



# Predeparture Program Guide

COCHABAMBA, BOLIVIA

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2017

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# FSD VALUES

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 as an FSD participant, you understand and remember these tenets throughout your time abroad, in order to make your program a meaningful experience for both you and the communities in which you serve.

## MISSION

FSD achieves community-driven goals through asset-based development and international exchange in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

## VISION

FSD envisions a world where all people have the opportunity and capacity to direct economic, social, and environmental resources toward sustainable outcomes that improve lives and communities.

## CORE VALUES

- **Start with Assets, Not Problems:** We take an asset-based approach to development work. We begin by listening to the priorities set by our community-based partners at our international program sites. We then identify and utilize existing assets and capacity to address those priorities.
- **Motivate Community Ownership:** We partner with leaders, organizations, and stakeholders committed to change, action, and social justice. We stress community ownership and participation before launching initiatives, especially in our volunteer programs.
- **Generate Enduring Results and Impact:** We ensure the outcomes of our support have long-lasting benefits for our partners. We think hard about how to participate appropriately and effectively in development, and on how to become redundant so that our initiatives outlast our involvement.
- **Focus On The Site Teams:** We are headquartered in California, but our International Site Teams direct our programs across Africa, Asia, and Latin America on the ground, 365 days a year. These teams build partnerships based on trust, respect, efficacy, and alignment with an asset-based approach.
- **Build Capacity:** We strengthen the skills, competencies, and abilities of the leaders of our community based partners and of our students and professional volunteers. We educate and train, facilitating the sharing of best practices across all of our stakeholders to support our partners' priorities.
- **Be A Bridge:** We relentlessly build a network of students, professionals, and passionate advocates for our community-based partners to access. We connect this network of assets and volunteers with the work of our partners through our international exchange and grantmaking programs.
- **Change Perspectives:** We share our experiences and learning about the complexities of development with friends, family, and colleagues. We promote cultural exchange and sensitivity, encouraging a reflective approach to navigating cross-cultural issues, confusions, and tensions.
- **Promote Reciprocity:** We operate on our founding principle that producing strong community outcomes must be the priority. We base all partnerships, strategies, and decisions on the Fair Trade Learning concept that we must be ethical and reciprocal in our planning, implementation, and outcomes.

# LETTER FROM FSD

Congratulations again on your acceptance to the Foundation for Sustainable Development's program! For many of you this experience will spark a lifelong interest in development. For others, it will be a chance to gain insights into 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 on your life.

Many challenges await you. It is likely that the most difficult obstacles you face will not be the ones that test your technical skills or knowledge. 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. Remember that culture, community, and language should guide your work as much as your own knowledge.

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, but 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; it contains information that is crucial to the success of your experience and our partnership.

Above all, you should feel comfortable contacting us at the US based headquarters if you need any additional support or have any questions.

Good luck!

# COCHABAMBA TEAM



**Mauricio Ramirez Parra** | Program Director

Mauricio has served as the Director of FSD’s Bolivia program since it was initiated in 2000. A native Bolivian, Mauricio has extensive experience with the international community. He has been involved with various agricultural and environmental projects and has served as the coordinator for Farmer to Farmer, financed by USAID since 1996, in Cochabamba. In this capacity he supported projects that provided agricultural producers with technical assistance in the areas of beekeeping, livestock, and the production of fruits and vegetables. He is currently the President of Partners of the Americas in Bolivia, an organization that incorporates volunteers from North Carolina and Bolivia. Together, volunteers address the areas of health, agriculture, art and culture, search and rescue, women’s issues, rehabilitation, and justice. Mauricio has experience working with volunteers since 1995.



**Devin Graves** | International Program Officer

Devin discovered the power of social change when he learned that he shared a birthday with Nelson Mandela. Studying about Mandela’s life gave him the determination to impact the world, and because of this desire, he pursued a Master’s degree in Intercultural Service, Leadership, and Management from the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont. As part of his studies, he focused on sustainable project design with an emphasis in monitoring and evaluation. Before joining FSD, he spent two years designing and implementing development projects among Mayan communities in both Mexico and Guatemala, and in the eastern districts of Uganda. Previous to living abroad, he worked in international education.

