

YOUR BRIEFING
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BEFORE YOU TRAVEL



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DESTINATION GUIDE

Argentina

Country facts

Size: Total land area 2,736,690 sq km (approx 11.5 times the size of UK).

Population: 44 million.

Capital: Buenos Aires.

Language: Spanish.

Electricity: 220-242 volts. Standard British plugs will need an adapter to a two-pin plug.

Time zone: GMT-3 hours.

Currency: Argentine peso (ARG\$). You can exchange money at hotels or banks. Banking hours are Monday-Friday, 10am-3pm.

Argentina is more cash-orientated than the UK, although in Buenos Aires and main tourist centres cards are widely used. In remote areas you may find only cash is accepted. It's best to take US Dollars cash and change these into Pesos within Argentina. This can be done at a Casa de Cambio and some hotels. (ATM fees can be high and the amount you can withdraw much lower than in the UK). Tips are always paid in cash, even if you pay for a meal using a card.

It's a good idea to know the official rate before you go and, when changing money within Argentina, check the rate offered. Due to the Argentine economic situation, in addition to the official rate of exchange, parallel (unofficial) rates exist within Argentina to convert hard currency into Pesos. There can be a big difference, often in your favour.

Changing small amounts at a time is wise both for security and to avoid having lots of Pesos left over. We advise against changing money on the street and to always check your insurance limits for carrying cash.

Until recently, purchases with credit and debit cards were always processed at the official rate. As of late 2022 regulations have been relaxed for foreigners using cards and you may find some transactions are processed at a better rate. However, this will vary depending on your card provider.

Budget: Prices do vary within each country and high end restaurants tend to be similarly priced to a UK equivalent. Hotel restaurants are also usually more expensive. As a rough guide at the time of writing, in Buenos Aires:

- The cost of a **2 course lunch/dinner** at a mid-range restaurant = US\$25.00/\$35.00
- The cost of a small (**0.33l**) **bottle of national beer** in a mid-range restaurant = US\$4.00
- The cost of a **glass of "house wine"** (Chilean or Argentine) = US\$4.00

Please note: Prices in Patagonia vary and can be up to 30% more expensive.....

Entry requirements

Visa and health regulations: No visa requirement for British citizens though other nationalities may require an entry visa or pay a reciprocity fee in advance. For the most up-to-date entry and health certification requirements please check www.iatatravelcentre.com. On arrival make sure to check the entry stamp in your passport and always keep safe any entry cards or other documentation handed to you by immigration officials as these are usually required when leaving the country.

Departure tax: For international flights, airport taxes are included in the ticket.

Internal flights: Domestic airport taxes may apply. (See section 8.10 on 'Airport Taxes') though they are generally included within the ticket cost. Aerolineas Argentinas permit a maximum of 15kg hold luggage on all domestic flights. When

the internal flight ticket is issued with an international flight, the latter's baggage allowance is respected. Alternatively, Excess luggage can be paid for locally.

Weather

Trelew/Peninsula Valdés can get very windy though temperatures generally considered mild for Argentina.

Buenos Aires & the Pampas is hot and humid throughout the summer months (Nov-Mar) with tropical rainstorms a possibility. In the winter (Jun-Sep) there are pleasantly warm sunny days but it can be cool and drizzly.

Patagonia region is very unpredictable with a better chance of good weather over the summer months (Nov-Mar). Winter (Jun-Sep) can be bitterly cold, but there is a chance of some cloudless skies and great views. The southernmost parts of Patagonia can experience strong winds throughout the year.

Iguazú Falls has a subtropical climate with two main seasons; summer, from Aug-Apr, is hot (27°C) and humid, and winter, from May-Sep, is cooler (occasionally much cooler) and drier.

Salta has plenty of sun throughout the year but it can be cool in winter. It is drier with little rain falling Apr-Oct.

Mendoza is a year round destination with plenty of sunshine. Temperatures dip from a high of 30°C to 15°C in winter but most rain falls in summer.

The weather in the **Argentine lake district** is at its best in the summer months Dec-Feb. Mar-Apr and Sep-Nov can be lovely seasons with rich autumn colours and blossoms respectively. Snow is likely in winter (Jul-Aug), the ski season.

Northwest Argentina is predominantly dry and hot. In general, the climate can be divided into 2 main types: a cold arid or

semi-arid climate at the higher altitudes and warmer subtropical climate in the eastern parts of the region.

Clothing tips

Buenos Aires: Appropriate dress is required when dining in the high-end restaurants.

Iguazú Falls: Pack quick-drying clothing/waterproofs, essential if a boat trip is incorporated.

Bariloche: Weather can be unpredictable and layered clothing is recommended. Bathing costumes for swimming in the lakes in the summer (Nov-Mar).

Mendoza: Lightweight clothing for excursions. Can become much cooler in the evening.

Salta: Pack for a dry climate, warm during the day but often very cold at night due to altitude.

Patagonia: Famous for having four seasons in one day, pack appropriately (see 'Patagonia and the Andes' section).

Travel Health & Vaccinations

This information is intended as an overview only. Please read Section 4: Health and Vaccinations and always consult your GP.

At the time of writing, no vaccinations are mandatory.

Yellow fever: Vaccination is recommended if travelling to Corrientes and Misiones Provinces including the Iguazú Falls. Vaccination is generally not recommended for travel to Formosa Province and designated areas of Chaco, Jujuy and Salta Provinces. Vaccination is not recommended for other areas of the country.

Malaria: There is no risk of Malaria in Argentina.

Water: Make sure you drink plenty of

fluids especially water. Tap water is drinkable in Buenos Aires, but you might prefer to protect yourself by only drinking bottled water. In other towns, avoid tap water (even when brushing teeth) and ensure ice cubes are made from purified water.

Sun protection: Use sunblock (SPF 30 or higher), a hat and sunglasses for protection from the harmful effects of UV sun rays. Be particularly careful in the south where the ozone layer is thin.

Recommendations

Eat: Steakhouses are in abundance and meats served are tender and succulent. Meat-eaters should not miss the chance to try an *asado* barbecue, especially on an estancia or in Patagonia. Also, lamb is excellent in Argentina.

Drink: Malbec wine characterised by its deep colour and intense fruity flavours. Torrontés, grown at altitude in the Salta region, is increasingly popular. Also try *mate* – the national infused hot drink with a grassy, herbal flavour.

Read: Labyrinths-Jorge Luis Borges
The best short stories by the father of modern Latin American fiction.

The Honorary Consul-Graham Greene
Charley Fortnum is the 'Honorary Consul', a whisky-sodden figure of dubious authority taken by a group of rebels in Argentina. In this spare, tense novel, Graham Greene explores the morality of a political system that turns priests into killers.

Bad Times in Buenos Aires: A Writer's Adventures in Argentina-Miranda France
The author shares her experiences as a young freelance journalist living in Argentina in the early 1990s.

The Real Life of Eva Perón-Nicholas Fraser
A well-researched, historically accurate and unbiased view of Evita's life.

A Funny, Dirty Little War-Osvaldo Soriano
This classic novel exposes the folly and horror of Argentina's "Dirty War". Osvaldo Soriano brilliantly emphasizes the farce underlying the terror.

Some notable events

Feb/Mar: Carnival (annual dates vary): Celebrated all over the country. Corrientes in the El Litoral region has a lively tradition and murga groups (a form of musical theatre) operate in Buenos Aires.

Feb/Mar: Buenos Aires Tango Festival: There are performances all over the city and lots of opportunities to learn a few steps of the famous national dance.

1st week of Mar: Fiesta Nacional de la Vendimia in Mendoza: A world-renowned celebration of wine and the winemaking industry. A great time to sample some of Mendoza's finest whilst watching the elaborate processions.

11-18 May: Feria de Galerias de Arte in Buenos Aires: Huge contemporary art fair showcasing painters, artists, photographers and designers from Argentina.

End of Oct: Eisteddfod takes place in Trelew. A remarkable tribute to the Welsh heritage of the region.

Nov: (week of the 10th) Día de la Tradición in San Antonio de Areco: A week of celebrations in honour of Argentina's Gaucho tradition.

DESTINATION GUIDE

Belize

Country facts

Size: Total land area 22,806 sq km
(approx size of Wales).

Population: 388,000

Capital: Belmopan

Language: English

Electricity: 110V. Standard British plugs will need an adapter to a flat two-pin plug.

Time zone: GMT-6 hours.

Currency: Belizean Dollar. You can exchange US\$ at banks, throughout the country US\$ are mostly accepted. Credit/debit cards usually accepted at lodges.

Budget: Prices do vary within the country and high end restaurants tend to be similarly priced to a UK equivalent. Hotel restaurants are also usually more expensive. As a rough guide at the time of writing, in Belize City:

- The cost of a **2 course lunch/dinner** at a mid-range restaurant = US\$15.00/\$20.00
- The cost of a small **(0.33l) bottle of national beer** in a mid-range restaurant = US\$2.50
- The cost of a **glass of "house wine"** (Chilean or Argentine) = US\$6.00

Prices in the Cayes and remote lodges are generally more expensive and vary greatly.

Entry requirements

Visa and health regulations: No visa requirement for British citizens though other nationalities may require an entry visa. A yellow fever vaccination certificate may be required for entry if travelling from countries with risk of yellow fever virus

transmission, even if you have not visited an affected area. For the most up-to-date entry and health certification requirements please check www.iatatravelcentre.com.

On arrival make sure to check the entry stamp in your passport and always keep safe any entry cards or other documentation handed to you by immigration officials as these are usually required when leaving the country.

Departure tax: For international flights, airport taxes are usually included in the ticket.

Internal flights: Domestic airport taxes may apply. (See section 8.10 on 'Airport Taxes') though they are generally included within the ticket cost

Weather

There are great seasonal variations in rainfall in Belize. Mar-Apr are the driest months in a dry season that runs from Nov-May. Between Jun-Nov heavy afternoon showers can be expected. Hurricanes threaten between Aug-Nov but are very few and far between. Temperatures are high all year round, often exceeding 30°C, although slightly cooler between Nov-Mar.

Clothing tips

Lightweight cotton or linen clothes are recommended throughout the year. Good walking shoes on mainland or sandals in the Cayes. A light sweater is recommended for cooler evenings on the coast and Mountain Pine Ridge. For further information see The Amazon and Tropical Lowlands section.

Travel Health & Vaccinations

This information is intended as an overview only. Please read, Section 4: Health and Vaccinations and always consult your GP.

Yellow fever: N/A (though please see 'Entry requirements')

Malaria: Risk is low throughout the year in some rural areas. Risk is negligible elsewhere.

Water: Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water (even when brushing teeth) and ensure ice cubes are made from purified water.

Sun protection: Use sunblock (SPF 30 or higher), a hat and sunglasses for protection from the harmful effects of UV sun rays.

Recommendations

Eat: Seafood is delicious, plentiful and good value. Marie Sharps has a wide range of hot sauces worth trying.

Drink: One Barrel is an award winning Belizean rum. Belikin is a ubiquitous and flavoursome full bodied beer.

Read: Time Among the Maya: Travels in Belize, Guatemala & Mexico-Ronald Wright An entertaining and educational travel book about the Maya region. Highly recommended for those interested in the ancient and modern Maya.

Music: Andy Palacio-A Belizean cultural icon, Punta musician and leading cultural activist for the Garifuna people.

Some notable events

Feb/Mar: Carnival (annual dates vary according to Lent): San Pedro Carnival Ambergris Caye transforms into a huge street party with costumes, parades and music.

19 Nov: Garifuna Settlement Day in Dangriga, is an eclectic celebration of the first Garifuna settlers.

DESTINATION GUIDE

Bolivia

Country facts

Size: Total land area 1,083,301 sq km (approx 4.5 times the size of the UK).

Population: 11 million.

Capital: Sucre.

Language: Spanish, Quechua, Aymara.

Electricity: 220v, though in La Paz voltage is 115. A universal plug/voltage adapter is recommended.

Time zone: GMT-4 hours.

Currency: Boliviano. Sizeable towns have ATM's. Visitors fare best with US dollars at casas de cambio (bureaux de change).

Budget: Prices do vary within each country and high end restaurants tend to be similarly priced to a UK equivalent. Hotel restaurants are also usually more expensive. As a rough guide at the time of writing, in La Paz:

- The cost of a **2 course lunch/dinner** at a mid-range restaurant = US\$18.00/\$22.00
- The cost of a small **(0.33l) bottle of national beer** in a mid-range restaurant = US\$3.50
- The cost of a **glass of "house wine"** (Chilean or Argentine) = US\$7.00

Entry requirements

Visa and health regulations: No visa requirement for British citizens though other nationalities may require an entry visa. For the most up-to-date entry and health certification requirements please check www.iatatravelcentre.com.

On arrival make sure to check the entry stamp in your passport and always

keep safe any entry cards or other documentation handed to you by immigration officials as these are usually required when leaving the country.

Departure tax: For international flights, US\$25.00, though usually included on the ticket.

Internal flights: Domestic airport taxes may apply, approx USD \$2 (See section 8.10 on 'Airport Taxes').

Weather

The Bolivian highlands (altiplano) has a temperate climate with variations in temperature according to altitude and time of day. The temperature in La Paz in the sunshine can be 25°C during the day and drop to freezing point at night. The wet season lasts from Nov-Mar.

Most rain falls between Jan-Apr in Uyuni when the roads can be very muddy. The dry season, Jun-Sep, guarantees sun and an easy drive across the salt flats, but due to the high altitude it can be very cold at night throughout the year.

Clothing tips

La Paz: Layered clothing recommended as it can get cold due to altitude.

Uyuni and Potosi: Hat, gloves and thermal undergarments are also recommended (hotels are basic in this region, so even the best hotels can be cold at night). Lip balm recommended as the thin air is dry.

Amazon: A visit to the rainforest requires a rain jacket and light, quick-drying clothes. See 'The Amazon and Tropical Lowlands' section.

