



Welcome to La Paz!

Bienvenidos a La Paz

Greetings from La Paz! We would like to welcome you to the highest capital in the world. La Paz is a lovely city with spectacular mountain scenery, a fascinating Indigenous culture and friendly people. We are confident you will enjoy your tour here.

The purpose of this letter is to anticipate some of the questions you may have about life in La Paz. Feel free to contact us with questions not covered here!

- Housing
- Cars
- School
- Medical
- Weather/ Clothing

➤ HOUSING

Most of the American and International community families live in the Calacoto and Achumani neighborhoods. Most supermarkets, the American Cooperative School, churches of different denominations that have services in English and Spanish are also located in these neighborhoods.

➤ Cars

The Bolivian Government has issued a new policy **prohibiting the importation of vehicles more than 3 years old**. Cars can be purchased locally, but delivery can take weeks or months, depending on the make. There are adequate automotive repair shops that service most of the popular makes, however parts and accessories can be difficult to obtain and expensive. It is wise to bring any tools or spare parts (wiper blades, filters, belts, "Fix-A-Flat") you reasonably expect to need. You may also wish to have your car outfitted with a car alarm, or bring one to have installed here; car break-ins are always a concern. A few isolated gas stations carry diesel. A sedan is adequate for city driving and some out-of-town driving, but the high ground clearance of a four-wheel drive is an advantage for extensive cross-country trips and even in some areas of the city. If extensive out-of-town travel or camping is on your personal agenda you will need a four-wheel drive vehicle.

➤ SCHOOL

La Paz is fortunate to have an excellent educational facility in the American Cooperative School (ACS). Founded in 1955, ACS is a private, coeducational school, offering an American based curriculum for pre-kindergarten through grade 12 for students of all nationalities. ACS is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The school year is comprised of two semesters extending approximately from August 11 to December 16 and from January 9 to May 26.

Contact the school directly at acs@acslp.org, or (011-591-2)279-3202, 279-4750 or 279-6995.

If you do not want to enroll your child at ACS, there are other options available such as Highlands International School, Saint Andrew's School, German School, and French School. If you want contact information for any these schools please send me an e-mail to waltercm@state.gov.

IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU HAND-CARRY SCHOOL RECORDS WITH YOU TO POST.

The CLO at the US Embassy maintains a current list of Nursery and Preschools taught both in English and Spanish. La Paz also has a Montessori School with Spanish instruction.

➤ MEDICAL

Approximately 25% of people experience an unpleasant period of acclimatization after they arrive in La Paz. This usually lasts for a few days, until the body adjusts to the altitude. **Normal adjustment symptoms** include mild headache, lack of energy and appetite, mild nausea, dizziness, lightheadedness, and insomnia. Symptoms that may indicate that you **need urgent medical care** include severe fatigue, a severe headache, shortness of breath

(especially if it continues at rest), vomiting, onset of a cough, lack of coordination, and confusion. If you are experiencing these symptoms, please seek medical help.

To ease your adjustment to high altitude, the US Embassy recommends the following:

1. Take **Diamox 125mg** by mouth twice a day for two days before the flight and for three days after arrival. If you are severely allergic to sulfa, you may find Ginkgo Biloba to be helpful. Dexamethasone may also be prescribed.
2. Drink plenty of fluids. Water, Gatorade, Koolaid, and herbal teas (sweetened) are especially helpful. Avoid drinking alcoholic, caffeinated, and carbonated drinks for one week. Allow fizzy drinks to go flat before drinking.
3. Eat frequent, small, carbohydrate-loaded meals (pasta, potatoes, rice, and non-chocolate candy). Avoid eating heavy, high fat meals, especially at night. Limit your activities for the first few days. Avoid doing a lot of walking or lifting. Children and young athletic adults are more likely to develop serious complications, so guard them against over-activity until they are well adapted. On the other hand, lying down and resting too long may actually increase the headache.
4. **Medications:** Take two tablets of Tylenol, with a full glass of water, every four hours for headache. Camomille (manzanilla) and coca tea may help alleviate nausea.
5. Avoid drugs such as alcohol, sleeping pills, and narcotics that can interfere with your breathing. Avoid “soroche remedies” such as “Coramine” and “Micoren.” These can increase adjustment symptoms. Avoid smoking for a week.
6. Avoid eating or drinking contaminated food or water. **Do not drink the water from the faucet!** Drink only bottled or distilled water. Don’t eat raw fruits or vegetables that you have not treated with a bleach solution. Order your meats well-done and served hot.

If anyone in your family requires special medication or is currently taking any long-term medication (i.e. birth control, thyroid, etc.) you should bring at least a 6-month supply with you. The medical unit has many medications on hand, but does not provide refills for long-term prescriptions. Many over the counter drugs are available in the local pharmacies, but is more cost effective to include those medications in your consumable shipment (i.e. sinus, ibuprofen, etc.) Do bring some Tylenol® with you for relief of altitude-induced headaches when you first arrive; aspirin exacerbates rather than relieves this problem. Please hand-carry your vision prescriptions and bring over-the-counter medications that you use regularly and include extra supplies.

The Embassy recommends that all immunizations be up to date prior to arrival in La Paz. Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B and Typhoid vaccines are recommended for all adults. Yellow Fever vaccine is mandatory for those traveling or assigned to the tropical areas. Rabies pre-exposure prophylaxis is also recommended.

Dental sealants: The Embassy recommend children between the ages of five and twelve have sealants applied to prevent cavities. The health unit provides fluoride supplements to all children.

➤ WEATHER/CLOTHING

The weather in La Paz has been described as “*constant fall*.” There are two seasons, the dry season from April to August, and the rainy season from September to March. The average daytime temperature is cool (50 F) in the dry season, and fairly warm (65 F) in the rainy season.

Whatever the season, when the sun goes down or is hidden by clouds, the temperature drops substantially. Most useful here are US spring/fall weight clothes for adults and children alike. A layered look is best — you’ll quickly learn never to leave the house without a jacket or sweater.

Sturdy rubber-soled walking shoes are best for navigating the cobblestone or dirt streets. Save your high heels for indoors. Men generally wear a coat and tie to work and to social events. Women should include some dressy outfits for cocktail parties and receptions, but long dresses are seldom worn otherwise. You should bring some summer clothing, as you will certainly want to travel to the semi-tropical lower areas of Bolivia, such as the cities of Santa Cruz and Cochabamba.

The sun is **extremely strong** at this altitude. Danger from sunburn cannot be overstated. Bring lots of powerful sunblock (15 or above) you’ll need it regardless of the season or your coloring. Also bring sunglasses. Wide brim hats and caps (especially for those people with less “covering” on their heads) also give you protection from the sun’s rays and long-sleeved shirts are added insurance. During the dry season residents use moisturizers, conditioners, nasal spray, and lip balm in large quantities.