# FSD STAFF ROLES

**Program Director:** FSD's program directors are local experts in the field of community development. Their experience and strong community ties make them a great resource to support you in your in-country project work. The program director develops and maintains FSD's relationships with our host organizations and is heavily involved in the process from the time you apply to FSD to the end of your term of service.

**Program Coordinators:** Your program coordinator(s) provides ongoing support to you, FSD's host families and our partner organizations. During the application process, they advise the program director and San Francisco staff about your placement. Once you're in the field, they serve as a bridge to the local culture and language and as lifeline when culture shock inevitably sets in. They are also available to advise you as you develop your program workplan.

**Program Officer:** FSD's program officers coordinate the work done at FSD sites in different regions of the world. They manage program logistics and design, corporate and university partnerships, and programmatic issues. Program officers are also your U.S. based emergency contact.

## FSD Headquarters Contact Info

- Office Hours: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. PST
- General Inquiries: [info@fsd.org](mailto:info@fsd.org)
- Office Phone: 415-283-4873
- Emergency Phone: 415-828-8414

# SAFETY & SECURITY

The safety and security of our program participants and staff is our first priority. Our safety and security protocols meet international standards and have been developed over 20 years of operation, and from the practical experience of our staff. We have rigorous and conservative safety and security procedures, including triaged security measures for students (such as restricted travel, curfews, and buddy systems) should any emergent or potentially emergent event occur. Every site has an emergency evacuation plan (supported by our travel insurance partner) that identifies safe houses, on-call transportation, and provides a variety of options for moving participants out of unsafe areas via land and air routes.

For each site, we have identified physicians, health centers, and hospitals for routine and emergency care that meet standards of care for foreigners, including the locations of and contact for relevant embassies and consulates. These procedures are supported by duty officer training of our support staff in San Francisco who monitor an emergency call line 24/7. But the most critical components of our safety and security system are our local staff, who are also on call 24/7, and our network of community partners at each of our program sites. Our local staff have the best knowledge regarding the potential of local events to become critical, and they have a network of community members to turn to for safety information.

While working abroad, there is always a potential risk that emergencies may occur, and we have experience dealing with a variety of issues, from localized civil unrest and natural disasters to total evacuation of programs. The US office is in constant communication with our program sites through a variety of communications channels, including biweekly phone calls and reporting on each participant, and we also monitor international media for emerging events.

All of our program sites are in safe areas. However, similar to the US, certain common-sense safety measures must be taken. These will be reviewed extensively during orientation, when every participant receives a safety briefing. We emphasize that the most important ways to stay safe are to exercise good judgment, to have a strong network of local contacts, and to have an awareness of the potential for harm.

FSD will do its utmost to provide a safe environment and a responsive support system to you throughout your experience. To ensure a safe and successful experience for everyone involved, we depend upon our staff to serve as a barometer of the local political, social and economic climates, and to use that knowledge to maintain a safe and secure environment for FSD participants. We depend on our participants to act prudently and be receptive to instructions and suggestions regarding safety and security.



## **FSD 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 partner organizations provide us with a good barometer of the climate in relation to the safety of foreign volunteers.
- Inform you about safety and security in your host community through materials like this predeparture guide. 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 these situations should they arise.
- Send you an electronic proof of insurance card.
- Direct you to a preferred medical facility in the case of an emergency.
- Support you logistically and emotionally through any medical or emergency situation.
- Contact your emergency contacts in the case of a major emergency.

## **YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Learn about the history and current events of your host country and community.
- Secure all recommended vaccinations.
- Secure legal and visa requirements for your stay.
- Follow the directions of your site team and host family.
- Register with the US State Department or equivalent.
- Avoid volatile or risky situations. Travel with someone you know, and avoid being out alone after dark.
- Be aware of your surroundings. Walk purposefully and act as though you know where you are going.
- Notify your site team of any incidents of harassment, illness, accident, or any other serious event as soon as possible.
- Review your insurance coverage to determine whether you want to purchase an enhanced package. FSD program insurance ensures that adequate support is available to you in the case of a major emergency. There is a US \$250 deductible for which you are responsible. The illnesses and medical issues you are more likely to encounter may require medical consultations and prescriptions. Beyond taking all necessary precautions to prevent illness and accidents, please plan financially for these types of expenses. Hospitals and clinics may require payment up-front for services; please bring cash and/or a credit card (Visa or Mastercard) for emergency medical expenses and seek reimbursement directly from the insurance provider. FSD is not responsible for medical fees.