Travel Health & Vaccinations

This information is intended as an overview only. Please read, 'Section 4: Health and Vaccinations' and always consult your GP.

Yellow fever: Recommended for those

intending to travel to the following areas east of the Andes below 2,300m in elevation: the entire departments of Beni, Pando, Santa Cruz, and designated areas of Chuquisaca, Cochabamba, La Paz, and Tarija. This does not include the cities of La Paz and Sucre.

Malaria: There is a low risk in the Amazon Basin and rural areas below 2500m. There is no risk in the city of La Paz or above 2500m.

Water: Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water (even when brushing teeth) and ensure ice cubes are made from purified water.

Sun protection: Use sunblock (SPF 30 or higher), a hat and sunglasses for protection from the harmful effects of UV sun rays. Be particularly careful at high altitude in the Andes and Lake Titicaca where the sun is intense. UV radiation is exceptionally strong at Salar de Uyuni.

Altitude: Travel in Bolivia invariably involves time spent at high altitude. Please read altitude advice in section 4: Health and Vaccinations (4.9 Altitude sickness).

Recommendations

Eat: Pique a lo *Macho* – grilled chunks of meat in a slightly spicy sauce with tomatoes and onion, on potatoes.

Drink: *Chicha* – made from fermented corn and drunk from a bowl after a small offering to the Inca earth goddess. Mocochoinchi – a non-alcoholic brew of peaches and spices in water.

Read: Bolivian Diary-Ernesto Che Guevara *These 1966 and 1967 diaries were written during Che's attempt to establish a guerrilla insurrectionary movement in Bolivia.*

A Ghost Train through the Andes-Michael Jacobs
Jacobs traces the footsteps and letters of his grandfather who worked in the

building of the railway running from Antofagasta in Chile to Potosí in Bolivia.

Marching Powder-Rusty Young
An account of a British Ex-pats experience locked up in La Paz's notorious San Pedro Prison.

Film: Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid
The film tells the story of two Wild West outlaws who flee to Bolivia in search of a more successful criminal career.

Some notable events

Jan: Alasita festival for the god of abundance "Ekeko" in La Paz. Fun activities with stalls selling anything you may wish for made in miniature.

Feb: Virgen de la Candelaria folkloric festival in Copacabana. Pageants re-enact the conquest of the Andes and take to the streets in a celebration of Amerindian and Christian customs.

Feb/Mar: Carnival of Oruro-one of the great Latin American folkloric events-a vibrant festival of music, dance and outlandish costumes. The finale ends with a huge water fight in the town square.

Late May/early Jun: Gran Poder street carnival in La Paz with processions of groups of indigenous dancers in historical and cultural themed costumes.

DESTINATION GUIDE

Brazil

Country facts

Size: Total land area 8,459,417 sq km (approx 35 times the size of the UK).

Population: 207 million.

Capital: Brasilia.

Language: Portuguese.

Electricity: 127v and 220v. Mostly 127V though one of few countries to use both voltage types, therefore a universal adapter is recommended.

Time zone: GMT-3 hours on the coast and -4 hours in the interior (Manaus/Cuiabá).

Currency: Brazilian Real (R\$/BRL), plural Reais. Notes can be withdrawn from ATMs at airports, larger towns and cities. Limits may be lower than your UK bank allows. Banco do Brasil, HSBC accept UK credit or debit cards. Bradesco also, but with a lower limit. Other banks eg Banco 24horas do not accept foreign cards. Most towns have a Banco do Brasil. ATMs close at 10pm. Currency also obtainable in banks and money exchanges (bring US Dollars cash to exchange into Reais locally). Paying for goods and services with credit/debit cards is possible in smarter establishments.

Budget: Prices do vary within each country and high end restaurants tend to be similarly priced to a UK equivalent. Hotel restaurants are also usually more expensive. As a rough guide at the time of writing, in Rio de Janeiro:

- The cost of a **2 course lunch/dinner** at a mid-range restaurant = US\$25.00/\$35.00
- The cost of a small (**0.33l**) **bottle of national beer** in a mid-range restaurant = US\$4.00

- The cost of a **glass of "house wine"** (Chilean or Argentine) = US\$7.00

Entry requirements

Visa and health regulations: No visa requirement for British citizens though other nationalities may require an entry visa (including USA). For the most up-to-date entry and health certification requirements please check www.iatatravelcentre.com.

On arrival make sure to check the entry stamp in your passport and always keep safe any entry cards or other documentation handed to you by immigration officials as these are usually required when leaving the country.

Departure tax: For international flights, airport taxes are included in the ticket.

Internal flights: Domestic airport taxes may apply. (See section 8.10 on 'Airport Taxes') though they are generally included within the ticket cost.

Weather

The coolest months in **Rio de Janeiro** are from May-Sep, with temperatures from 18-32°C. The city can also be subject to days at a time of drizzle during this period. Dec-Mar will be humid with temperatures of 32-42°C.

Iguazú Falls has a subtropical climate with two main seasons; summer, from Aug-Apr, is hot (27°C) and humid, and winter, from May-Sep, is cooler (occasionally much cooler) and drier. Throughout the year it is generally sunny.

Salvador is hot and humid with most rain falling from Mar-Jul.

The Amazon enjoys a drier season from Jun-Sep (although this is when the river levels are highest). In the Amazon temperatures rarely drop below 23°C.

In the **Pantanal**, the rainy season lasts from Jan-Mar, where heavy rainfall results

in widespread flooding. In Apr-Jun the waters recede, while Jul-Sep (winter) wildlife is at its most abundant. The highest temperatures (up to 42°C) are reached in Nov-Dec.

Southern Brazil (Santa Catarina) has a semi-tropical climate, with hot summers (Dec-Apr, 34c) and mild winters (Jun-Oct, 20c, also the whale watching season

Clothing tips

Rio de Janeiro: Casual warm weather clothes. Avoid wearing expensive jewellery.

Salvador: Shorts, t-shirts and comfortable walking shoes/sandals/flip-flops for cobblestone streets/beach.

Iguazú Falls: Quick-drying clothing/waterproofs, especially if a boat trip incorporated.

Chapada Diamantina: Sturdy hiking boots for the rugged terrain.

Pantanal: Can get cool – take light layers and long sleeves.

Amazon: A visit to the rainforest requires a rain jacket and quick-drying clothes. See 'The Amazon and Tropical Lowlands section.

Travel Health & Vaccinations

This information is intended as an overview only. Please read, Section 4: Health and Vaccinations and always consult your GP.

Vaccination must take place at least 10 days prior to the date of entry to Brazil for the certificate to become valid.

Yellow Fever: Vaccination is recommended for all of our holidays to Brazil.

Malaria: There is a low risk in the Amazon basin, including the city of Manaus you will need to discuss the most suitable preventative measures with your doctor.

There is a very low risk in the rest of Brazil.

Water: Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water (even when brushing teeth) and ensure ice cubes are made from purified water. When visiting remote areas water purification tablets may be useful.

Sun protection: Use sunblock (SPF 30 or higher), a hat and sunglasses for protection from the harmful effects of UV sun rays.

Recommendations

Eat: Brazil's national dish is *feijoada*, a hearty stew made of black beans, pork and beef. *Churrasco* is a Brazilian barbecue. Excellent seafood in coastal areas. In the northeast, Bahian cuisine is an infusion of African, Indian and Portuguese influences. Popular 'por kilo' (pay by the kg) restaurants cater well for meat eaters and vegetarians alike.

Drink: *Caipirinha* cocktail made with cachaça. Coffee is of high quality, sweet and strong. *Água de coco*, coconut water.

Read: Dona Flor and her Two Husbands - Jorge Amado

A lively narrative takes the reader on a tour through Bahia using the story of a young woman haunted by her late husband's ghost.

City of God-Paulo Lins

Based on a true story, this is a sprawling, magnificently told epic about the history of gang life in Rio's favelas. This is the original novel of the hugely acclaimed film.

Futebol: The Brazilian Way of Life-Alex Bellos

A study of football in Brazil, its history, its players, supporters and legends. Takes the standpoint that Brazilian football is one the modern wonders of the world – 'the beautiful game' being an art form in itself and a universally recognised trademark and brand.

The Hour of the Star-Clarice Lispector
This lucid, charming book tell the story of Macabea, a typist who does not know how to type. She represents the underclasses in Brazil. The book gives a clear insight into life in the country.

Some notable events

31 Dec: Celebrations in Rio de Janeiro, with fireworks and ceremonies on Copacabana beach.

2 Feb: Celebration of Yemanjá (the Goddess of the Sea) in Salvador. Gifts for Yemanjá usually include flowers and objects of female vanity (perfume, lipsticks, mirrors). These are gathered in large baskets and taken out to the sea by local fishermen. Afterwards a mass street party ensues.

Feb/Mar: (annual dates vary according to Lent) *Carnaval*: The most famous celebrations are in Rio de Janeiro and Salvador though Carnival is celebrated all over the country over 5 days.

Late Jul: Búzios Jazz and Blues Festival: Lasts four days with many free events in the town.

14-16 Oct: Paraty-Mimo is a celebration of Brazilian music conceived by producer, Lú Araújo, and an increasingly popular event in a number of Brazilian cities.

DESTINATION GUIDE

Chile

Country facts

Size: Total land area 743,812 sq km (approx 3 times the size of the UK).

Population: 18 million.

Capital: Santiago de Chile.

Language: Spanish.

Electricity: 220v. Standard British plugs will need an adapter to a round two-pin plug.

Time zone: GMT-3 hours (Easter Island – 5 hrs)

Currency: Chilean peso (CLP\$). Credit and debit cards are widely accepted. ATM network is respectable in coverage.

In many hotels, when paying your final bill for any additional charges, services, meals etc if you pay in USD\$ or with a foreign credit card you will be exempt from VAT (19%).

Budget: Prices do vary within each country and high end restaurants tend to be similarly priced to a UK equivalent. Hotel restaurants are also usually more expensive. As a rough guide at the time of writing, in Santiago de Chile:

- The cost of a **2 course lunch/dinner** at a mid-range restaurant = US\$30.00/\$35.00
- The cost of a small (**0.33l**) **bottle of national beer** in a mid-range restaurant = US\$6.00
- The cost of a **glass of "house wine"** (Chilean or Argentine) = US\$7.00

Please note: Prices in Patagonia vary and can be up to 30% more expensive.

Entry requirements

Visa and health regulations: No visa

requirement for British citizens though other nationalities may require an entry visa or pay a reciprocity fee in advance. For the most up-to-date entry and health certification requirements please check www.iatatravelcentre.com.

On arrival make sure to check the entry stamp in your passport and always keep safe any entry cards or other documentation handed to you by immigration officials as these are usually required when leaving the country.

Chile has especially strict rules regarding the import of crop and animal products, including nuts, cheese, ham, tea, fruit and vegetables, among others. All crop and animal products must be declared at customs where bags will be checked. Infractions of these rules can lead to large fines and even trials.

Departure tax: For international flights, airport taxes are included in the ticket.

Internal flights: Domestic airport taxes may apply. (See section 8.10 on 'Airport Taxes') though they are generally included within the ticket cost.

Easter Island: Visitors to Easter Island are required to complete an online entry form no earlier than 3 days prior to arrival in Easter Island and via <https://ingresorapanui.interior.gob.cl/>

Weather

Seasons in **Santiago** and surrounds are the opposite to ours in the UK. Nov-early Mar can be very hot with little or no rain (Dec-Jan being the hottest). The winter is cold and can be wet.

While summers in **the lake district** are generally warm and sunny, as a rule the further south in Patagonia you go the more unpredictable the climate, with weather changing day to day and morning to afternoon. Generally though it follows the same pattern as Santiago, with a higher chance of warm temperatures

from Nov-Mar.

San Pedro de Atacama enjoys sunshine and warm temperatures year-round, influenced by altitude and the high Andes, with cool nights Jul-Sep and a chance of heavy rains in Jan-Mar.

Easter Island has pleasant temperatures all year, warmest Oct-Mar, cooler Jun-Sep.

Jun-Aug are the winter months in Patagonia where it can be very cold with snow.

Clothing tips

Santiago de Chile: Casual warm weather clothes in summer, fleece and waterproofs in winter.

Atacama: Bring layered clothing. Early mornings and nights can be bitterly cold and you'll need warm clothes, light windproof/rain jacket recommended. The air is very dry so you should use lip balm.

Lake district: Weather can be unpredictable and layered clothing is recommended. A waterproof/windproof jacket is essential.

Patagonia: (see 'Patagonia and the Andes section).

Travel Health & Vaccinations

This information is intended as an overview only. Please read, Section 4: Health and Vaccinations and always consult your GP.

Yellow fever: N/A

Malaria: N/A

Water: Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water (even when brushing teeth) and ensure ice cubes are made from purified water.

Sun protection: Use sunblock (SPF 30 or higher), a hat and sunglasses for protection from the harmful effects of UV sun rays. Be particularly careful in the

north where sun rays are strong and south where the ozone layer is thin.

Altitude Sickness: Please see altitude advice in Health and Vaccinations Section 4.9.

Recommendations

Eat: Seafood is both abundant and outstanding – particularly exotic shellfish. Try *machas a la parmesana* (clams in a white wine and butter sauce topped with parmesan) and grilled lamb in Patagonia.

Drink: Wine. Well known for its Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot but excellent Syrah and Pinot Noir is also produced. *Pisco Sour* cocktails are popular.

Read: The House of Spirits – Isabel Allende
An epic novel tracing Chile's turbulent history through the story of the tragedies befalling successive generations of females within a family.

In Patagonia – Bruce Chatwin
An early childhood fascination with his grandmother's scrap of giant sloth skin drew Chatwin to Patagonia, where he was intrigued by odd miners, Darwin, the Welsh and the log cabin built by Butch Cassidy. (The book covers both Chilean and Argentinean Patagonia).

