

South America

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO



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GENERAL INFORMATION

This tour visits: Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil

Languages spoken: Spanish, Portuguese

Religion: Catholic

Time Zones: Peru: GMT-5

Bolivia: GMT-4

Argentina & Brazil: GMT-3

ACCOMMODATION

Hotels on our tours are generally of a 3* to 4* international standard and feature the familiar comforts of Western establishments including heating, air-conditioning, televisions and private bathrooms. At each hotel, your National Escort will try to organise the rooming arrangements to suit everyone's requirements. If you are travelling as a couple please note that we cannot guarantee the availability of double beds.

TRANSPORT

Road: Vehicles are left hand drive. Most roads in the countries visited are modern and well-maintained, but please be aware that this may not be the case in Bolivia. Please note that seatbelts are compulsory by law in all countries.

Plane: Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines.

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

You may be offered extra sightseeing that is not included on the itinerary. Participation in this is at the discretion of the passenger and is not part of your tour; therefore any additional costs will need to be paid directly to the guide.

FOOD AND DRINK

The food in South America in general is a combination of colonial (Spanish or Portuguese) influences and that of the indigenous cultures. Local foods, when they are available, also play a big part in the dishes of each country.

In Peru, the traditional food staples are corn, potatoes, grains such as quinoa and legumes, whilst the Spanish brought rice, wheat and meats such as beef, pork and chicken to Peru. Lima is the culinary capital of South America, so you can expect some delicious food there, the best known of which is ceviche, whereas up in the highlands, guinea pig is a speciality dish.

Similarly, in Bolivia corn, potatoes and beans are at the centre of the traditional diet, and are combined with the same Spanish brought ingredients. Although Bolivia is landlocked and has quite harsh terrains, the food options are still wonderfully varied with fish from the Amazon and Lake Titicaca and llama meat in the Highlands.

Argentina is well-known for its delicious and plentiful steak,

but also has a lot of Mediterranean influence in its cuisine. The 'asado', a feast of barbecued meats, is the national dish served with a variety of salads and vegetables, whilst pasta and pizza are also very popular. Oh and there is the wine of course!

Brazil's food is influenced not only by Europe and indigenous cultures but by Africa as well and varies a lot by region. There is a wealth of root vegetables and tropical fruits. Feijoada is considered the national dish – this consists of black beans and beef or pork products served with rice.

Delicious snack foods such as empanadas (pasty), humitas (a steamed corn snack) and paes de queijo (cheese buns) are available throughout the region and are an excellent light bite. There is also plenty of international food options available in all countries visited.

SPECIAL DIETARY REQUIREMENTS

If you are on a restricted diet, it is a good idea to reiterate this with your guide upon arrival.

Vegetarians & Food Allergies – In order to ensure that you are properly catered for at each meal, please make sure that you have alerted Wendy Wu Tours to your preferences/requirements so that arrangements can be pre-arranged for you. Unfortunately we can give no guarantee that special requirements can always be met. We recommend you bring snacks/supplements you can eat to ensure you will always have something on hand if your diet, allergy or preference cannot be catered for. Patience, understanding and personal involvement with your National Escort/Guide will go a long way to ensuring that your dietary requirements are met.

WEATHER

Peru – Winter (May to September) is dry whilst summer (December to March) brings heavy showers. Temperatures remain fairly constant throughout the year ranging from 20-27° on the coast and 19-20° up in the Highlands.

Bolivia – April to October is Bolivia's winter but is generally dry and sunny – the sky at this time is often a dazzling blue although temperatures can be quite low, especially at the higher altitudes. From November to March it is both summer and the rainy season with milder temperatures and humidity in the lowlands.

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Argentina – Generally temperate year-round, Argentina's weather varies hugely due to its size and geography. The northern regions are tropical with hot temperatures, whilst the Central Pampas are moderate. January is the hottest month whilst June and July are the coldest.

Brazil – The summer months in Rio are December to March, when the weather is hot, humid and wet with temperatures of around 30°. The winter months are June to September when it is still warm, around 24°, but there is less rain and lower humidity.

VISAS AND IMMIGRATION

Entry visas for Australian passport holders are only required for Brazil. The Brazil visa IS **NOT** included in the costs for this tour and must be obtained by the passenger.

Australian passport holders also must pay a required reciprocity fee for entry into Argentina prior to departure. Failure to provide the proper documentation and proof of this payment upon arrival will result in a denial of entry into the country. This payment must be organised by the passenger prior to departure.