# HEALTH PREPARATIONS

As an FSD participant, it is your full responsibility to identify and take all necessary health precautions prior to, during, and following the program. Please start your health preparations early, as some vaccinations must be taken eight weeks or more before departure. Providing detailed medical advice is beyond the expertise of FSD staff so it is very important to consult the resources below as well as medical professionals or local travel health clinic.

## Topics to talk to your doctor or local health clinic about:

- The symptoms of the most common illnesses contracted by travelers, and the appropriate treatment
- Medicines and supplies for preventing and treating common illnesses and maladies (diarrhea, dehydration, sunburn, food poisoning, etc.)
- Yellow Fever and Typhoid
- Malaria, if participants plan to travel to at-risk areas (see [www.cdc.gov/travel-static/yellowbook/2016/map\\_3-19.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/travel-static/yellowbook/2016/map_3-19.pdf))
- Rabies
- Food and water-borne illnesses

## What happens if I get sick?

For serious illness that may occur during your program, there are public and private clinics and hospitals available in most areas. Cochabamba is home to several very good hospital facilities and well-trained, sensitive doctors are easily found. If you should become sick, please alert the FSD site team and your host family immediately and they will ensure that you receive appropriate medical care.

# HEALTH 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)

## Traveler's Health for Bolivia

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/bolivia.htm>

## Malaria Hotline

404-332-4555



# VISA INFORMATION

The recommendations provided here are subject to change at any time. As an FSD participant, it is your full responsibility to secure the appropriate visa and ensure the full legality of your stay in the host country during the program. To do so requires consultation of resources above and beyond the information provided by FSD. Please check with a Bolivian consulate or embassy for the most current information.

**Guidance:** (subject to change at any time)

It is required that you obtain a tourist visa for travel in Bolivia (including participation in the FSD program). The Site Team strongly suggests that you purchase this visa upon arrival at the airport in Bolivia rather than before you leave the US. Previous FSD participants recommend that purchasing the visa at the airport is much more efficient and simpler than purchasing it ahead of time.

- 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.
- The fee for the tourist visa is \$160 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.
- Besides the fee, you must also provide your passport and an address for where you will be staying.
- Compile all the requirements and have them readily available in your carry-on baggage.

# VISA RESOURCES

## **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 United States**

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

# PACKING & LUGGAGE

## RECOMMENDED PACKING LIST

### Clothes

- Several pairs cotton underwear and socks
- Light waterproof jacket & umbrella
- Warm jacket and 2 sweater(s)
- 2-3 Long-sleeved warmer shirts/tops
- 3-4 Short-sleeved tops/t-shirts
- 1-3 Long pants/capris/jeans
- 1-2 Shorts
- 1-3 Skirts, knee-length or longer for women
- Light sports attire if you are interested in sports, running, hiking, etc
- Shorts or sweats for around the house
- A belt (dryers are not common in Bolivia)
- Multiple shirts appropriate for work, leisure, travel
- At least one nice outfit for special occasions
- Sneakers and sandals (“nice” footwear optional)
- Close-toed comfortable shoes for work and/or special occasions
- Bathing suit, sarong and other beach gear
- Modest sleepwear
- Flip flops to wear around the house
- Hat for sun protection/warm hat, gloves and scarves (season appropriate)

### Health and Hygiene

- A supply of hand wipes and/or anti-bacterial hand lotion (some restrooms don't have running water)
- Any medications you use in their original containers and a copy of your prescriptions, eyeglasses, contacts, saline solution
- Personal hygiene products—soap, shampoo, toothpaste, tampons, floss, etc. (these can be purchased locally to save room in your luggage, but you should pack travel sizes to use until you can go to the store the first week)
- Strong insect repellent and Calamine lotion or other itch-relief cream (you will get bitten by insects at some point during your stay)
- Vitamins
- Antibiotics for travelers' diarrhea
- Sunglasses and sunscreen
- Contact lens solution (is prohibitively expensive in-country)
- Feminine hygiene products (sanitary pads are widely available, tampons are not)

### Practical Supplies

- Steel or plastic water bottle
- Travel alarm clock

- Towel
- Medium-sized pack for day and weekend trips
- Flashlight/headlight (remember that power outages are relatively common)
- Earplugs (if you have trouble sleeping with noise)
- Lock for luggage (can also be used at lockers in hostels if traveling)
- Money belt (around the waist is more secure than around the neck)
- Utility knife

### **Documents and Money**

- Airline ticket
- Passport
- Vaccination booklet
- Insurance Card
- Visa or Mastercard
- Photocopies of all documents
- Cash—be sure to bring new bills, even slightly ripped bills will not be accepted (US currency is accepted at large stores in Bolivia)

### **Other**

- Spanish-English Dictionary
- Small gifts for your host family (optional)
- Reading material

# LUGGAGE 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 make 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), and the site team contact information in your carry-on luggage in case your checked bag is temporarily lost or delayed.

## **What documents should I bring?**

You should bring your passport, vaccination booklet, insurance card, and list of FSD contacts in Bolivia and two photocopies of each. In-country keep the originals and one copy safe in your room and the other copy on your person at all times.

## **What are some items especially difficult to get in Bolivia?**

Although most things can be purchased in Bolivia (with limited selection), books in English, some comfort foods that you are used to and feminine hygiene products (like Tampax) are also hard to find.

# CLOTHING FAQ

## HOW ARE CLOTHES WASHED?

Most host families have washing machines, and some host families 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 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 could 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 participants are often invited to celebrations such as weddings or baptisms by their host family and friends. Bathing suits are optional but may come in handy during the Midterm Trip.

## 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 jeans or khakis appropriate. Knee-length 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. Old t-shirts and jeans are recommended in case of building projects.
- **At home:** Comfortable clothing and sandals are commonly worn for lounging at home and informal activities. Please bring a pair of modest pajamas to sleep in.

# ELECTRONICS

## ADAPTERS

If you decide to bring your laptop or other American electronic devices, check to see if they work with 220V. If not, you will need a converter. Most people find that their two-pronged electronics work without a converter or adapter. However, if necessary, converters and adapters can be easily purchased in Bolivia.

## LAPTOPS

Personal computers and especially laptops are not particularly common in Bolivia. The majority of participants find having a laptop to be extremely helpful during their internship. Many participants say that they wish they had brought their laptops to Cochabamba. 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 FSD office in Cochabamba has an extra laptop with internet connection for participants to use.

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 ciber. If you do decide to bring your laptop, please take 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. Bringing a laptop entails the risk that it could be lost, stolen or damaged. FSD is not responsible for your possessions.

Instead (or in addition to) of a laptop it may be a good idea to invest in a cheap USB drive. These are an excellent way to carry around your documents and email, print or fax them from a ciber.

## SHOULD I BRING MY IPOD?

iPods/iPhones are very rare in Cochabamba – you should generally not walk around listening to your iPod; they 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.



# FOOD & WATER

## **Can I drink the tap/well water?**

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

## **Where can I get safe water?**

Cochabamba is at an altitude of 9000 ft., so 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 bottled water isn't a priority for most Bolivians.

## **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 is consumed more than foreigners 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 drink made from fermented corn, consumed in its pure state and a core of Cochabamba social events and culture.

## **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 greasy with very few vegetables and even less 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 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 may have a mate and a pastry such as an empanada.

### **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.

### **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. 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. Other foods likely to be offered that you should avoid, unless your host family prepares them properly, are juices, quesillo, 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.

### **How should I express my preferences, or turn down unsafe food 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.

### **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. Cochabamba has an excellent selection of food, you can find almost anything; Italian, sushi, kebabs, etc.

# COMMUNICATION

*Staying in touch with your family and friends back home is important. You'll be eager to share your experiences and accomplishments while gaining reassurance and comfort by communicating with them. Here are some ways in which this will be possible during your stay in Bolivia.*

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

Email, WhatsApp or Skype are the most reliable ways 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.

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 and understand that it is best not to schedule international calls at exact times.

In case of emergency, your friends or family can call the FSD emergency phone line, at 415-828-8414.

## **Are cell phones available?**

FSD provides participants with a cell phone during their program. The phone will have minutes at the beginning of your program, and then you are responsible for purchasing any additional minutes. Friends and family can call you on your phone with no cost to you. Calls to cell phones can be relatively expensive (2-4 bolivianos/minute, US \$0.25-0.50).

## **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 cellphones 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 call the U.S.?**

To call the U.S. from a call center, dial 001, the area code, then the seven-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.

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

From one landline to another in Cochabamba, you can simply dial the seven-digit number. To call a cell phone, all you have to do is dial the eight-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).

### **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. FSD's Cochabamba office has free internet access and an extra laptop for interns. Additionally, Cochabamba is filled with restaurants and cafes that have wi-fi.

### **Can I receive packages from the US?**

FSD-Cochabamba has a post office box, which is checked regularly, although the Bolivian mail system can be very unreliable. Mail can be sent to this post office box at the following address: [Your Name], c/o Mauricio Ramirez Parra, Casilla 6293, Cochabamba, Bolivia. You can also receive mail and packages via FedEx, DHL, or UPS. Make sure the sender sends you the tracking number. Once you confirm the package has arrived, you will need to go directly to the FedEx, DHL, or UPS office in Cochabamba to pick up your package. Make sure that no package weighs over two kilos, or you will have to pay additional taxes when the package arrives.

# MONEY

## How much cash should I bring with me?

You should plan on bringing about US \$200 in cash when you arrive, (in addition to the \$135 cash in new bills for your visa), an ATM card, and a credit card for emergencies (however there are very few places to use credit cards). There will be opportunities to exchange money during the orientation in Cochabamba.

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

FSD covers all of your necessary expenses, including room and board, in-country transportation, mid-term retreat expenses (if applicable), orientation and debriefing sessions. You will 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 for normal days, and more for weekend trips: \$200 for Salar de Uyuni, \$100 for Chapare, \$150 for La Paz or Santa Cruz. Bring more if you plan to go out often (eating out, coffee, dinner, drinks, theater) 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.

### Monetary Unity & Exchange Rate

#### MONETARY UNIT

Boliviano/Peso

#### EXCHANGE RATE

The exchange rate is approximately 7 Bolivianos to the US Dollar. You can find the current rate through websites like

[www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com)

## 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

## FLIGHT INFORMATION

### **Arrival in Cochabamba**

When making your flight reservations, be attentive to the time between your international arrival and subsequent transfer to Cochabamba to ensure that you will have enough time to collect your luggage and go through customs. In general, we recommend at least three hours for this process. Please plan to arrive into Cochabamba by the morning or early afternoon of your program's start date. Orientation activities will begin in the afternoon on the date your program begins. If you plan to arrive early, the site team can arrange for you to stay at our orientation site, at an additional cost. The site team or a trusted FSD transportation service with an FSD logo sign will meet participants at the Cochabamba Airport.

After booking your international flight into La Paz (or Santa Cruz), you will need to book a domestic flight to Cochabamba. As booking from outside sources can result in a higher cost, we recommend that you book your domestic flight with Boliviana de Aviación (BOA). If you run into problems, the FSD site team can book your domestic flight for a 10% service fee. Please send confirmation of your international and domestic flight to the FSD site team so they can arrange your airport pick-up.

### **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.

### **What time should I book my return flight?**

When it comes time for you to leave Bolivia, you will have to book a taxi to return to the airport (the site team will be on-hand to help you to book if need be). While the airport is only 15 minutes away from downtown Cochabamba by taxi, due to traffic, it is strongly advised to allow 60 minutes for the travel and an additional 90 minutes to check in prior to departure. Departure flights that leave in the early afternoon/evening are thus preferable. If you plan on traveling in the region or elsewhere before returning home, make sure to review all the pertinent information online before your departure. You will want to ensure that you have the proper paperwork for traveling from Bolivia.

### **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. If your bag gets lost, use the FSD site team member as a contact.

### **If I cannot meet the group for the scheduled pickup, how do I get to the orientation site?**

It is very important for you to contact your site team to coordinate your arrival if you cannot meet the group for transport. They will be able to give your important directions and tips to help ensure your safety and comfort. They can also assist

in arranging for a recommended and trusted taxi driver to pick you up from the airport. This is preferable to negotiating your own travel with an unknown taxi driver as you will likely be charged a higher tourist price and your personal safety cannot be assured. Traveling alone at night is not recommended, especially upon your arrival in an unfamiliar country.

### **How far is the orientation site from the airport?**

The average travel time from Cochabamba airport to the orientation site by taxi is approximately 15 minutes but can vary greatly with traffic.

During all your travels, please be vigilant with your personal belongings, especially in El Alto airport, the bus stop in El Alto and the bus Terminal in Cochabamba. And lastly, once you have arrived and settled in, be sure to make contact with your families back home—they will want to know that you arrived safely!

### **ARE THERE ANY OTHER TIPS FOR ARRIVAL?**

Please make sure to keep your site team's phone numbers on you at all times so if you are delayed or have any questions you can easily contact them. Note that there are two terminals at the Buenos Aires airport. Most flights coming from the United States arrive at Terminal A. If you arrive at Terminal B, just go outside and walk to the right, then turn right again at the corner you will see a walk that goes to sliding doors—that's terminal A. It's a very short distance—about 5 minutes.

# **IN-COUNTRY TRANSPORTATION**

## **WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON MODES OF TRANSPORT?**

### **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 1.9 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 driver (chauffeur) before getting on the bus. Transport chauffeurs 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 areas where buses do not travel or when you are traveling with luggage or with a group.

- **Payment**

Most taxi rides are about a dollar unless you are going long distances or traveling at night. 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, and negotiate the price with the driver at the beginning.

- **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.

## **Is it safe to go out at night?**

Make sure to not walk after 9:00 p.m., or in unknown and/or dark areas, especially if you are alone. Consult with your host family about safety information specific to your neighborhood. Plan ahead and be cautious. If traveling within Cochabamba, it is always best to use a taxi service at night. If you plan to go out at night, never go alone. Hanging out in the plazas is very unsafe after dark and it is always best to avoid crossing plazas at night. However, Cochabamba's city center, where most of the restaurants and bars are located, is generally safe at all hours. But even while hanging out in the city center, you want to make sure you are with a friend or someone from your host family when it is dark out. Consult with your host family as to safety information specific to where you plan on going during nighttime hours. Plan ahead and be cautious!

# WHAT TO EXPECT: ORIENTATION

Upon arrival in Cochabamba, you will participate in FSD's orientation program. Orientation usually takes between 5-7 days. You will stay in a hotel near the FSD Office during the majority of orientation. The goal of orientation is to provide you with an overview of life in Cochabamba, ensure that safety and health protocols are clear, and further familiarize you with the FSD program. A sample orientation schedule is below:

## **Day 1: Arrival**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
10:00	Group arrival and pick-up at airport; Meet up with other participants at Centro Palestra
12:30	Lunch at Palestra
15:30	Introductions, overview of activities and discussion materials.
15:45	Discussion: Safety, Health and Food
17:00	Free time to make phone calls or use the internet
18:30	Dinner at Palestra

## **Day 2: Introduction to Bolivia: Culture, Geography, and Current Events**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
8:00	Breakfast at Palestra
8:30	Visit to Cristo de la Concordia: history and layout of Cochabamba, La Cancha, City Tours
12:30	Lunch at Palestra
14:30	Discussion: Culture Shock
15:15	Presentation: Culture, Geography, and Current Events
17:00	Reflection: General questions and thoughts about the day
19:00	Dinner at Palestra

## **Day 3: Sustainable Development**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
8:00	Breakfast at Palestra
9:00	Discussion: Volunteerism, motivations
10:00	Workshop: Sustainable Development
12:30	Lunch at Palestra
14:30	Descubriendo la ciudad activity (Scavenger Hunt!)
18:30	Dinner at Palestra

#### **Day 4: Project Design and Management**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
8:00	Breakfast
9:00	Presentation: Project Design, Asset Mapping, and Work Plan
12:30	Lunch at La Muela
14:30	Individual meetings with interns: Introduction to NGOs, host families and answer general questions
16:00	Discussion: Media (Facebook, blogs, etc.), Video Project
17:00	Presentations: Descubriendo la Ciudad and prizes
18:30	Activity with Host Families

#### **Day 5: Expectations, Host Families, NGOs**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
8:00	Breakfast at Palestra
9:00	Leave for a day at Parque Pairumani
10:00	Discussion: Host Families, what to do and what not to do
11:00	Discussion: Expectations and Tips for working with an NGO
12:30	Lunch: Discuss Community Integration Techniques
15:00	Reflection: Reality vs Ideal
15:30	Return to Palestra (free time until dinner)
18:30	Dinner at Palestra

#### **Day 6: Final Discussion Integration into Host Families**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
8:00	Breakfast at Palestra
9:00	Final discussions , time for Q&A, orientation evaluation
11:30	Host family pickup from Palestra
12:30	First lunch with host families
14:00	Practice: How to go from home to your NGO, FSD

#### **Day 7: Integration into organizations**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
9:00	Day of work with organizations (visit to NGO general introductions) FSD will pick you up and bring you to your NGO to introduce you
12:30	Lunch with host families



# HOMESTAY IN BOLIVIA

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!

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. Host families offer the rare opportunity to truly integrate yourself into the local culture and build meaningful relationships that will last long past your stay. The families who host FSD participants are carefully selected and offer their homes out of a genuine sense of generosity and the wish to learn about another culture. Your host family will view you as a member of the family and treat you as such. We hope that you will feel equally at home with your family but we ask that you never forget you are a guest in their home. Please always be respectful of their rules and help out the best you can.

## **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 shower head. This results in variable water pressure and temperature – usually, water becomes hotter as less is let out of the shower head. Never touch the shower head or wires attached to the shower head 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 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.

### **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 the family's care and just like your own family, and 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 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. Exercise good judgment: As anywhere, it is best to go out with family members, coworkers or friends that you meet. Being a foreigner 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 my 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!



# CULTURAL PRACTICES

For the most part, you will gain insight into Bolivian culture through your own experiences, but here are a few common questions that are likely to arise:

## **How important is punctuality in Bolivian culture?**

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.

## **How do people in Bolivia feel 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!

## **How do people in Bolivia greet and say goodbye?**

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?**

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 do Bolivians view household animals/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! If you are concerned about not wanting to drink any alcohol and are afraid you won't be able to say no, you can plan in advance to say you are on antibiotics, in which case people should understand and not continue to insist.

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

Approximately 80% 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.

# REFLECTION ON BOLIVIA

**By Sarah Connette**

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.

# MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

An important part of ensuring you have a positive experience in Cochabamba is to manage your expectations from the very beginning. Remember that you are arriving to learn and be a small step in the overall sustainable development process. It is normal to feel lost and perhaps even without purpose at the beginning. Our suggestion is to follow the 3 Ps:

## BE PROACTIVE

- Good relationships lead to good projects, not the other way around. Take the initiative to begin to form relationships in your organization and with other people that you meet in Cochabamba.
- Your supervisor will often not give you specific tasks. You may feel you are without direction. Take a moment and think of something you can be doing or working on. Think of possible obstacles and solutions in advance. Accept that you may have more free time than you are used to; relax and do something for you.

## BE PERSISTENT

- You may need to ask for things you need more than once. You are your own best advocate. Even if it takes a few tries, don't give up on asking for what it is you need.
- Things may not work out on the first try (or second, or third, etc). Analyze what did and did not work and try again.

## BE POLITE

- No matter how frustrated or confused you are, always be polite. Remember that you are not at home and that rash reactions can often offend. Learn a few stress management techniques and see which works best for you. Learn the difference between being firm and being rude.
- Development is often a painfully slow process. Take the time before you arrive to mentally prepare yourself for a different pace of life and work.

Keep in mind you may need to change your definitions of productivity and success. Even small accomplishments and projects require significant amounts of time. Be prepared to be frustrated at times; adjustment and adaptation can be difficult, especially at first. If you ready yourself for these realities before you arrive, the process will be easier once here.



# RACE, SEXUALITY, & GENDER

How you interact with others 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 of these 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 using generalizations to refer to the appearance of foreign looking persons, Bolivians also refer to their family with these racial "nicknames" if they look 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 who 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 of these terms are used in regular conversation and you shouldn't be offended when hearing them, but should always be aware of the context in which they are used.

## SEXUALITY

Sexual orientation or preference is not a topic that is openly discussed in Bolivia. However, there is a large and an active LGBT community that organizes events on a regular basis. 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.

### **DISCRIMINATION**

The previous three sections are not written to validate or excuse discriminatory behavior. In Bolivia, when someone refers to you as Chino/a, or Gringo/a, the majority of the time they are not doing so in a discriminatory fashion, but more out of lack of understanding regarding diversity. Not only is there a lack of awareness regarding diversity of race, gender, and sexuality, you may also find a lack of awareness in regard to religions, ethnicities, and nationalities. This lack of understanding/awareness does not always translate into discrimination.

However, if at any time you feel discriminated against at your host family, host organization, or during your interactions within the community, please inform the FSD site team immediately so we can help. We will work with you to ensure that you are able to enjoy your time with FSD to the fullest without worrying about discrimination.



# 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 other countries. 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-berto’ 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 many 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.

## 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 PHRASEBOOKS

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.



# 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:

**Los Hermanos Cartagena (1984)** — The film portrays the 1952 revolution and 1980 coup in Bolivia through the lives of two brothers, Juan José and Martín. Juan José, the legitimate son of Luís, is transformed, by his experiences as a youth in 1950s, to become a boss of one of the groups of paramilitaries during the 1980 coup. Martín, the illegitimate son of Luís and an indigenous peasant, becomes a trade union leader during that period. The film details the process by which the brothers' divergent childhood situation drives them towards the definitive clash.

**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. In this film, a Bolivian immigrant working illegally as a cook in a small restaurant in Buenos Aires suffers abuse and discrimination from its customers.

**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. After being denied an American visa, a Bolivian professor becomes involved in a web of criminal activities, holds-up the American consulate and falls for a beautiful prostitute from the Bolivian lowlands.

**¿Quien 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.

**Zona Sur (2009)** — In La Paz -as opposed to many other cities- the rich live below, which is the Southern District. Life goes on without major mishaps in a large house surrounded by a beautiful garden. It is a wonderful world, a great bubble of comfort, where different personal spheres coexist: the mother, along with her three children and the Aymara inhabitants of the house. The drama surfaces slowly, without narrative ploys, observing day-to-day activities until internal and external forces make the bubble burst. The film

relates the story of the final days of an upper-class family, at a time when the country is undergoing social changes.

**La nación clandestina (1989)** — In this Bolivian story, a man remembers his life while on a journey which will help him expiate his sins and which will result in his death. The focus on the story is on a man who has betrayed everyone he knows. He is planning to perform an ancient ritual dance which will end with his life being taken. He journeys from where he was living back to the village where most of the people he wronged still live. As he journeys, carrying his distinctive dance costume, his story is told in flashbacks. Once he gets there, he gets involved in the affairs of the villagers once more.

**El día que murió el silencio (1998)** — Handsome entrepreneur Abelardo Rios Clarios arrives in the sleepy little town of Villaserena, rigs up speakers throughout the village, and begins broadcasting “Radio Nobleza”. For a small sum of money, they can now buy the opportunity to express publicly what they couldn’t say before. Villaserena’s closets are quickly emptied of their skeletons, old quarrels are revived and secrets are no longer. Abelardo soon discovers the beautiful Celeste, a beautiful young woman virtually imprisoned behind the walls of her father’s house, and romance ensues.

**En Busca del Paraiso (2010)** — This film tracks the lives of Felicity illegal immigrant working in Spain and her brother who moves to Santa Cruze with the plan to reunite with her sister in Spain. After many mishaps and setbacks, while navigating through the shift from the pueblo to the big city, he falls in love. Meanwhile in Spain, Felicida shares a house with a group of Bolivian girls, each searching for success in a foreign country.



# RECOMMENDED READING

## **My Mother's Bolivian Kitchen: Recipes and Recollections, by Jose Sanchez-H**

Written by a Cochabambino living in the United States, this cookbook-cum-memoir will help to prepare you for the culinary delights you can expect to find on your plate at your host family's home. Recipes are provided in English and in Spanish, and can be a fun and helpful way to jump start conversation and interaction with your host family.

## **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.

## **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.

## **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.

## **Impasse in Bolivia: Neoliberal Hegemony and Popular Resistance, by Benjamin Farthing and Linda C. 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.

## **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.

## **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: Resource 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.

**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.

# WEBSITE GUIDE

[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.

[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.democracctr.org](http://www.democracctr.org)

The Democracy Center is an NGO whose 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.