Patagonia: A Cultural History - Chris Moss
Through various sources, Moss constructs a panoramic portrait of a region that continues to beguile travellers. Contemporary film, tourism and environmental issues also feature in a very readable book that seeks to demystify the fabled "end of the world".

Travels in a Thin Country-Sara Wheeler
This is Sara Wheeler's account of a six-month odyssey which included Christmas Day at 13,000 feet with a llama sandwich, a sex hotel in Santiago and a trip round Cape Horn delivering a coffin.

Between Extremes– Brian Keenan and John McCarthy

A well-written testament to friendship by Keenan and McCarthy whose dream of making a million from yak farming in Chilean Patagonia was born in their shared Beirut prison cell.

Clandestine in Chile – Gabriel García Márquez

A picture of life under Pinochet, told by a film director who returns under a false identity after 12 years.

Ines of my Soul – Isabelle Allende
The vibrant novel from Isabel Allende takes her back to her homeland of Chile, and tells the story of the first Spanish woman to arrive on its shores with the conquistadors in the 1500s.

My Invented Country – Isabel Allende
The life story of Isabel Allende, which focuses on her relationship with Chile and its complicated history and politics.

The Postman – Antonio Skármeta
Subsequently adapted for the silver screen in the award-winning film, Il Postino, The Postman is a story of poetry, love, politics and life set in the years preceding the Pinochet dictatorship.

Some notable events

31 Dec: Celebration and fireworks displays in Valparaiso.

Jan/Feb: Tapati Rapa Nui: A celebration of Easter Island's traditions and cultural heritage.

Feb: Costumbrista Chilote: A celebration of Chiloé's unique cultural and historical folklore held in the town of Castro.

Mar/Apr: Fiestas de la Vendimia (Grape Harvest): Weekend-long fêtes take place annually in many of the country's wine producing areas, but the largest such event is in the city of Curicó.

Apr: The culmination of the rodeo season is at the Campeonato Nacional de Rodeo

held in Rancagua each year. Rodeo was declared the national sport in 1962.

16 Jul: Fiesta de la Tirana is an annual festival held in northern Chile in honour of the Virgen del Carmen. Traditional music and dance, mixing both Inca and Christian cultures.

18/19 Sep: Fiestas Patrias: A countrywide expression of Chilean culture and celebration of independence and nationality.

DESTINATION GUIDE

Colombia

Country facts

Size: Total land area 1,038,700 sq km (approx 4 times the size of UK).

Population: 50 million.

Capital: Bogotá.

Language: Spanish, (English in San Andrés and Providencia).

Electricity: 110V. Standard British plugs will need an adapter to a flat two-pin plug

Time zone: GMT-5 hours.

Currency: Colombian peso (COP). Almost all major banks have adjacent ATM's.

Budget: Prices do vary within each country and high end restaurants tend to be similarly priced to a UK equivalent. Hotel restaurants are also usually more expensive. As a rough guide at the time of writing, in Bogotá:

- The cost of a **2 course lunch/dinner** at a mid-range restaurant = US\$20.00/\$25.00
- The cost of a small (**0.33l**) **bottle of national beer** in a mid-range restaurant = US\$3.00
- The cost of a **glass of "house wine"** (Chilean or Argentine) = US\$5.00

Entry requirements

Visa and health regulations: No visa requirement for British citizens though other nationalities may require an entry visa. A yellow fever vaccination certificate may be required for entry if travelling from countries with risk of yellow fever virus transmission, even if you have not visited an affected area. For the most up-to-date entry and health certification requirements

please check www.iatatravelcentre.com.

On arrival make sure to check the entry stamp in your passport and always keep safe any entry cards or other documentation handed to you by immigration officials as these are usually required when leaving the country.

Travellers to the island of San Andrés are required to purchase a tourist card. COP \$100,000 (approx £25), payable on arrival.

Departure tax: For international flights, airport taxes are included in the ticket.

Internal flights: Domestic airport taxes may apply. (See section 8.10 on 'Airport Taxes').

Weather

Bogotá and the central Andes has a temperate climate; with an average temperature of 14°C and a mixture of sunshine, cloud and showers during the day. There's a dry season from Dec-Mar and it is also drier Jul-Aug.

The Caribbean coast and islands are an all-year destination, with plenty of sun throughout and temperatures reaching 30°C. The rainy season is Aug-Nov when showers can be torrential. Dec-Apr should be pretty rain-free.

Cali is hot and humid all the year round though it can rain at any time. **Popayán, Silvia** and **San Agustín** are at a higher elevation and so substantially cooler, with a drier feel to the air: all in all the climate is sunny, warm and pleasant. Most rain falls Apr-Jun but it can rain here at any time

Nuquí on the western coast is one of the wettest places on earth.

Clothing tips

Bogotá: Hot during the day it can be chilly at night. Layered clothing recommended

Cartagena: Loose-fitting and light

clothing recommended.

Medellín: It rains frequently so a lightweight raincoat is useful.

Travel Health & Vaccinations

This information is intended as an overview only. Please read, Section 4: Health and Vaccinations and always consult your GP.

Yellow fever: Vaccination is recommended for those travelling to areas below 2,300m. Vaccination is generally not recommended for travel only to the cities of Barranquilla, Cali, Cartagena, and Medellín. Vaccination is not recommended for travel only to areas above 2,300m, the department of San Andrés y Providencia and the capital city of Bogotá.

Malaria: There is a low risk of malaria in most rural areas of Colombia below 1,600m. There is a very low risk in areas above 1,600m and in Cartagena.

Water: Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water (even when brushing teeth) and ensure ice cubes are made from purified water.

Sun protection: Use sunblock (SPF 30 or higher), a hat and sunglasses for protection from the harmful effects of UV sun rays.

Altitude sickness: Please read altitude advice in section 4: Health and Vaccinations (4.9 Altitude sickness).

Recommendations

Eat: *Buñuelos* (deep fried corn flour balls with cheese) and *arepas* (corn tortillas, often made with cheese). The widest variety of exotic and tropical fruits in Latin America.

Drink: The national alcoholic drink is *aguardiente*, which tastes strongly of anise.

Coffee (*tinto*) is of a very high quality.

Read: *The Lost Steps* – Alejo Carpentier
A composer, fleeing an empty existence in New York City, embarks on a journey to an area relatively untouched by civilisation – the upper reaches of the Amazon.

Love in the Time of Cholera – Gabriel García Márquez
A touching story of love and mortality set in a traditional Colombian coastal town at the turn of the 19th Century.

One Hundred Years of Solitude – Gabriel García Márquez
An epic magical realist novel that tells the story of generations of the Buendía family – founders of Macondo, a remote Colombian town.

The Fruit Palace – Charles Nicholl
The Fruit Palace of the title sells only fruit, but it happens to be in Santa Marta, the small town at the centre of Colombia's 1980s cocaine trade. Nicholl relates his quest for "The Great Cocaine Story" with madcap energy and vividness in this classic travel book.

Killing Pablo – Mark Bowden
Bowden documents the spectacular rise and fall of Pablo Escobar.

Some notable events

Jan: Hay Festival: Cartagena. An offshoot of the famous literary festival in Hay-on-Wye, it attracts Latin American and international writers and intellectuals of international renown.

Feb/Mar: (annual dates vary according to Lent) Carnival -The most famous and extravagant carnival takes place in the Caribbean city of Barranquilla, with frenetic dancing and parades of revellers wearing extravagant costumes.

Mar/Apr: (annual dates vary) Semana Santa: Celebrated throughout the country, though Popayán is famed for

lavish processions and celebrations.

Aug: Medellín Flower Fair: Known as the “city of eternal spring”, Medellín bursts with colour as it hosts a festival of over 142 cultural, traditional, and modern events.

Sep: International Jazz Festival, Bogotá. World renowned artists performing in front of thousands of jazz enthusiasts.

11 Nov: Independence of Cartagena: The city commemorates its declaration of independence from Spain with celebrations, lavish masks and costumes, dancing, and music.

DESTINATION GUIDE

Costa Rica

Country facts

Size: Total land area 51,060 sq km (approx 2x the size of Wales).

Population: 5 million.

Capital: San Jose.

Language: Spanish.

Electricity: 110V. Standard British plugs will need an adapter to a flat two-pin plug.

Time zone: GMT-6 hours.

Currency: Colon. ATMs can be found in most cities. Credit/debit cards usually accepted at lodges.

Budget: Prices do vary within each country and high end restaurants tend to be similarly priced to a UK equivalent. Hotel restaurants are also usually more expensive. As a rough guide at the time of writing, in San Jose:

- The cost of a **2 course lunch/dinner** at a mid-range restaurant = US\$25.00/\$30.00
- The cost of a small (**0.33l**) **bottle of national beer** in a mid-range restaurant = US\$6.00
- The cost of a **glass of "house wine"** (Chilean or Argentine) = US\$7.00

Entry requirements

Visa and health regulationst: No visa requirement for British citizens though other nationalities may require an entry visa. A yellow fever vaccination certificate may be required for entry if travelling from countries with risk of yellow fever virus transmission, even if you have not visited an affected area. For the most up-to-date entry and health certification requirements

please check www.iatatravelcentre.com.

On arrival make sure to check the entry stamp in your passport and always keep safe any entry cards or other documentation handed to you by immigration officials as these are usually required when leaving the country.

Departure tax: Domestic airport taxes may apply. (See section 8.10 on 'Airport Taxes').

Internal flights: Domestic airport taxes may apply. (See section 8.10 on 'Airport Taxes').

Weather

Despite its small size, Costa Rica has a number of distinct microclimates. The Caribbean coast is humid all year round with the driest months being Sep-Oct; The rest of the country experiences a dry season from Dec-Apr, when there is plenty of sun and temperatures are high, and a rainy season from May-Nov. However, this is not a hard-and-fast rule for all regions: for example, the rainy season starts a month earlier in the south Pacific, while the northern areas, including the Guanacaste coast, are not as affected by the seasons and are generally much drier. The highlands and cloud forests have warm temperatures during the day but the high altitude means evenings are much cooler.

Clothing tips

Lightweight cotton or linen clothes are recommended throughout the year. In the cloud forests a fleece can be useful due to high elevation. Wear closed, heavy-soled footwear in jungle areas. (See 'The Amazon and Tropical Lowlands section).

Travel Health & Vaccinations

This information is intended as an overview only. Please read, Section 4: Health and Vaccinations and always

consult your GP.

Yellow fever: N/A (though please see 'Entry requirements')

Malaria: Risk is low throughout the year.

Water: Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water (even when brushing teeth) and ensure ice cubes are made from purified water.

Sun protection: Use sunblock (SPF 30 or higher), a hat and sunglasses for protection from the harmful effects of UV sun rays.

Recommendations

Eat: *Canitas* – Costa Rican sugar cane beef. *Gallo Pinto*, a mixture of fried rice with onion, sweet pepper, red beans and garlic. *Corvina* (sea bass) is delicious.

Drink: *Guaro* is a distilled liquor with a strong, sweet taste

Read: Green Phoenix: Restoring the Tropical Forests of Guanacaste - William Allen
A refreshing and positive look at ways to restore the world's tropical forests based on the authors experience.

Monkeys Are Made Of Chocolate: Exotic and Unseen Costa Rica – Jack Ewing
A collection of experiences and fascinating look at Costa Rica's wildlife.

Some notable events

Last week Feb: Puntarenas Carnival: A popular week-long fiesta with pachanga music and parades.

Mar: International Arts Festival: Every year the Department of Culture and Youth of Costa Rica organizes the International Arts Festivals for two-weeks with theatre, music, dancing, among others.

DESTINATION GUIDE

Cuba

Country facts

Size: Total land area 109,820 sq km (slightly smaller than England).

Population: 11 million.

Capital: Havana.

Language: Spanish.

Electricity: Most older hotels have a voltage of 110, but newer ones have 220V. A universal plug adapter is recommended.

Time zone: GMT-4 hours.

Currency: Since 2021, the Cuban National Peso (CUP) has been the only legal cash currency in Cuba. Bring Sterling (or Euros) to exchange into CUPs. At government-owned Cadeca exchange houses, banks and some larger hotels you will be given the official rate of exchange. US Dollars cash are not accepted by any government-owned businesses.

Private hotels, bars, restaurants often accept payment in Sterling or Euros cash using an unofficial (often much better) exchange rate. US Dollars cash may also be also welcomed by such private businesses. Tourists often stock up on CUPs by paying using hard currency in this way and getting their change in CUPs. We think it's best to only change small amounts at a time into CUPs and be alert to forgeries. Using street money changers is not recommended and you should also avoid having CUPs left over at the end of your trip.

Sterling/Euro/US Dollar bank notes should not be damaged in any way and coins won't be accepted. ATMs are quite widely available and will apply additional charges to those of your own bank.

You'll need a credit card to cover transactions in most shops, as well as hotel extras and car-rental extras such as petrol. Some clients have reported difficulties using cards in Cuba so do not rely on them as your only source of funding. Be sure to check with your bank that your cards are accepted in Cuba (cards issued by US banks are not accepted, for example).

Internet: Internet and WiFi access is now available in most towns (usually around the central plaza) and in decent-sized hotels. However, it is currently only available in the hotel common areas and not in rooms. If staying connected is essential, be aware that bandwidth is weak and connection unreliable. To access WiFi you first need to purchase a NAUTA scratch card from either a hotel reception desk or ETECSA office.

Budget: Prices do vary within each country and high end restaurants tend to be similarly priced to a UK equivalent. Hotel restaurants are also usually more expensive. As a rough guide at the time of writing, in Havana:

- The cost of a **2 course lunch/ dinner** at a mid-range restaurant = US\$20.00/\$25.00
- The cost of a small (**0.33l**) **bottle of national beer** in a mid-range restaurant = US\$3.00
- The cost of a **glass of "house wine"** (Chilean or Argentine) = US\$6.00

Entry requirements

Visa and health regulations: British

passport holders require a tourist card to visit Cuba. We can issue these if you are making your travel arrangements through Journey Latin America. A yellow fever vaccination certificate may be required for entry if travelling from countries with risk of yellow fever virus transmission, even if you have not visited an affected area. Other nationalities may require an entry visa. For the most up-to-date entry and health certification requirements please check www.iatatravelcentre.com.

On arrival make sure to check the entry stamp in your passport and always keep safe any entry cards or other documentation handed to you by immigration officials as these are usually required when leaving the country.

Departure tax: For international flights, airport taxes are included in the ticket.

Internal flights: Domestic airport taxes may apply. (See section 8.10 on 'Airport Taxes').

Weather

Cuba has a tropical climate and is mostly hot and sunny throughout the year, although it is susceptible to storms and occasional hurricanes from Jul-Nov. The humidity and high temperatures (up to 33°C) in Jul-Aug can be stifling. During the dry season, Dec-Apr the weather is more benign, with slightly lower temperatures. Most rain falls between Jun-Sep.

Clothing tips

Havana: Light clothing, cotton and natural fibres; sensible flat comfortable shoes for walking tours.

Trinidad: Comfortable walking shoes while exploring the colonial cobblestone streets.

Viñales: Can get cool in the evening, so a long sleeved shirt/sweater is useful.

Travel Health & Vaccinations

This information is intended as an overview only. Please read, Section 4: Health and Vaccinations and always consult your GP.

Yellow fever: N/A (though please see 'Entry requirements').

Malaria: N/A

Water: Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water (even when brushing teeth) and ensure ice cubes are made from purified water.

Sun protection: Use sunblock (SPF 30 or higher), a hat and sunglasses for protection from the harmful effects of UV sun rays.

Recommendations

Eat: Although Cuban food can be bland things are changing and food is improving. In Cuba pork is the most popular meat and reasonably priced lobster is commonplace. *Moros y cristianos* (rice and beans) accompanies many meat dishes. The best cuisine tends to be found in local *paladares* or *homestays*.

Drink: Rum. Cuba is famous for mojito cocktails (rum, lime, sugar, mint leaves, club soda) and *Daiquiri* (rum, lime juice and sugar).

Read: Our Man in Havana: An Entertainment – Graham Greene *makes light of spying during the Cold War. A vacuum cleaner dealer is recruited as a spy for a secret British organisation in Cuba. The main character struggles to keep his life in check and his conscience within bounds.*

Islands in the Stream – Ernest Hemingway *The novel was written inspired by Jardines del Rey Archipelago (one of Hemingway's favourite getaways in Cuba).*

Music: Alejo Carpentier

Not only the best and most extensive study of Cuban musical history, it is a work of literature. Drawing on such primary documents as church circulars and musical scores, Carpentier encompasses European-style elite Cuban music as well as the popular rural Spanish folk and urban Afro-Cuban music.

Explosion in a Cathedral-Alejo Carpentier
Regarded as one of Latin America's greatest historical novels, Explosion in a Cathedral deals with the impact of the French Revolution on the Caribbean. The narrative deals with the cyclical nature of control, destruction, and development during revolution. Stylistically, it contains elements of existentialism and magical realism, and it mirrors the tension between Europe and Latin America found in many of Carpentier's other works

Film: Guantanamera is a 1995 comedy film from Cuba which depicts life in Cuba during the 'special period' of the 1990s.

Some notable events

18-26 Jul: (may vary) Santiago de Cuba Carnival: Cuba's most famous festival. The best days are towards the end, when the city literally never sleeps. See the exciting annual performance at the Cuartel Moncada, and there are colourful scenes everywhere you stroll along Avenida Trocha.

8-15 Aug: Havana Carnival: Music, dancing, rum and lots of fun are the ingredients of the fantastic Havana Carnival every year. Parades run the length of the Malecón and rich traditional music competes with more contemporary sounds.

Oct/Nov: Festival de Ballet de La Habana. Performances by the Cuban National Ballet company, still one of the most highly regarded troupes in the world.

Dec: Festival Internacional Jazz Plaza in Havana. A world renowned jazz festival

showcasing both local and international musicians.

19-24 Dec: Las Parrandas de Remedios: An extravagant Carnival in the small village of Remedios near Santa Clara. Expect fireworks and a big street party on the 24th.

DESTINATION GUIDE

Ecuador

Country facts

Size: Total land area 276,841 sq km (slightly larger than the UK).

Population: 16 million.

Capital: Quito.

Language: Spanish.

Electricity: 120v. Standard British plugs will need an adapter to a flat two-pin plug.

Time zone: GMT-5 hours. (Galápagos islands -6 hours)

Currency: US dollar (US\$). High denomination bills can be difficult to change. ATM's are found in most cities and even in smaller towns, though they are occasionally out of order. Credit cards are widely accepted. ATMs in the Galápagos Islands are notoriously unreliable.

Budget: Prices do vary within each country and high end restaurants tend to be similarly priced to a UK equivalent. Hotel restaurants are also usually more expensive. As a rough guide at the time of writing, in Quito:

- The cost of a **2 course lunch/dinner** at a mid-range restaurant = US\$24.00/\$28.00
- The cost of a small (**0.33l**) **bottle of national beer** in a mid-range restaurant = US\$4.00
- The cost of a **glass of "house wine"** (Chilean or Argentine) = US\$6.00

Please note: Prices in the Galápagos Islands tend to be a little more expensive.

Entry requirements

Visa and health regulations: No visa requirement for British citizens though

other nationalities may require an entry visa. A yellow fever vaccination certificate may be required for entry if travelling from countries with risk of yellow fever virus transmission, even if you have not visited an affected area. For the most up-to-date entry and health certification requirements please check www.iatatravelcentre.com.

On arrival make sure to check the entry stamp in your passport and always keep safe any entry cards or other documentation handed to you by immigration officials as these are usually required when leaving the country.

Departure tax: For international flights, airport taxes are included in the ticket.

Internal flights: Domestic airport taxes may apply, approx USD \$7 (See section 8.10 on 'Airport Taxes').

Galápagos Islands: Maximum checked luggage allowance for the flight to the Galápagos is 20kg (one suitcase/bag).

Weather

There are only two seasons, wet and dry. The dry season in the Andean highlands lasts from Jun-Sep, and on the coast from May-Dec. Although Feb-Apr is traditionally the green (wet) season, there is a chance of showers throughout the year. Due to altitude, Quito and the Andean highlands can be chilly in the evenings.

The coastal areas are especially hot, wet and humid from Jan-Apr.

It can rain at any time in the **Amazon** but the wettest months are Apr-Jun. In the **Amazon** and Pacific lowlands, temperatures of 30°C are not uncommon.

Galápagos Islands: See 'The Galápagos Islands' section.

Clothing tips

Quito and Andes: Weather can be unpredictable and layered clothing is

recommended (see 'Patagonia and the Andes section).

Guayaquil: Hot and generally humid so loose-fitting and light clothing preferred.

Galápagos Islands: See 'The Galápagos Islands' section.

Amazon: A visit to the rainforest requires a rain jacket. See 'The Amazon and Tropical Lowlands section.

Mindo Cloudforest: Long sleeves and trousers, a warm layer for cooler evenings, a rain jacket, and comfortable walking shoes.

Travel Health & Vaccinations

This information is intended as an overview only. Please read, Section 4: Health and Vaccinations and always consult your GP.

Yellow fever: Vaccination is recommended for all travellers to the following provinces east of the Andes below 2,300m: Morona-Santiago, Napo, Orellana, Pastaza, Sucumbios and Zamora-Chinchipe, and the province west of the cordillera, Esmeraldas.

Vaccination is generally not recommended for travellers whose itineraries are limited to the following provinces west of the Andes including below 2,300m: Guayas, Los Rios, Santa Helena, Santo Domingo de los Tsachilas and designated areas of Azuay, Bolivar, Canar, Carchi, Chimborazo, Cotopaxi, El Oro, Imbabura, Loja, Pichincha, Tungurahua.

Vaccination is not recommended for travel only to areas above 2,300m, the cities of Quito and Guayaquil and the Galápagos Islands.

Malaria: On mainland Ecuador, there is a low risk of malaria in areas below 1,500m, including the coastal provinces and Amazon basin. There is no risk of malaria in the Galapagos islands or the city of

Guayaquil.

Water: Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water (even when brushing teeth) and ensure ice cubes are made from purified water.

Sun protection: Use sunblock (SPF 30 or higher), a hat and sunglasses for protection from the harmful effects of UV sun rays.

Altitude sickness: Please read altitude advice in section 4: Health and Vaccinations (4.9 Altitude sickness).

Recommendations

Eat: Ecuador offers a wide variety of exotic foods. *Locro de papa* is a famous Ecuadorian soup with avocados, potatoes and cheese. Also *ceviche* (raw seafood marinated in lime juice).

Drink: The national drink is rum. *Canelazo* is a hot drink made with *aguardiente* (fermented sugar cane). Fresh *tomate de árbol* juice – a sweet-and-sour local fruit.

Read: Saddled with Darwin-Toby Green *An interesting voyage in the footsteps of Darwin by a young, intrepid explorer with a fantastic sense of humour. A good balance of history and adventure.*

Floreana: A Woman's Pilgrimage to the Galápagos – Margret Wittmer *An account from one of the first settlers on the Galápagos and full of exotic adventures.*

The Panama Hat Trail –Tom Miller *The Panama hat is not from Panama! The book provides an insightful look at Ecuadorian culture from the capital city of Quito set high in the Andes to the tropical town of Guayaquil on the coast.*

Satan Came to Eden – Dore Strauch *Originally published in 1936. Satan Came to Eden meticulously recounts Ritter and Strauch's often bizarre, true-life struggle from a survivor's point of view—an account lost to the*

public for nearly 80 years. Editor Joseph Troise supplements Strauch's original memoir with previously unpublished photographs and an informative preface, introducing a new generation of readers to one of the strangest stories of the twentieth century.

Nan magazine is a bi-monthly bilingual travel magazine about Ecuador produced by Ecuadorans, expats and visitors.

www.nanmagazine.com/en

Some notable events

Mar/Apr: Semana Santa (annual dates vary) Ecuador is a very religious country, the Andes and urban areas are very interesting places to experience festivities, such as Cuenca.

21 Apr: Riobamba Independence Festival: Lively parades throughout the city.

3rd week in Jun: Los San Juanes: Three festivals including Inti Raymi. A week-long celebration including music, dance, and interesting indigenous rituals.

Jun: Septenario in Cuenca: Corpus Christi festival lasts a week with fireworks and 'vacas locas'. Thousands of balloons are sent into the sky over the city on closing night.

1st week of Nov: Fiesta de la Mama Negra in Latacunga, a traditional parade to celebrate the mixture of indigenous, Spanish and African influences found in Ecuador.

1st week of Dec: Fiestas de Quito: A week of various parades, performances and music culminating in the all-night event of 5 Dec.

DESTINATION GUIDE

El Salvador

Country facts

Size: Total land area 20,721 sq km (approx size of Wales).

Population: 6 million.

Capital: San Salvador.

Language: Spanish.

Electricity: 120v. Standard British plugs will need an adapter to a flat two-pin plug.

Time zone: GMT-6 hours.

Currency: US Dollar (US\$). ATMs widespread except in more isolated towns.

Budget: Prices do vary within each country and high end restaurants tend to be similarly priced to a UK equivalent. Hotel restaurants are also usually more expensive. As a rough guide at the time of writing, in San Salvador:

- The cost of a **2 course lunch/dinner** at a mid-range restaurant = US\$15.00/\$20.00
- The cost of a small (**0.33l**) **bottle of national beer** in a mid-range restaurant = US\$3.00
- The cost of a **glass of "house wine"** (Chilean or Argentine) = US\$5.00

Entry requirements

Visa and health regulations: No visa requirement for British citizens though other nationalities may require an entry visa. A yellow fever vaccination certificate may be required for entry if travelling from countries with risk of yellow fever virus transmission, even if you have not visited an affected area. For the most up-to-date entry and health certification requirements please check www.iatatravelcentre.com.

On arrival make sure to check the entry stamp in your passport and always keep safe any entry cards or other documentation handed to you by immigration officials as these are usually required when leaving the country.

Departure tax: For international flights, airport taxes are included in the ticket.

Internal flights: Domestic airport taxes may apply. (See section 8.10 on 'Airport Taxes').

Weather

The dry season runs from late Nov-Apr. Temperatures are tropical, around 30°C, and it feels even hotter and more humid on the coast, especially towards the beginning of the wet season in May. San Salvador, at 680m above sea level, enjoys a slightly more temperate climate. The wet season is characterised by daily downpours which relieve the heat somewhat but travel by road can be difficult.

Clothing tips

Lightweight cotton or linen clothes are recommended throughout the year. Casual loose-fitting clothing in Suchitoto which can be stifling.

Travel Health & Vaccinations

This information is intended as an overview only. Please read, Section 4: Health and Vaccinations and always consult your GP.

Yellow fever: N/A (though please see 'Entry requirements')

Malaria: There is a low risk of malaria in rural areas of Santa Ana, Ahuachapán and La Unión provinces in western El Salvador.

Water: Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water (even when brushing teeth) and ensure ice cubes are made

from purified water.

Sun protection: Use sunblock (SPF 30 or higher), a hat and sunglasses for protection from the harmful effects of UV sun rays.

Recommendations

Eat: *Pupusas* made from thick, hand-made corn tortilla and filled with refried beans and cheese.

Drink: *Licuada*s (juices) made with locally sourced fresh fruit, milk, and usually ice.

Read: Small Hours of the Night – Roque Dalton

One of Latin America's most compelling poets, and an active member of El Salvador's revolutionary movement. This collection of his work enunciates in a direct, conversational tone his preoccupation with social injustice.

The Martyr of El Salvador: The Assassination of Oscar Romero-Reagan Martin

Although much more in depth works about the life of Monsenor Romero are available, this short book gives a good background to El Salvador's revered icon.

Some notable events

1st Sunday in May: The Flower and Palm Festival in Panchimalco is an intriguing and colourful traditional ceremony and procession.

31st Aug: Bolas de Fuego in Nejapa. In a tradition dating back to 1658, the festival of fire involves two teams waging a pitched battle of fire balls. Watching (not participating) is advised.

DESTINATION GUIDE

Falkland Islands

Country facts

Size: 12,173 sq km (slightly smaller than Northern Island).

Population: 3,398.

Capital: Stanley

Language: English

Electricity: 242V using square 3-pin UK type plugs.

Time zone: GMT-3 hours.

Currency: Falklands Pound

Budget: There are only 2 main restaurants in Stanley with a few other pubs which serve food and an American style diner:

- The cost of a **2 course lunch/dinner** at a mid-range restaurant = £20/£30 US\$18.00/\$22.00
- The cost of a small **(0.33l) bottle of national beer** = £2.50
- The cost of a **glass of "house wine"** in a pub = £2.50

Entry requirements

Visa and health regulations: No visa requirement for British citizens though other nationalities may require an entry visa. For the most up-to-date entry and health certification requirements please check www.iatatravelcentre.com.

On arrival make sure to check the entry stamp in your passport and always keep safe any entry cards or other documentation handed to you by immigration officials as these are usually required when leaving the country.

Departure tax: £25 per person. If

travelling via LATAM this will need to be paid on departure at the airport in cash only (dollars, euros or sterling). Alternatively you can pay at the Customs and Immigration Office located in Stanley. If travelling via MOD the departure tax will be included on your flight ticket.

Weather

The Falkland Islands have a chilly climate characterised by strong winds, particularly in the spring (Sep-Oct). Rain falls on approximately 180 days per year, but totals are small. The islands are at their warmest in Jan, the mid-point of the southern summer, but temperatures (averaging 10°C) don't vary much throughout the year. A little-known fact is that the islands are bathed in the same number of sunshine hours as southern England. Visitors benefit from long hours of daylight Oct-Mar, when migratory birds and mammals arrive. November is the breeding time for penguins.

Clothing tips

Casual clothing is the order in the Falkland Islands. Travellers should bring clothes similar to those worn in Britain in the spring. Particularly important are a wind & waterproof jacket or anorak with a hood or hat and a stout pair of walking boots or shoes, as you may have to cross some rough ground to see the best wildlife. Sun/ wind screen and lip salve are essential when spending time outdoors in the remarkably clear, unpolluted air. Shoes or slippers for indoor use are also useful as it is customary to remove outdoor footwear when entering lodges/houses, particularly in camp (outside of Stanley).

Travel Health & Vaccinations

This information is intended as an overview only. Please read, Section 4: Health and Vaccinations and always

consult your GP.

At the time of writing, no vaccinations are mandatory.

Yellow fever: N/A

Malaria: N/A

Water: Make sure you drink plenty of fluids especially water. Tap water is drinkable

Sun protection: Use sunblock (SPF 30 or higher) and Sunscreen lip balm (SPF 20 or higher), a hat and sunglasses for protection from the harmful effects of UV sun rays.

Recommendations

Eat: Patagonian Tooth fish, local Lamb, local squid along with 'smoko' treats which include an array of homemade biscuits, cakes, and confectionary

Drink: Falklands Brewery makes a selection of local ales and the Falklands also makes its own vodka and more recently gin.

Read: Little black Lies: By Way of the Falkland Islands - Sharon Bolton – *a dark suspense thriller set on the Islands with vivid descriptions of community life, geography, wildlife, and landscapes.*

Falklands Diary: Winds of Change in a Distant Colony - Jean Austin – *Austin's husband was appointed Colonial Secretary of the Falkland Islands in 1969 and in this memoir she describes life on the remote outpost of the British colonies as well as the Islands' growing geopolitical significance.*

Some notable events

24 Mar: Stanley Marathon – The world's most southerly AIMS certified marathon affording magnificent views around the capital.

14 Jun: Liberation Day commemorates the end of the Falklands War in 1982 and key date for the islanders.

26-28 Dec: The Christmas Races is a century long tradition of horse racing and gymkhanas held in Stanley.

DESTINATION GUIDE

Guatemala

Country facts

Size: Total land area 107,159 sq km (approx ½ the size of UK).

Population: 15 million.

Capital: Guatemala City

Language: Spanish (English in Livingston)

Electricity: 120V. Standard British plugs will need an adapter to a flat two-pin plug.

Time zone: GMT-6 hours.

Currency: Quetzal. You can exchange US\$ at banks throughout the country. ATMs generally widespread except in more isolated towns.

Budget: Prices do vary within each country and high end restaurants tend to be similarly priced to a UK equivalent. Hotel restaurants are also usually more expensive. As a rough guide at the time of writing, in Antigua:

- The cost of a **2 course lunch/dinner** at a mid-range restaurant = US\$18.00/\$22.00
- The cost of a small **(0.33l) bottle of national beer** in a mid-range restaurant = US\$3.50
- The cost of a **glass of "house wine"** (Chilean or Argentine) = US\$5.00

Entry requirements

Visa and health regulations: No visa requirement for British citizens though other nationalities may require an entry visa. A yellow fever vaccination certificate may be required for entry if travelling from countries with risk of yellow fever virus transmission, even if you have not visited

an affected area. For the most up-to-date entry and health certification requirements please check www.iatatravelcentre.com.

On arrival make sure to check the entry stamp in your passport and always keep safe any entry cards or other documentation handed to you by immigration officials as these are usually required when leaving the country.

Departure tax: For international flights, airport taxes are included in the ticket.

Internal flights: Domestic airport taxes may apply. (See section 8.10 on 'Airport Taxes').

Weather

The dry season runs from Nov-May and the wet season between Jun-Oct. The wettest months are Aug-Oct, when heavy afternoon showers are to be expected.

Temperatures vary greatly depending on the altitude. The tropical jungles of the Petén and coastal lowlands are hot and humid year round whilst the western Highlands (including Guatemala City, Antigua, Lake Atitlan and Chichicastenango) experience a much more comfortable spring-like climate with sunny days and temperatures averaging 22C. Nights and early mornings are much colder at altitude, particularly so in Huehuetenango, Todos Santos Cuchumatanes and Quetzaltenango which lie between 1900-2500masl.

Clothing tips

Lightweight cotton or linen clothes are recommended throughout the year. Antigua and Lake Atitlan can get cool in the evening, take a long sleeved shirt and a sweater.

In Tikal/Petén take shoes with good ankle support and grip for exploring the Mayan ruins and jungle trails.

Travel Health & Vaccinations

This information is intended as an overview only. Please read, Section 4: Health and Vaccinations and always consult your GP.

Yellow fever: N/A (though please see 'Entry requirements')

Malaria: There is a low risk of malaria in Guatemala below 1,500m. There is no risk in Guatemala City, Antigua and Lake Atitlan and areas above 1,500m.

Water: Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water (even when brushing teeth) and ensure ice cubes are made from purified water.

Sun protection: Use sunblock (SPF 30 or higher), a hat and sunglasses for protection from the harmful effects of UV sun rays.

Recommendations

Eat: *Tamales* – an ancient Mayan food made from maize and wrapped in plantain leaves with many different varieties. Pepian, a hearty Mayan stew with many roasted spices.

Drink: *Atole de Elote*, a corn based drink best consumed when hot.

Read: The President – Miguel Ángel Asturias

A dark, often harrowing account of life under the Guatemalan dictator, Manuel Estrada Cabrera, which denounces the atrocities committed by those who held absolute power. A real life tale that, disturbingly, creates some parallels with Orwell's fictitious novel 1984

The Lost Chronicles of the Maya Kings – David Drew

Explores the collapse of the Maya Empire, including a fascinating and well-crafted portrait of the Maya world.

I, Rigoberta Menchu – Rigoberta Menchu

The testimony that catapulted an indigenous Guatemalan woman onto the political stage. Menchu's powerful voice records the plight of the Guatemalan people during the Civil War.

Some notable events

Mar/Apr (annual dates vary): Semana Santa: Antigua, is particularly famous for its vibrant and colourful celebrations and intricate floral carpets that decorate the streets.

DESTINATION GUIDE

Guyana

Country facts

Size: Total land area 196,849 sq km (slightly smaller than the UK).

Population: 735,000.

Capital: Georgetown.

Language: English, Amerindian dialects, Creole.

Electricity: 242v. Standard British plugs will need an adapter to a flat two-pin plug.

Time zone: GMT-4 hours.

Currency: Guyanese dollar (GYD). ATM's and credit card use are very limited. Take as much cash in US\$ as your travel insurance will allow.

Budget: Prices do vary within each country and high end restaurants tend to be similarly priced to a UK equivalent. Hotel restaurants are also usually more expensive. As a rough guide at the time of writing, in Georgetown:

- The cost of a **2 course lunch/dinner** at a mid-range restaurant = US\$18.00/\$25.00
- The cost of a small **(0.33l) bottle of national beer** in a mid-range restaurant = US\$2.00
- The cost of a **glass of "house wine"** (Chilean or Argentine) = US\$5.00

Entry requirements

Visa and health regulations: No visa requirement for British citizens though other nationalities may require an entry visa. British citizens do require a visa if travelling to Suriname. For the most up-to-date entry and health certification requirements please check www.iaatatravelcentre.com.

On arrival make sure to check the entry stamp in your passport and always keep safe any entry cards or other documentation handed to you by immigration officials as these are usually required when leaving the country.

Departure tax: For international flights, airport taxes are included on the ticket.

Internal flights: Domestic airport taxes may apply. (See section 8.10 on 'Airport Taxes').

Weather

Guyana is typically hot with average daily temperatures of 27°C and it remains warm during the night. The north of the country experiences two wet seasons – from May -Jun and Dec-Feb.

The south and the Rupununi region has only one wet season – from May-Aug.

Clothing tips

See 'The Amazon and Tropical Lowlands section).

Travel Health & Vaccinations

This information is intended as an overview only. Please read, Section 4: Health and Vaccinations and always consult your GP.

Yellow fever: Vaccination recommended for visitors to all areas.

Malaria: There is a risk of malaria in all interior regions of Guyana. There is a very low risk of malaria in Georgetown and the coastal regions.

Water: Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water (even when brushing teeth) and ensure ice cubes are made from purified water.

Sun protection: Use sunblock (SPF 30 or higher), a hat and sunglasses for

protection from the harmful effects of UV sun rays.

Recommendations

Eat: Pepper pot. A spicy dish made with cassareep and beef, served with split peas and rice.

Drink: El Dorado is an award winning, dark Caribbean rum.

Read: Wild Coast: Travels on South America's Untamed Edge – John Gimlette
John Gimlette tells of his travels through the three Guianas, which took him deep into the jungle, from the hideouts of runaway slaves to penal colonies, outlandish forts, remote Amerindian villages, a 'Little Paris' and a space port.

Some notable events

The festivals of all the main religions represented by the population are celebrated, Christian Christmas and Easter; Hindu Diwali; Muslim Eid and Amerindian Mashramani.

Feb 23: Mashramani. A country-wide celebration of Guyanese Republic Day. Expect spectacular costume competitions, float parades, masquerade bands, and plenty of dancing to steel drums, soca, calypso and chutney music.

Oct/Nov: Diwali, Georgetown: The 'festival of lights' celebrates Indian cultural life and traditions with a grand parade of decorated floats and firecrackers.

DESTINATION GUIDE

Honduras

Country facts

Size: Total land area 111,890 sq km (slightly smaller than England).

Population: 9 million.

Capital: Tegucigalpa.

Language: Spanish (English in the Bay Islands)

Electricity: 110V. Standard British plugs will need an adapter to a flat two-pin plug.

Time zone: GMT-6 hours.

Currency: Lempira. Bring US\$ to change to local currency. ATMs can be found in most cities.

Budget: Prices do vary within each country and high end restaurants tend to be similarly priced to a UK equivalent. Hotel restaurants are also usually more expensive. As a rough guide at the time of writing, in Tegucigalpa:

- The cost of a **2 course lunch/dinner** at a mid-range restaurant = US\$15.00/\$19.00
- The cost of a small **(0.33l) bottle of national beer** in a mid-range restaurant = US\$2.50
- The cost of a **glass of "house wine"** (Chilean or Argentine) = US\$4.00

Please note: Prices in The Bay Islands and remote lodges are generally more expensive and vary greatly.

Entry requirements

Visa and health regulations: No visa requirement for British citizens though other nationalities may require an entry visa. A yellow fever vaccination certificate may be required for entry if travelling from

countries with risk of yellow fever virus transmission, even if you have not visited an affected area. For the most up-to-date entry and health certification requirements please check www.iatatravelcentre.com.

On arrival make sure to check the entry stamp in your passport and always keep safe any entry cards or other documentation handed to you by immigration officials as these are usually required when leaving the country.

Departure tax: For international flights, airport taxes are included in the ticket.

Internal flights: Domestic airport taxes may apply. (See section 8.10 on 'Airport Taxes').

Weather

The coastal lowlands have a hot tropical climate all year round with temperatures approaching 30°C. The mountainous interior has a milder climate and in Dec-Jan temperatures hover around 18°C and it is cool at night. The rainy season runs May-Nov with afternoon showers-although precipitation is more persistent on the north coast. Sep-Nov is the season when rainfall may be heavy and hurricanes are possible.

Clothing tips

Lightweight cotton or linen clothes are recommended throughout the year. Sensible shoes to explore the cobblestone streets and ruins at Copán.

In the Bay Islands taking your own snorkelling gear and mask is beneficial.

Travel Health & Vaccinations

This information is intended as an overview only. Please read, Section 4: Health and Vaccinations and always consult your GP.

Yellow fever: N/A (though please see 'Entry requirements')

Malaria: There is a low risk of malaria

below 1,000m and in Roatán and other Bay Islands. There is no risk of malaria in San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa and areas above 1,000m.

Water: Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water (even when brushing teeth) and ensure ice cubes are made from purified water.

Sun protection: Use sunblock (SPF 30 or higher), a hat and sunglasses for protection from the harmful effects of UV sun rays.

Recommendations

Eat: *Sopa de caracol* (Conch soup) made with coconut milk. *Tamales* are an ancient Mayan food made from maize and wrapped in plantain leaves. Many different varieties

Drink: *Horchata* made from rice, morro seeds, ground nuts and spices and mixed with milk and sugar.

Read: The Mosquito Coast-Paul Theroux
A breathtaking adventure as an inventor takes his family to live in Central America determined to build a utopia in the Honduran jungle.

Some notable events

12th Apr: Punta Gorda Festival in Roatan commemorating the day in which Garifuna people were placed on the island. Punta Gorda has the biggest celebrations.

May: Feria de San Isidro, La Ceiba, Honduras: The Honduran version of Carnival where neighbourhood carnivalitos culminate in a big parade and all-night party along Avenida San Isidro and beach.

DESTINATION GUIDE

Mexico

Country facts

Size: Total land area 1,943,945 sq km (approx 8 times the size of UK).

Population: 125 million.

Capital: Mexico City.

Language: Spanish.

Electricity: 127V. Standard British plugs will need an adapter to a flat two-pin plug.

Time zone: There are four time zones in Mexico:

Southeastern Time Zone: GMT -5hours (including Cancun and Riviera Maya)

Central Time Zone: GMT -6hours (including Mexico City and the Yucatan)

Mountain Time Zone: GMT -7hours (Northern Mexico including Copper Canyon and Baja sur)

Pacific Time Zone GMT: -8hours (including Baja Norte)

Currency: Mexican Peso (MXN\$). Best to use major international credit card or debit card which are widely accepted. ATM's are plentiful.

Budget: Prices do vary within each country and high end restaurants tend to be similarly priced to a UK equivalent. Hotel restaurants are also usually more expensive. As a rough guide at the time of writing, in Mexico City:

- The cost of a **2 course lunch/dinner** at a mid-range restaurant = US\$16.00/\$20.00
- The cost of a small (**0.33l**) **bottle of national beer** in a mid-range restaurant = US\$4.00
- The cost of a **glass of "house wine"**

(Chilean or Argentine) = US\$7.00

Entry requirements

Visa and health regulations: No visa requirement for British citizens though other nationalities may require an entry visa. For the most up-to-date entry and health certification requirements please check www.iatatravelcentre.com.

On arrival make sure to check the entry stamp in your passport and always keep safe any entry cards or other documentation handed to you by immigration officials as these are usually required when leaving the country.

Departure tax: For international flights, airport taxes are included in the ticket.

Internal flights: (See section 8.10 on 'Airport Taxes') though they are generally included within the ticket cost.

Baja California: Visitors to Baja California are required to pay a tourist tax of \$18.50 at the airport on arrival.

Weather

South of the Tropic of Cancer, which slices the country in half, there is a hot and humid climate along both coasts, especially from May-Sep, whereas in the highlands the weather tends to be drier and more temperate.

Mexico City is generally dry from Nov-Apr and experiences some rain (often only an hour or so a day) from May-Sep. The high altitude (2,200m) means that it is rarely oppressively hot.

The **Yucatán** tends to be hot and humid throughout the year. Jul-Sep is the green (wet) season when afternoon showers can be expected. Although few and far between, hurricanes are possible on the Caribbean coast.

Palenque is in the tropical lowlands, with temperatures in the low 30°C throughout the year. The heaviest rainfall occurs in

May-Oct.

San Cristóbal de las Casas has a pleasant temperate climate with temperatures in the low 20°C throughout the year. Maximum sunshine hours in Jan-Feb. Most rain falls Jun-Sep.

In the Copper Canyon evenings can get very cold when temperatures drop below zero, especially in Jan-Feb. Deep snow is common especially in the area between Creel at 2,336m and Mexico's highest town, San Juanita (2,350m).

Clothing tips

Mexico City: Casual loose-fitting and light clothing. The city is at an altitude of 2,242m so can get cold at night and in winter.

Yucatán: Light clothing, cotton and natural fibres and good walking shoes.

Caribbean coast: Bathing suits, sunglasses, strong sunscreen, a hat.

Travel Health & Vaccinations

This information is intended as an overview only. Please read, Section 4: Health and Vaccinations and always consult your GP.

At the time of writing, no vaccinations are mandatory.

Yellow fever: N/A.

Malaria: There is a low risk of malaria in Mexico.

Water: Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water (even when brushing teeth) and ensure ice cubes are made from purified water.

Sun protection: Use sunblock (SPF 30 or higher), a hat and sunglasses for protection from the harmful effects of UV sun rays.

Recommendations

Eat: Mexican food is known for varied

flavours and spices. Popular dishes include *tacos*, *burritos*, *quesadillas*, *chimichangas*, *enchiladas*, *tamales*. *Cochinita pibil* a traditional Mexican slow-roasted pork dish

Drink: Tequila distilled from agave (cactus). *Mescal*, less well known and from the Oaxaca region is also produced from agave. *Michelada* – beer mixed with lime

juice and various sauces and spices. *Agua de Jamaica* – a (non-alcoholic) infusion of dried red hibiscus flowers.

Read: Like Water for Chocolate – Laura Esquivel

Set in turn-of-the-century Mexico, it tells the tale of the youngest of three daughters whose fate is to remain single so that she can take care of her mother in old age. Forbidden love and family traditions are mixed together with a hint of magical realism.

Labyrinth of Solitude – Octavio Paz
A beautifully written and deeply felt discourse on Mexico's quest for identity that gives us an unequalled look at the country hidden behind 'the mask'.

The Death of Artemio Cruz – Carlos Fuentes
Chronicling a family history from the pre-Revolution period through to 1960s allows Fuentes to show the failure of the Mexican Revolution.

The Savage Detectives – Roberto Bolaño
Bolaño's award-winning epic tale of two poets, Ulisses Lima and Arturo Belano, and their lives in Mexico City in the 1970s and subsequent travels in Europe and Africa.

Tinisima – Elena Poniatowska
A biography of the Italian-American photographer Tina Modotti, focusing largely on the Mexican cultural revolution and its leading protagonists, including Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo.

Some notable events

Mar/Apr: Semana Santa (annual dates vary): Celebrated all over the country. Particularly colourful celebrations are held in San Miguel de Allende, Taxco and Pátzcuaro.

1st week of Apr: A colourful fair with the streets and parks filled with flower booths and displays with light and sound show in the evening.

End of Jul: Guelagüetza in Oaxaca: An annual indigenous cultural event of traditional dance and costume.

15-20 Aug: Día de la Asunción de la Virgen in Huamantla: Processions, parades, floral designs carpet the streets, and the running of the bulls.

1-2 Nov: Día de Todos los Santos and Día de los Muertos (nationwide): An annual remembrance of the dead, encapsulating Mexico's upbeat treatment of mortality. The celebrations in Pátzcuaro are particularly notable.

16 Sep: Independence Day, Celebrations throughout the country. The day is celebrated with fireworks, flags, food, and parades. On the night of September 15th the cry of Dolores is re-enacted by local politicians in the public squares of most cities and towns throughout the country.

DESTINATION GUIDE

Nicaragua

Country facts

Size: Total land area 119,990 sq km (slightly smaller than England).

Population: 6 million.

Capital: Managua.

Language: Spanish (English in the Corn Islands and Bluefields).

Electricity: 120V. Standard British plugs will need an adapter to a flat two-pin plug.

Time zone: GMT-6 hours.

Currency: Cordobas. Bring US\$ to change to local currency, though dollars are widely accepted in tourist areas. ATMs can be found in most cities but uncommon in rural areas.

Budget: Prices do vary within each country and high end restaurants tend to be similarly priced to a UK equivalent. Hotel restaurants are also usually more expensive. As a rough guide at the time of writing, in Granada:

- The cost of a **2 course lunch/dinner** at a mid-range restaurant = US\$18.00/\$22.00
- The cost of a small **(0.33l) bottle of national beer** in a mid-range restaurant = US\$1.50
- The cost of a **glass of "house wine"** (Chilean or Argentine) = US\$4.00

Entry requirements

Visa and health regulations: No visa requirement for British citizens though other nationalities may require an entry visa. A yellow fever vaccination certificate may be required for entry if travelling from countries with risk of yellow fever virus

transmission, even if you have not visited an affected area. For the most up-to-date entry and health certification requirements please check www.iatatravelcentre.com.

On arrival make sure to check the entry stamp in your passport and always keep safe any entry cards or other documentation handed to you by immigration officials as these are usually required when leaving the country.

Departure tax: \$35.00 though airport taxes are sometimes included in the ticket.

Internal flights: Domestic airport taxes may apply. (See section 8.10 on 'Airport Taxes').

Weather

Situated well within the tropics, Nicaragua has a typical tropical climate with high temperatures all year round. Temperatures are significantly modified by altitude – higher up in the Matagalpa region it can get fresh at night.

May-Nov is rainy season, but places on the eastern coast, the Caribbean side, tend to be rather wetter, and to have a longer rainy season, than those on the Pacific coast to the west. There's a risk of tropical storms or hurricanes Jun-Nov.

Clothing tips

Lightweight cotton or linen clothes are recommended throughout the year. On the Atlantic side, Rio San Juan is one of the wettest places on earth and a raincoat is advised. See Amazon and Tropical Lowlands section.

Travel Health & Vaccinations

This information is intended as an overview only. Please read, Section 4: Health and Vaccinations and always consult your GP.

Yellow fever: N/A (though please see 'Entry requirements').

Procesión de San Jerónimo on first Sunday of Dec.

Malaria: There is a low risk of malaria in Nicaragua.

Water: Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water (even when brushing teeth) and ensure ice cubes are made from purified water.

Sun protection: Use sunblock (SPF 30 or higher), a hat and sunglasses for protection from the harmful effects of UV sun rays.

Recommendations

Eat: *Gallo Pinto*, a mixture of fried rice with onion, sweet pepper, red beans and garlic. *Rundown* ("Rondon") is a coconut based stew popular in the Caribbean.

Drink: *Flor de Canene* rum is one of Latin Americas most prestigious rums.

Read: *Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey* – Salman Rushdie
Travel tales and social commentary set in Nicaragua. Stirring and original in its simple descriptions that provide an impressionistic picture of the country in bright, patchwork colours unavailable in usual journalistic dispatches.

Selected Writings – Rubén Darío *Originally from Nicaragua, Darío is considered the father of Latin American poetry.*

Some notable events

19/20 Jan: *Diriamba*: Celebrated by all Nicaraguans. Even though it is now a Roman Catholic festival, the dances, songs, and costumes reflect indigenous culture.

End of Sep: *Fiestas de Masaya, Nicaragua*: A three-month celebration on Sundays of parades, tamarindo music, and includes *Fiesta del Toro* and *Fiesta de los Agüisotes* in late Oct and ends with the impressive

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Panama

Country facts

Size: Total land area 74,342 sq km (slightly smaller than Scotland).

Population: 4 million.

Capital: Panama City.

Language: Spanish.

Electricity: 110V. Standard British plugs will need an adapter to a flat two-pin plug.

Time zone: GMT-5 hours.

Currency: US\$ Dollar. ATMs can be found in most cities. Credit cards widely accepted.

Budget: Prices do vary within each country and high end restaurants tend to be similarly priced to a UK equivalent. Hotel restaurants are also usually more expensive. As a rough guide at the time of writing, in Panama City:

- The cost of a **2 course lunch/dinner** at a mid-range restaurant = US\$16.00/\$24.00
- The cost of a small (**0.33l**) **bottle of national beer** in a mid-range restaurant = US\$2.00
- The cost of a **glass of "house wine"** (Chilean or Argentine) = US\$7.50

Entry requirements

Visa and health regulations: No visa requirement for British citizens though other nationalities may require an entry visa. A yellow fever vaccination certificate may be required for entry if travelling from countries with risk of yellow fever virus transmission, even if you have not visited an affected area. For the most up-to-date

entry and health certification requirements please check www.iatatravelcentre.com.

On arrival make sure to check the entry stamp in your passport and always keep safe any entry cards or other documentation handed to you by immigration officials as these are usually required when leaving the country.

Departure tax: For international flights, airport taxes are included in the ticket.

Internal flights: Domestic airport taxes may apply. (See section 8.10 on 'Airport Taxes').

Weather

Situated well within the tropics, Panama has a typical tropical climate with high temperatures (30°C) all year round at low altitudes. Temperatures are cooler at night in the highlands round Boquete.

Apr-Nov is rainy season, with the Caribbean side receiving more rainfall than the Pacific. Although there is plenty of sun in Bocas del Torro the province receives copious rainfall throughout the year.

There's a small risk of tropical storms on the Caribbean coast but the country lies outside the main hurricane belt.

Clothing tips

Lightweight cotton or linen clothes are recommended throughout the year due to high humidity.

Travel Health & Vaccinations

This information is intended as an overview only. Please read, Section 4: Health and Vaccinations and always consult your GP.

Yellow fever: Vaccination is recommended for those travelling to all mainland areas east of the area surrounding the Canal (the entire comarcas of Emberá and Kuna Yala, the province of Darién and areas of the

provinces of Colón and Panama that are east of the Canal).

Vaccination is not recommended for travellers whose itineraries are limited to areas west of the Canal, the city of Panama, the Canal area itself, Balboa Islands (Pearl Islands), and San Blas Islands.

Malaria: There is a low risk of malaria east of the Canal Zone in Panama. There is a very low risk of malaria west of the Canal Zone. There is no risk of malaria in Panama City or the Canal Zone itself.

Water: Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water (even when brushing teeth) and ensure ice cubes are made from purified water.

Sun protection: Use sunblock (SPF 30 or higher), a hat and sunglasses for protection from the harmful effects of UV sun rays.

Recommendations

Eat: *Sancocho* – the national Panamanian dish, a chicken stew with local vegetables.

Drink: *Chichas* – which come in a variety of flavours such as watermelon and pineapple as well as *chicha de marañón* from the fruit of the cashew tree.

Read: The Tailor of Panama-John le Carré
A tailor living in Panama reluctantly becomes a spy for a British agent.

Panama Fever: The Epic Story of One of the Greatest Human Achievements of All Time- *the Building of the Panama Canal* – Matthew Parker

Some notable events

Jan: Feria de las Flores y del Café in Boquete, Panama. A grand and picturesque festival of flowers.

Feb/Mar: (annual dates vary according to Lent) Carnival is celebrated with much

gusto in Panama City, costumed revelry, music and dancing culminate in a big Shrove Tuesday parade.

Mar: Jazz and Blues Festival: Held every year in Boquete.

DESTINATION GUIDE

Paraguay

Country facts

Size: Total land area 397,302 sq km (approx 1.5 times the size of UK).

Population: 7 million.

Capital: Asunción

Language: Spanish.

Electricity: 220v. Standard British plugs will need an adapter to a round two-pin plug.

Time zone: GMT-4 hours.

Currency: Guaraní. You can exchange US\$ into Paraguayan Guaranies at numerous casas de cambio in Asunción and throughout the country. ATMs available but only in Asunción and larger towns and cities (Visa is the most reliably accepted at ATMs).

Budget: Prices do vary within each country and high end restaurants tend to be similarly priced to a UK equivalent. Hotel restaurants are also usually more expensive. As a rough guide at the time of writing, in Asuncion:

- The cost of a **2 course lunch/dinner** at a mid-range restaurant = US\$15.00/\$20.00
- The cost of a small (**0.33l**) **bottle of national beer** in a mid-range restaurant = US\$3.00
- The cost of a **glass of "house wine"** (Chilean or Argentine) = US\$5.00

Entry requirements

Visa and health regulations: No visa requirement for British citizens though other nationalities may require an entry visa. A Yellow Fever vaccination certificate

may be required for entry if travelling from countries with risk of yellow fever virus transmission, even if you have not visited an affected area. For the most up-to-date entry and health certification requirements please check www.iatatravelcentre.com.

On arrival make sure to check the entry stamp in your passport and always keep safe any entry cards or other documentation handed to you by immigration officials as these are usually required when leaving the country.

Departure tax: USD\$35.00 though usually included on the ticket.

Internal flights: Domestic airport taxes may apply. (See section 8.10 on 'Airport Taxes').

Weather

The climate of this low-lying country is sub-tropical. Summer is extremely hot and humid (Oct-Mar), with average temperatures in Feb reaching 35°C. In winter (May-Aug) temperatures are variable and it can be very cold at night. Most precipitation falls Oct- Apr but it can rain at any time of the year.

Clothing tips

Asunción: Lightweight cotton or linen clothes are recommended. In winter it can get chilly at night so bring a sweater.

Travel Health & Vaccinations

This information is intended as an overview only. Please read, Section 4: Health and Vaccinations and always consult your GP.

Yellow fever: Vaccination recommended for all travellers.

Malaria: There is no risk of malaria in Paraguay.

Water: Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles.

Avoid tap water (even when brushing teeth) and ensure ice cubes are made from purified water.

Sun protection: Use sunblock (SPF 30 or higher), a hat and sunglasses for protection from the harmful effects of UV sun rays.

Recommendations

Eat: *Chipa Guasu* – a Paraguayan staple is a moist corn cake made with cheese – often delicious! Highly popular are empanadas (meat/egg stuffed in a pastry and baked).

Drink: *Tereré* – mixed herb beverage drunk from a *guampa* like Argentinean mate, but served cold because of the hot climate.

Read: At the Tomb of the Inflatable Pig: Travels through Paraguay-John Gimlette *A celebration of the beauty, horror and charm of South America's obscure and remote 'island surrounded by land', a fascinating piece of travel journalism.*

Watch: Landfill Harmonic follows the Recycled Orchestra-a beautiful story about the transformative power of music, which highlights two vital issues of our times: poverty and waste pollution.

Some notable events

03 Feb: Dia De San Blas a celebration of Paraguay's patron saint. Saint Blas festival sees its biggest celebrations in the city of Ciudad del Este.

Feb/Mar: (annual dates vary according to Lent): Carnival as in other countries, pageants and parades through the streets, and lots of music and dancing into the night.

DESTINATION GUIDE

Peru

Country facts

Size: Total land area 1,279,996 sq km (approx 5 times the size of UK).

Population: 31 million.

Capital: Lima.

Language: Spanish, Quechua.

Electricity: 220v. Many Peruvian electricity outlets accept both round or flat two pin-plugs. A universal adapter is recommended.

Time zone: GMT-5 hours.

Currency: Nuevo sol. ATM's are found in nearly every city and town in Peru and at airports. Casas de cambio (bureaux de change) are considered the best places to exchange money. In smaller towns it can be difficult to use credit/debit cards, so make sure that you take enough cash.

Budget: Prices do vary within each country and high end restaurants tend to be similarly priced to a UK equivalent. Hotel restaurants are also usually more expensive. As a rough guide at the time of writing, in Cusco:

- The cost of a **2 course lunch/dinner** at a mid-range restaurant = US\$17.00/\$22.00
- The cost of a small (**0.33l**) **bottle of national beer** in a mid-range restaurant = US\$5.00
- The cost of a **glass of "house wine"** (Chilean or Argentine) = US\$9.00

Entry requirements

Visa and health regulations: No visa requirement for British citizens though other nationalities may require an entry visa. For the most up-to-date entry and health certification requirements please

check www.iatatravelcentre.com.

On arrival make sure to check the entry stamp in your passport and always keep safe any entry cards or other documentation handed to you by immigration officials as these are usually required when leaving the country.

Departure tax: For international flights, airport taxes are included in the ticket.

Internal flights: Domestic airport taxes are usually included on the ticket. (See section 8.10 on 'Airport Taxes').

Weather

In **Cusco and the highlands**, Jun-Sep can be very cold at night, but days are usually extremely clear with sun. Nov-Apr are the wettest months of the year (the Inca Trail is closed throughout Feb) – note that rains tend to be in short, heavy bursts, rather than continual showers, with rains clearing towards the end of Apr. Nights are cold throughout the year at altitude.

Lima has a mist (la garúa) that comes in from the sea, principally from May-Oct, but is otherwise fairly dry throughout the year.

In the **Amazon** the climate is generally hot and humid (about 30°C). The dry season is from Apr-Oct and the wet season from Nov-Apr. The wet season is characterised by a few hours of rain each day and temperatures that can reach up to 42°C. In May there is often a layer of low cloud over the rainforest.

Clothing tips

Lima: Casual warm-weather clothing for day and light jackets and sweaters for the evenings.

Amazon: A visit to the rainforest requires a rain jacket. See 'The Amazon and Tropical Lowlands' section.

Puno and Colca Canyon: Whilst hot during the day, a jacket is important as the

high altitude means it can get very cold at night.

Cusco and Sacred Valley: Layered clothing recommended. (see 'Patagonia and the Andes' section).

Travel Health & Vaccinations

This information is intended as an overview only. Please read, Section 4: Health and Vaccinations and always consult your GP.

Yellow fever: Vaccination is recommended for those travelling to the following areas at altitudes below 2,300m: the Regions of Amazonas, Cuzco (for Cuzco city, Machu Pichu and the Inca trail see below), Huánuco, Junín, Loreto, Madre de Dios, Pasco, Puno (for Puno city see below), San Martín, Ucayali and designated areas of the following Regions far-north-eastern Ancash; far-north of Apurímac; northern and north-eastern Ayacucho; northern and eastern Cajamarca; far northern Huancavelica; eastern La Libertad, and eastern Piura.

Vaccination is generally not recommended for travellers whose itineraries are limited to areas west of the Andes: regions of Lambayeque and Tumbes and designated areas of south, west and central Cajamarca and western Piura.

Vaccination is not recommended for travellers whose itineraries are limited to the following areas: all areas above 2,300m altitude, areas west of the Andes not listed above, the cities of Cuzco, Puno and the capital city of Lima, Machu Picchu, and the Inca Trail.

Malaria: There is a low risk of malaria in the Amazon basin of Peru along the border with Brazil, particularly in Loreto province and in the other rural areas of Peru below 2,000m including that part of the Amazon Basin which borders Bolivia.

Water: Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles.

Avoid tap water (even when brushing teeth) and ensure ice cubes are made from purified water.

Sun protection: Use sunblock (SPF 30 or higher), a hat and sunglasses for protection from the harmful effects of UV sun rays. Be particularly careful at high altitude in the Andes and Lake Titicaca where the sun is intense

Altitude sickness: Please read altitude advice in section 4: Health and Vaccinations (4.9 Altitude sickness).

Recommendations

Eat: Peru's excellent gastronomic reputation is well deserved. The national dish *ceviche* (raw seafood cooked in citrus juices, red onion and chilli) is widespread but best in Lima and along the coast. Roasted Guinea Pig (*cuy*) is one of the more unusual traditional Andean delicacies you will find and Alpaca a surprisingly lean and tender meat. Quinoa, held to be sacred by the Incas, is used inventively in many dishes and Lúcumá, one of many exotic fruits native to Peru, makes delicious milkshakes and ice-cream.

Drink: *Pisco Sour* cocktails – the national drink. Popular with locals is *Chicha de Jora* a traditional drink made with fermented corn. *Mate de Coca*, a tea made from the leaves of the coca plant. *Inca Kola*, Peru's unique luminous yellow soft drink.

Read: Deep Rivers – José María Arguedas *An account of the influence of pre-Hispanic cultures on modern life in Peru. Good descriptions of Cusco and the Sacred Valley.*

A World for Julius-Alfredo Bryce Echenique
This lyrical, richly textured novel, first published in 1970 opens new territory in Latin American literature with its focus on the social elite of Peru. In this postmodern

novel Bryce Echenique incisively charts the decline of an influential, centuries-old aristocratic family faced with the invasion of foreign capital in the 1950s.

Conquest of the Incas – John Hemming
A readable and authoritative book of Pizarro's conquest of Peru and his search for El Dorado in the 1530s. An astonishing account of war strategies and upsets between unequal forces with vastly different technologies. It gives a real understanding into present-day relationships between Spanish and native peoples in South America.

Exploring Cuzco – Peter Frost
An excellent book giving up-to-date information on where to go and what to see in and around Cusco. (Best bought on arrival in Cusco from one of the shops around the main square.)

General Song – Pablo Neruda
The Latin American continent through history and poetry. In section 2, 'The Heights of Machu Picchu', Neruda chronicles his own journey to the ancient Inca citadel.

The White Rock – Hugh Thomson
An exploration of the Inca heartland. Part travelogue, part history lesson – British filmmaker Thomson relates his travels through Peru and Bolivia.

Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter – Mario Vargas Llosa
Highly original novel set in 1950s Lima. The anxieties of an aspiring writer, his fears, doubts, failures and experiences are conveyed using Peruvian society as a microcosm of Latin America. (There are many more excellent novels by the Nobel Prize laureate.)

Some notable events

2 Feb: Main day of the Mamacha Candelaria festival in Puno, a lavish folkloric festivity.

May/June: Qoyllur Rit'i : A festival and huge pilgrimage of native Indians in honour of the Lord of Qoyllur Rit'i in Cusco region.

24 June: Inti Raymi in Cusco: Homage to the Sun, an important god in Inca culture, held on the esplanade of Sacsayhuamán.

16 July: Virgen del Carmen in Paucartambo near Cusco is a colourful mix of Andean pre-Columbian and Catholic ceremonies. Festive costumes, music and dance abound.

Oct: El Señor de los Milagros: A religious procession through the streets of Lima to the venerated mural, lasting 24 hours and involving tens of thousands dressed in purple.

DESTINATION GUIDE

Uruguay

Country facts

Size: Total land area 175,015 sq km (approx 2/3 the size of UK).

Population: 3 million.

Capital: Montevideo.

Language: Spanish.

Electricity: 230v. Standard British plugs will need an adapter to a round two-pin plug.

Time zone: GMT-3 hours.

Currency: Uruguayan Peso. You can exchange US\$ at the numerous casas de cambio throughout the country. ATMs also available in both Colonia and Montevideo.

When paying for hospitality services (restaurants, bars, hotels) with a foreign credit card you are exempt from paying VAT (22%).

Budget: Prices do vary within each country and high end restaurants tend to be similarly priced to a UK equivalent. Hotel restaurants are also usually more expensive. As a rough guide at the time of writing, in Montevideo:

- The cost of a **2 course lunch/ dinner** at a mid-range restaurant = US\$25.00/\$28.00
- The cost of a small (**0.33l**) **bottle of national beer** in a mid-range restaurant = US\$4.00
- The cost of a **glass of "house wine"** (Chilean or Argentine) = US\$4.00

Entry requirements

Visa and health regulations: No visa

requirement for British citizens though other nationalities may require an entry visa. For the most up-to-date entry and health certification requirements please check www.iatatravelcentre.com.

On arrival make sure to check the entry stamp in your passport and always keep safe any entry cards or other documentation handed to you by immigration officials as these are usually required when leaving the country.

Departure tax: For international flights, airport taxes are included in the ticket.

Internal flights: Domestic airport taxes may apply. (See section 8.10 on 'Airport Taxes').

Weather

Uruguay is an all-year destination, but probably best enjoyed in summer (Nov-Feb). Temperatures range from 10-16°C in the southern hemisphere winter, while in the summer they hover in the mid-20s. Wet and windy conditions outside high summer are not unheard of, and can make it feel very chilly. Rainfall is moderate and varies little over the year, apart from Jul-Aug when there are prolonged wet periods.

Clothing tips

Montevideo: A warm jacket for evenings in Spring (Sep-Oct) and Autumn (Apr-May).

Punta del Este: Smart-casual evening wear when dining on the main strip. Shorts during the day.

Colonia: Sensible shoes to explore the cobblestone streets.

Travel Health & Vaccinations

This information is intended as an overview only. Please read, Section 4: Health and Vaccinations and always consult your GP.

Yellow fever: N/A

Malaria: N/A

Water: Tap water is drinkable in Montevideo, but you might prefer to protect yourself by only drinking bottled water. In other towns, drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water (even when brushing teeth) and ensure ice cubes are made from purified water.

Sun protection: Use sunblock (SPF 30 or higher), a hat and sunglasses for protection from the harmful effects of UV sun rays.

Recommendations

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Eat: Steak which rivals that from Argentina.

Drink: Tannat red wine – unique to Uruguay, full-bodied.

Read: *The Tree of Red Stars*-Tessa Bridal
Set in 1960s Uruguay, the story charts the toll of political events on a young woman and those close to her.

Some notable events

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Jan 5: Epifania: a big family event with presents exchanged and large meals prepared. Traditionally it marks the beginning of the country's carnival season.

Feb 2: Candlemas: A religious holiday celebrating the presentation of Jesus to the temple 42 days after his birth. Colourful processions, dancing and live music throughout the day.

DESTINATION GUIDE

Venezuela

Country facts

Size: Total land area 882,050 sq km (approx 3.5 times the size of UK).

Population: 31 million.

Capital: Caracas.

Language: Spanish.

Electricity: 120 Standard British plugs will need an adapter to a flat two-pin plug.

Time zone: GMT-4 hours.

Currency: Bolívares (BsF). At the time of writing Venezuela is going through a difficult period of hyper-inflation. However, we advise you to take US\$ in cash (as much as your insurance will cover you for), because travellers cheques are not accepted and in large cities outside Caracas, many ATM's don't recognise British credit/debit cards. In cities, cards are acceptable in shops and restaurants –at the official rate. Branches of Banco Mercantil and Banesco have worked for some travellers. Sometimes the ATM will ask you for a 2-digit identification number after you have selected the amount to withdraw. If you are asked for this, input 00 and it should work. (This is a security measure as all Venezuelan bank cards are linked to an identity document, which UK bank cards are not.)

Parallel-market (black market) traders often offer rates which are much more attractive than banks, ATMs and bureaux de change (casas de cambio), however previous travellers have reported money-exchange scams taking place. So the safest option is to change money through the official channels. The least safe is to get involved with shady men in sometimes not-so-dark corners. If we are providing transfers for you, the driver or guide

may offer you an exchange rate which is double or more than the official rate. It's technically illegal, but our suppliers turn a blind eye, since it's a reasonable alternative to the parallel-market.

Note that you'll need to provide official exchange slips if you want to change money back from bolívares.

Budget: Prices do vary within each country and high end restaurants tend to be similarly priced to a UK equivalent. Hotel restaurants are also usually more expensive. As a rough guide at the time of writing, in Caracas:

- The cost of a **2 course lunch/dinner** at a mid-range restaurant = US\$18.00/\$25.00
- The cost of a small (**0.33l**) **bottle of national beer** in a mid-range restaurant = US\$4.00
- The cost of a **glass of "house wine"** (Chilean or Argentine) = US\$7.00

Entry requirements

Visa and health regulations: No visa requirement for British citizens though other nationalities may require an entry visa. For the most up-to-date entry and health certification requirements please check www.iatatravelcentre.com.

On arrival make sure to check the entry stamp in your passport and always keep safe any entry cards or other documentation handed to you by immigration officials as these are usually required when leaving the country.

Departure tax: For international flights, airport taxes are included in the ticket.

Internal flights: Domestic airport taxes may apply. (See section 8.10 on 'Airport Taxes').

Weather

There are two main seasons: Dec-Apr,

when it's hot and dry, and May-Nov, when it's hot and wet. The Orinoco plains are usually flooded from Jun-Oct; Angel Falls is typically inaccessible by canoe from mid-Dec to mid-Apr due to low river levels. As expected, altitude influences temperature – it is about 4°C colder for every 1,000m above sea level. Caracas lies at 900m.

Clothing tips

Caracas: Lightweight cotton or linen clothes are recommended throughout the year.

Mérida: Can get chilly at night so bring a rain jacket or sweater.

Los Roques: Pack light as there is a 10kg luggage restriction on flights. Beachwear and light clothes for the evening.

Angel Falls: Sturdy walking shoes and Teva-style sandals.

Orinoco: (See 'The Amazon and Tropical Lowlands' section).

Travel Health & Vaccinations

This information is intended as an overview only. Please read, Section 4: Health and Vaccinations and always consult your GP.

Yellow fever: Vaccination recommended for all travellers visiting any area outside the main cities in Venezuela.

Malaria: There is a risk of malaria in all areas of Venezuela south of and including the Orinoco River and Angel Falls, rural areas of Apure, Monagas, Sucre and Zulia states.

Water: Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water (even when brushing teeth) and ensure ice cubes are made from purified water.

Sun protection: Use sunblock (SPF 30 or higher), a hat and sunglasses for

protection from the harmful effects of UV sun rays.

Recommendations

Eat: *Arepas* – stuffed tortillas are the quintessential Venezuelan dish. Try '*reina pepiada*' (chicken and avocado) and *domino* (beans and cheese) variations.

Drink: A popular non-alcoholic drink is *chicha* made from rice or corn flour. *Chicha Andina* incorporates fermented pineapple.

Read: In *Trouble Again: A Journey Between the Orinoco and the Amazon* – Redmond O'Hanlon *O'Hanlon ventures into the Venezuelan jungle encountering poisonous snakes, Yanomami Indians and recalcitrant guides. With an enthusiasm and attention to detail rivalling that of the 19th Century explorers who influenced him (such as Henry Walter Bates) he adds his own brand of satirical observation making his Amazon account an extremely witty and intelligent read.*

Some notable events

14 Jan: *Divina Pastora:* A colourful procession from Santa Rosa to the Metropolitan Cathedral of Barquisimeto. Millions of people take to the streets with musicians, celebrants and devotees.

28 Jun: *Feast of John the Baptist,* Caracas: An unusual mix of traditions, and displays of dancing and purification rituals as African drums are pounded and mantras chanted.

DESTINATION GUIDE

The Amazon and Tropical Lowlands

Clothing should be casual, comfortable and resistant. Light colours are beneficial against sun and bugs. Dark clothes attract mosquitoes. The best colours to wear are light tones, brown, beige and green, which don't highlight you in the landscape, scaring the animals. Avoid strong colours such as yellow, blue and red.

It is important that you always keep at least one set of dry clothes for the evening.

The following items may prove useful:

Clothing

- Short and long-sleeved shirts/T-shirts (lightweight wicking fabric controls perspiration and dries quickly).
- Long-sleeved shirts in a light colour (cotton).
- Lightweight trousers.
- Shorts.
- Swimsuit.
- A light sweater (it can get surprisingly chilly in the rainforest, especially on boat trips).
- Sun hat/cap.

Footwear

- Comfortable outdoor shoes/trainers for evening use.
- Teva-type sandals

Foul-weather gear

- A lightweight raincoat or waterproof poncho.
- Cold fronts sometimes pass through the Amazon very suddenly and temperatures can drop drastically;

heavier clothing can be beneficial.

Travel accessories

- Insect repellent (50% deet).
- Sunglasses (suitable for strong UV conditions).
- Torch/head torch with extra batteries (those with infrared setting attract fewer insects)
- Water bottle/canteen.
- Antihistamine tablets and an EpiPen for people with serious allergies to stings.
- Zip-lock bags to keep things dry.
- Silica bags (recommended for electronic equipment in humid regions)
- Binoculars
- Sunscreen or Sunblock
- Daypack

For some excursions to the jungle and some lodges, you may find you are restricted to a maximum baggage allowance of 10kg (owing to limited space in canoes or light aircraft). In these cases, the local operator will provide secure storage of the remainder of your luggage.

DESTINATION GUIDE

The Galápagos Islands

The Galápagos Islands are on the Equator, but the tropical heat is tempered by ocean breezes. You may require a light sweater for the evening and between Nov-Mar there is a chance of rain. In Aug-Sep you may experience garúa (mist), but the rest of the year skies should be clear and sunny, though we would suggest that you take a waterproof just in case. In addition to bringing good walking shoes, a pair of sports/trekking sandals are highly recommended to negotiate 'wet landings' ashore. Please note that the national park prohibits the introduction of any kind of seeds, fruits, vegetables or food to the Galápagos Islands.

Clothing requirements on board boats cruising the Galápagos range from very informal to "smart casual", depending on the grade of vessel.

The following items would prove useful:

Clothing

- Lightweight trousers.
- Shorts.
- Short-sleeved shirts/T-shirts (cotton is cool in hot climates, but lightweight wicking fabric controls perspiration and dries quickly).
- Long-sleeved shirts in a light colour (cotton).
- Light sweater or sweatshirt (nights can get rather cool and you don't want to miss stargazing on deck).
- Wind resistant jacket.
- Long sleeved 'rash vest' (for sun protection when swimming)
- Shorty wetsuits are recommended in the cold water months (Jul-Sept). These can be hired locally; some boats

provide them.

- Sun hat/cap.

Footwear

- Sandals (for the boat).
- Trainers (for dry landings and rocky shores).
- Teva-style sandals (for wet landings).

Travel accessories

- Sunscreen or sunblock (Water-resistant SPF 50 or higher).
- Sunglasses.
- Water bottle/canteen.
- Camera and memory cards or film (underwater camera beneficial).
- Binoculars.
- Most yachts will provide snorkelling equipment (but if you have your own, we recommend bringing it for an assured fit).
- Vaseline (creates a seal on snorkelling mask for those with facial hair).
- Small umbrella (for sun protection and comfort when walking on trails during the hottest months of the year).
- Insect repellent.

Tipping on cruises

The convention is usually US\$15 per person per day, although this is only a suggestion as we understand that tipping is a personal choice and solely based upon the service provided. You will be given specific guidance on board, though some companies recommend upwards of US\$15 per day per person for the crew, and the same again for your guides. This is often aimed at some travellers, who routinely tip at 15% or even 20% and we believe these figures to be somewhat inflated. Please do not feel pressured into tipping at this level.

DESTINATION GUIDE

Patagonia and The Andes

The following information will be useful even if hiking is not included on your itinerary.

Patagonia: Weather is very unpredictable, and can change drastically and unexpectedly. On a sunny day, daytime temperatures can be very pleasant, ranging between 13-20°C (low 60s to low 70s °F). However, rain, high winds, and cold air can blow in quickly even during the summer months, making the temperatures drop to freezing. In Patagonia it is particularly important that you have windproof and waterproof garments and to wear a hat as the ozone layer is thin and sun can be intense.

The Andes: Nov-Mar are the wettest months. The rest of the year, it's very sunny and hot during the day, but cold at night. Temperatures can drop below 0°C at night, especially in the dry season from Jun-Sep.

Before undertaking a hike involving points of altitude we suggest spending several days acclimatising during which time you should drink plenty of water, gradually increasing your physical activity and avoid drinking too much alcohol.

In the Andes it is particularly important to use sunblock because the sun is intense.

If you have any heart or respiratory conditions, you should consult your doctor before going to high altitudes. Please read altitude advice in section 4: Health and Vaccinations (4.9 Altitude sickness).

Clothing

Hiking in Patagonia and the Andes requires you to bring comfortable and adequate clothing to protect you from

cold (and possibly wet) weather. We recommend to layer with synthetic clothing (such as polypropylene, capilene, or pile) as synthetic fabrics are the most effective barriers against the cold. They provide the best insulation, are light in weight, wick away perspiration, and dry quickly if wet. Wool and wool/ synthetic blends are also suitable. We discourage the use of cotton garments in cold or wet mountain conditions. When layering, the innermost layer should be long underwear. The middle layer can be a synthetic jumper or wool shirt, and trousers. The outermost layer should be a synthetic or down jacket, and/or a good quality Gore-Tex wind/rain parka and over-trousers. We have not included quantities for each item listed. Use your own judgment, based on the length of your trip and overall packing/weight restrictions for your luggage.

Underwear

- Regular underwear. Synthetics are easier to wash and dry.
- Synthetic thermal underwear. You need a lightweight long underwear top and bottom of a polyester-type fabric. Wool and wool/synthetic blends are also suitable.

Shirts

- Long-sleeved, synthetic or wool shirt.
- Short-sleeved synthetic or cotton synthetic T-shirts.

Sweater/jacket

- Medium-weight sweater or jacket of synthetic fabric, such as fleece.
- Medium-weight down or synthetic-fill jacket.

Trousers

- Full-length trousers, preferably of quick-drying synthetic fabric.
- Hiking shorts, preferably of quick-drying

synthetic fabric.

- Fleece-lined trousers, ideal for around camp.

Headwear

- Sun hat with wide brim, preferably with a chinstrap to keep it from blowing off.
- Bandana – it will keep your neck from getting sunburned
- Wool or pile hat or ski cap.

Foul-weather gear

- Gore-Tex rain/wind parka (must fit over bulky clothing).
- Optionally, a sturdy poncho to protect daypack and camera gear from rain.
- Gore-Tex rain/wind trousers, preferably with full-length side zipper (must fit over your other trousers).

Hands

- Gloves or mitts (wool or pile).
- Waterproofed shell gloves or mitts.

Socks

- Thick/trekking socks.
- Athletic socks (synthetic for easy washing and drying).

Footwear

- