you go along.



### What are common practices for socializing with colleagues?

The best way to socialize with colleagues is to talk with them (and learn from them) in relaxed moments in the workplace, take breaks with them over coffee or go out for drinks after work. Participate in as many meetings, workplace activities and outside get-togethers as possible to establish rapport with your coworkers.



# personal account: an intern's reflection on Bolivia

## Sarah Connette, Intern

For the past 5 weeks I have been working at Centro Integral Warmi, a small non-profit community center in a neighborhood on the outskirts of Cochabamba, Bolivia. In addition to running a day-care center and a library, Warmi operates a soap factory that employs ten mothers in the community. The women take turns cooking, taking care of the kids, and working in the Centro Productivo. In the Centro Productivo, I had the chance to work with them as they ripped animal fat to be cooked in a giant, fairytale pot, broke hard casts of soap into smaller pieces, and dumped the pieces into two machines that churned out soap in thick, spaghetti-like strings. The women work hard but enjoy it as they chat and joke with each other. As one woman said, "Como hermanas trabajamos," or "We work like sisters." The stories of these women are both rich and moving, and I felt like the customers should know more about what buying Warmi soap means to these women.



I had the opportunity to interview the 5 women who have been here for a long time, some since the organization began in 1982. I asked some questions about their families, their personal stories, and what they like about the work and about Warmi, but mostly I just let the conversations flow. Hunched over a little Sony tape recorder in the library filled with chattering kids, I listened to the recorded conversations and typed up the testimonies. With these testimonies I will help create a brochure exclusively about the women and the story of the Centro Productivo to be included when the soap is sold. The power of a story is transformative, and ultimately, the most sustainable development is one that transforms lives through the heart.

Although the salaries are fairly minimal, the women continue to work here because of their kids. They want their kids to eat and grow up in an environment that fosters educational and personal growth. One thing I heard over and over again was, "Por mis wawas he entrado," or "I came because of my kids." Before Warmi, many of these women sold meat, worked in agricultural fields, or washed clothes. Warmi has been like a foundation for them, a second home, where they know their kids are safe, nearby, and receiving physical, emotional, and intellectual nourishment. They have become active community members. I hope that, with the creation of this brochure about their stories, Warmi can sell more soap to a wider range of people who appreciate and are inspired by the empowerment stories of these women. These señoras exemplify what the power and solidarity of "warmi," which means "women" in Quechua, can accomplish together.



# language guide

## Local Language Variations

Bolivians generally speak Spanish slowly and clearly when compared to other South American Spanish speaking countries. However, their vocabulary may be different from that which most are accustomed to. Upon arrival, the FSD site team will provide you with common slang, important phrases and the most drastic vocabulary changes that an intern might encounter.

Some Bolivians, especially in rural regions, tend to pronounce the sound 'rr' as 'ja'. For example *Roberto* would be pronounced 'jo-ber-to' or *perro* would be pronounced 'pejo'. In addition, the word *vos* is used in place of *tu*; however in Bolivia they don't conjugate the verb into the *vos* form as they do in most South American countries. An example is the following, "¿Cómo estás vos?" or "¿Y vos, qué tienes?"

Quechua is also a dominant language in the Cochabamba region. In the city, Spanish or *castellano* is the overriding language, but most people understand and/or can communicate in Quechua as well. When walking in the streets it is normal to hear as much Quechua spoken as Spanish. However, when in the rural areas, Quechua is the principal language; most native Quechua speakers either speak fluently or have a basic understanding of Spanish, so it usually isn't that big of a problem. Quechua sounds nothing like Spanish, nor does it have a similar grammatical structure, so those interested in taking Quechua courses are encouraged to do so. The FSD site team can assist you in finding a class.

## Language at work

Familiarize yourself with the vocabulary you'll need at work. Bringing a dictionary with you is vital, but a specific list that addresses terms specific to your organization (health, microfinance, education, etc.) can help a lot.

To review vocabulary, you can Google the relevant words in Spanish (*salud, microfinanzas, educación, desarrollo sostenible*, etc.).

To address adults in general, use the prefix *Don* or *Doña* (Sr. and Sra. are not used as prefixes here).

## Language Resources

- **Practice:** Speaking a language is the best way to learn, so don't be afraid to practice your Spanish with as many people as possible. Your best resource in learning the local language will be your host family and co-workers at your host organization. Depending on your language ability, this may be extremely frustrating at times. Relax and remember that the key to learning (or improving your skills in) a language is the ability to laugh at yourself.
- **Dictionaries and Phrase Books:** These can be expensive and difficult to find once you are in-country, so you might want to purchase one before you leave. Oxford and Collins produce good pocket dictionaries.
- **On-line:** [www.google.com.bo](http://www.google.com.bo) is the **Bolivia** edition of Google.
- The following **websites** also have good language assistance resources:  
Spanish: <http://babel.uoregon.edu/yamada/guides/spanish.html> and <http://wordreference.com>  
Quechua: <http://babel.uoregon.edu/yamada/guides/quechua.html>
- **Tutoring:** If you are interested in tutoring upon arrival, let your Site Team know. They will help you set up sessions with a tutor, at your own expense. Sessions usually cost US \$7/hour.

## film guide

Filmmaking is not a significant industry in Bolivia and most of the movies in theaters come straight from Hollywood – major Bolivian films make appearances a few times a year, at best. Because of this, it's most likely not the easiest feat to come across Bolivian cinema internationally, although this might change with the recent success of *¿Quién mató a la llamita blanca?* and *American Visa*. Following are some suggestions for films not only made by Bolivians, but also featuring Bolivian subject matter:

### Bolivian film:

- *Los Hermanos Cartagena* (1984) – An approachable film for Bolivian history, which starts with the 1952 revolution and follows the lives of two brothers up to the 1980s.
- *Bolivia* (2001) – In fact, this movie doesn't take place in Bolivia, but rather follows Bolivian illegal immigrants in Argentina. The story tracks the loneliness of living apart from one's family and the difficulties of dealing with immigration officials.
- *American Visa* (2005) – An award-winning movie about a Bolivian professor's unsuccessful quest for an American visa and the chain of events this provokes.
- *¿Quién mato a la llamita blanca?* (2006) – The *llamita blanca* "destroys the stereotypical image of the abused, victimized, desolate Latin American, irreverently presenting the first ever story with black humor and indigenous superheroes." So states the official website's synopsis of this utterly unique and highly entertaining movie, which is invaluable for learning about Bolivia's internal dynamic as well as its relationship with the United States. The movie is Bolivia laughing at itself, mocking public figures and stereotypes, and a satire of the U.S. role in the drug war. Since the story is based on a road trip, you'll also see shots from many of Bolivia's important regions and cities, including Cochabamba.
- *I am Bolivia* (2006) – Follows a group of friends in Santa Cruz and their relationship to a kidnapped eight-year old girl named Bolivia. The film attempts many metaphors for Bolivia and the issues the country faces.
- *Zona Sur* (2009) – A new film by Juan Carlos Valdivia (*American Visa*, 2005) that tells the story of a family from an upper class neighborhood in La Paz during a time of intense social change in Bolivia.

Also:

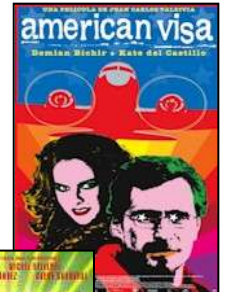
- *La nación clandestina* (1989)
- *Para recibir el canto de los pájaros* (1995)
- *El día que murió el silencio* (1998)

### Documentaries on Bolivia:

- *The Devil's Miner* (2005) – Follows two teenage brothers working in Potosí's silver mines.
- *Our Brand is Crisis* (2005) - A documentary on U.S. political and marketing tactics used in Goni's campaign for president of Bolivia.

### Films featuring Bolivia:

- *La Muerte del Che Guevara* (1986) – There's certainly no dearth of film inspired by Che, and Bolivia, the location of his martyrdom, factors into much of it. This one traces his last days and death in Bolivia, with scenes filmed in the country.
- *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969) – Not the most accurate representation of Bolivia and Bolivians, but does contain the famous line, "The next time I say we go someplace like Bolivia, let's go someplace like Bolivia!" It's a liberal, and at moments strange, representation of Butch and Sundance's last days in the Bolivian southwest.



# recommended reading

## Travel and Culture

- *Lonely Planet Guide* — An excellent travel guide book on Bolivia.
- *Culture Shock! Bolivia*, by Mark Cramer — This guide series seeks to provide insight and sensitivity to world travelers on the customs and societies of the locales they visit.
- *The Rough Guide to Bolivia*, by James Read — An innovative guide to the varied customs, etiquette, norms, and regions of Bolivia.

## News and Current Events

- [www.losttiempos.com](http://www.losttiempos.com)  
Local Cochabamba online newspaper
- [www.opinion.com.bo](http://www.opinion.com.bo)  
National Bolivian newspaper
- [www.erbol.com.bo](http://www.erbol.com.bo)  
Summary of Bolivian newspapers
- [www.bolpress.com](http://www.bolpress.com)  
Bolivian current events and news analysis
- [www.upsidedownworld.com](http://www.upsidedownworld.com)  
An English written alternative news and a more leftist resource that offers articles on Latin American current events and News Analysis
- [www.democracyctr.org](http://www.democracyctr.org)  
The Democracy Center is an NGO who's mission is "to work globally to advance human rights through a unique combination of investigation and reporting, training citizens in the art of public advocacy, and organizing international citizen campaigns." The Democracy Center has an office in Cochabamba and their director, Jim Shultz, offers a blog that intelligently critiques the current ongoing events in Cochabamba, as well as in Bolivia.
- [www.ain-bolivia.org](http://www.ain-bolivia.org)  
The Andean Information Network is an NGO that currently focuses on examining the effects of the U.S. and international War on Drugs. AIN's overarching goals are to change the U.S. anti-drug policy in the Andean region by seeking to replace them with policies that address the underlying economic, social, political, and cultural needs of the region. Their website offers articles that do in-depth analyses of current Bolivian social and political issues.

## Development and Economics

- *Llamas, Weavings, and Organic Chocolate: Multicultural Grassroots Development in the Andes and the Amazon of Bolivia*, by Kevin Healy  
An excellent introduction to the world of grassroots development projects in Bolivia. Each chapter describes a different development project in various fields and various parts of Bolivia.
- *Coca, Cocaine, and the Bolivian Reality*, by Madeline Barbara Leons (Editor), Harry Sanabria (Editor)  
This series of essays explores coca trade, and its effect on agriculture and society. Coca takes its place within the historical context of a country that has relied on products for export for economic survival, and the exploitation that has accompanied this economic status.

- *Marching Powder*, by Rusty Young  
A fictional account of the author's experience in a Bolivian Prison. This book gives the reader a better idea of the penitentiary and judicial system in Bolivia, one very different from that of the United States.
- *Development of Freedom*, by Amartya Sen  
The 1998 Economic Science Nobel Prize winner's ground breaking book that places individual freedom at the center of a comprehensive analysis of today's global economy.
- *The Shock Doctrine*, by Naomi Klein  
Offers a critique on modern capitalism based on an analysis of the wealth accumulated through the exploitation of conflicts and disasters throughout the developing world. A widely acclaimed and carefully researched book.

## History and Politics

- *Cochabamba, 1550-1900: Colonialism and Agrarian Transformation in Bolivia*, by Brooke Larson, William Roseberry
- *Simon Bolivar: South American Liberator (Hispanic Biographies)*, by David Goodnough  
This biography describes Bolivar's struggle to liberate much of Latin America (Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, and Bolivia) from Spanish colonial rule in the early 19th century.
- *The Bolivian Diary of Ernesto Che Guevara*, by Ernesto Che Guevara, Mary-Alice Waters (editor), Michael Taber (translator)  
This book holds the journal entries of the beloved leftist guerilla Che Guevara. When killed in Bolivia, his journal was found and entries were later compiled into this edition.
- *The Price of Fire: Resources Wars and Social Movements in Bolivia*, by Benjamin Dangl  
This book gives a blow-by-blow account of recent social movements and their battles to fight neo-liberal economic policies; it analyzes what has caused these battles, while also contextualizing them regionally and historically. From the first moments of Spanish colonization to today's headlines, it traces the story of a small nation whose natural resources helped fund the rise of capitalism and that has spent the subsequent four centuries suffering the consequences.
- *Impasse Bolivia*, by Farthing and Kohl  
This book explores the tensions between markets, democracy, neo-liberalism, state restructuring and citizenship. In this regard, the balance of citizen rights has been shifted away from providing citizens with social rights to privileging the property rights of private, mostly transnational, firms. Impasse Bolivia throws light on the reasons and processes behind the rising opposition in country after country in Latin America to the currently fashionable, internationally prescribed economic development strategy of neo-liberalism.
- *Dignity and Defiance: Stories from Bolivia's Challenge to Globalization*, edited by Jim Shultz and Melissa Crane Draper.  
Published in 2009 by the Democracy Center in Cochabamba, this book provides a good summary of recent social and political movements in Bolivia.
- *Cochabamba! Water War in Bolivia*, by Oscar Olivera  
Provides a good account of the Water conflict in Cochabamba in 2001 that resulted in the reversal of the privatization of water resources, and precipitated the rise of Evo Morales to power.

## Religion and Ethnic Conflict

- *Bolivia: The Evolution of a Multi-Ethnic Society*, by Herbert Klein  
This detailed history of Bolivia spans the centuries from conquest and colonization to the modern day. This historical resource seeks to shed light on the economic, social, political, and cultural evolution of Bolivia, and is key to understanding current events such as the illegal economy that sparked the U.S.'s coca

eradication program, and other issues of modern significance.

- *Bolivia, a Land Divided*, by Harold Osborne
- *Fire from the Andes: Short Fiction, by Women from Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru*, edited by Susan E. Benner, Kathy S. Leonard

This anthology provides an opportunity for English-speaking audiences to read previously untranslated fiction by women from Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru. Much of this work is inspired by an awareness of social injustice—particularly for women, indigenous groups, and other marginalized members of society and by a desire to transcend that injustice through personal revelation. Most of the stories focus on women's inner lives and their struggles to make sense of experience.