WHAT TO WEAR

The dress code throughout South America is casual and comfortable. South American people tend to take a greater pride in their appearance than we do in Europe and how you are treated may be reflected in how you present yourself.

A collared shirt, a dressier top and proper shoes, for example, might be a good idea for eating in a restaurant or visiting a bar. Due to the variation of altitudes and climates, layers are a good idea, and a decent rain jacket. Good, sturdy boots for walking would also be very handy.

When visiting churches or other places of worship, it is suggested that all group members wear long trousers and a collared shirt/blouse with sleeves as a sign of respect.

MONEY

Each country that this tour visits has its own currency but the US dollar is also widely accepted – we would recommend a mixture of local currencies and dollars. Paying in local currency, though, tends to be better value for money. Dollars are by far the most easily exchanged currency. The exchange rates at the time of printing (8 March 2017) are:

Peruvian Sol

\$1AUD = 2.49
\$1USD = 3.28

Bolivian Boliviano

\$1AUD = 5.27
\$1USD = 6.94

Argentinian Peso

\$1AUD = 11.80
\$1USD = 15.56

Brazilian Real

\$1AUD = 2.37
\$1USD = 3.12

Cash – try and keep some small notes and coins on you, as on street stalls and in small shops they may not have the change to break up a high denomination note. If you decide to use dollars in Peru and Bolivia in particular, make sure they are in a good state (not ripped etc) or they will not be accepted.

ATMs: ATMs are common across South America – we would recommend using an ATM inside a bank where possible. In Argentina, the amount of cash you can withdraw from an ATM at a time is limited.

Credit and Debit Cards: Most major credit cards are widely accepted across the continent, please bear in mind the charges of your provider. Debit cards are also widely accepted but may have a limit to the amount of cash you can withdraw – consult your bank about this before travelling.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Some attractions and sites may require you to pay a photography fee or may not allow you to take photographs at all – check with your National Escort if in doubt. It is forbidden to take photos of government buildings. You should always ask permission before taking anyone's photograph and respect their decision if they say no. You may also find that some people will expect a tip for having their photo taken. If so, a small coin will be sufficient.

SHOPPING

In both Peru and Bolivia, you will have plenty of opportunity to pick up a great range of items made from sheep and alpaca wool, such as jumpers, hats, gloves, scarves and socks – these make great presents or souvenirs. You'll also find plenty of other textiles, art and handicrafts, created by the indigenous people of the Andean region – your visit to a market in the Sacred Valley will be the perfect time to pick up these products. Buenos Aires is a great city for shopping in general but it is wine and mate tea plus associated paraphernalia that make good souvenirs here. In Brazil, unique items to buy include Cachaça, a spirit made of sugarcane, products made of local fruits and rainforest nuts and also Brazilian coffee. In both Argentina and Brazil, leather goods are also good value and high quality.

ELECTRICITY

Peru – 220 volts and 60 hertz, using a two-pronged, round-pin plug.

Bolivia – 220/230 volts and 50 hertz using with a two-pronged, round pin-plug or a two-pronged, flat-pin plug.

Argentina - 220/240 volts and 50 hertz using with a two-pronged, round pin-plug or a three-pronged, flat-pin plug.

Brazil - 220 volts and 60 hertz, using a two-pronged, round-pin plug or a three-pronged, round-pin plug.

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PHARMACEUTICAL GOODS

It is recommended that you take any pharmaceutical products that you may require on your tour. This could include items such as sleeping pills, tablets to relieve stomach upsets, headaches, motion sickness and any other medication that you usually take, though you will find these products available in pharmacies throughout the trip. For any prescribed medication we strongly recommend that you have a letter from your doctor.

ALTITUDE

On this tour you will be spending several nights at altitude – in Cusco at 3,399 metres, in Puno at 3,830 metres, and in La Paz at 3,500 metres. You will also stop briefly at La Raya Pass between Cusco and Puno, which is 4,335 metres. At these sort of altitudes, Altitude Sickness is a risk, and we have adapted the itinerary to make sure that your time at these heights is as relaxed and easy as possible. There are no specific factors, such as age or fitness, that can cause you to suffer from Altitude Sickness but your National Escort will be extremely well-trained in dealing with its effects – taking it easy and taking some time to acclimatise are the best ways to prevent and combat it. Serious cases, meaning that you have to descend immediately, are rare.

LUGGAGE & INCIDENTAL ITEMS

Passengers are limited to one suitcase weighing no more than 23kg. You may also carry a cabin bag of approximately 5kg. Please ensure your luggage is properly locked at all times. You are also advised not to travel with a Samsung Galaxy Note 7 device in either hand baggage or checked-in baggage. Many airlines will not permit you to carry them at all, others will allow them in hand baggage only.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

For more information on safety and security in the countries on this trip, please visit www.smarttraveller.gov.au.

Petty crime and street crime are common throughout South America so try to be aware of your belongings at all times, particularly in crowded places and in cafes/restaurants etc. Use

your common sense - it is best to not display expensive gadgets, jewellery and money as you are walking around. We would strongly advise not to walk around your own at night and to leave your passport and valuables in a safe place at all times. You should also be aware of your surroundings if you use an ATM – it is recommended that you use a machine inside the bank where possible. Carry a form of ID around with you, be it your driving licence or a photocopy of your passport.

INSURANCE AND HEALTH

Comprehensive Travel Insurance is highly recommended. Please ensure you have arranged the appropriate cover for your holiday, as overseas medical costs are expensive. We strongly advise you consult your doctor for advice on appropriate vaccinations. If you are taking out travel insurance with your credit card company, you need to investigate the policy's inclusions and conditions fully. You should receive a policy number, an international access phone number to contact them in an emergency and a copy of full conditions.

TOILETS

In all of your hotels you can expect to find toilets that are of a western standard and that are western style. We would recommend carrying toilet paper in your day pack if you need to visit more basic facilities whilst you are out on tour.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Phone calls -To call the UK the international access code is 0061, followed by the local area code (omitting the first 0) then the number.

Mobile phones – If you have a 3G or 4G smart mobile phone you should have no issues in continuing contact with your loved ones at home with data roaming, though do bear in mind that this can be expensive.

Post – In Peru, the post service is run by Serpost, and you can send your post from one of their offices. A postcard will cost about 8 to 10 soles.

In Bolivia, look for 'Ecobol' and that will be the post office! To send a postcard here is about 10 Bolivianos.

In Argentina, Correo Argentino is the government postal service – it has a reputation for being unreliable. Here it costs

about 10 pesos to send a postcard.

In Brazil, the post office is called 'correio' – look for the bright yellow post boxes. A foreign postage stamp is about 2 reals. **Internet** – Wi-Fi Internet access is available in your hotels in the major cities, which you can use with any mobile devices with Wi-Fi capabilities with. Most hotels also have an internet enabled computer or two available for guests to use.

USEFUL PHRASES

Spanish

Hello	Hola
Good morning	Buenos dias
Good afternoon	Buenos tardes
Good night	Buenos noches
Please	Por favor
Thank you	Gracias
Where is the toilet?	Donde esta el bano?
Excuse me	Perdoname
How much does it cost?	Cuanto cuesta?
Do you speak English?	Habla ingles?
Goodbye	Adios

Portuguese

Hello	Ola
Good day	Bom dia
Good evening	Boa tarde
Good night	Boa noite
Please	Por favor
Thank you	Obrigado
Where is the toilet?	Onde fica o banheiro?
Excuse me	Perdoe-me
How much does it cost?	Quanto custa isso?
Do you speak English?	Voce fala ingles?
Goodbye	Adeus

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SUGGESTED READING

Peru -

'Last Days of the Incas' – Kim MacQuarrie

'Lost City of the Incas' – Hiram Bingham

Anything by author Mario Vargas Ilosa

Bolivia -

'The Fat Man from La Paz: Contemporary Fiction from Bolivia'

edited by Rosario Santos

'Marching Powder' – Rusty Young

Argentina -

Anything by author Jorge Luis Borges

'The Argentina Reader' edited by Gabriela Nouzeilles and Graciela Montaldo

'A Funny Dirty Little War' – Osvaldo Soriano

Brazil -

'A Death in Brazil' – Peter Robb

'City of God' – Paulo Lins

'Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon' – Jorge Amado

OUR GROUND OPERATOR

If, during your trip you are dissatisfied with any element of your arrangements please notify your National Escort or Local Guide who will endeavour to resolve the issue at the time.

Should the outcome not be satisfactory, please contact our ground operator partner, South American Tours:

South American Tours

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8th Floor, 22011-010 Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro

Tel: +55 21 3147 2599

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

Wendy Wu Tours Emergency Phone: 0061 4 3315 6179

South American Tours Emergency Phone:

(0055) 021 991836560

NATIONAL EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Peru

105 - Police

117 - Ambulance

116 - Fire

Bolivia

110 - Police

118 - Ambulance

119 – Fire

Argentina

101 - Police

107 - Ambulance

100 – Fire

Brazil

190 - Police

192 - Ambulance

1193 - Fire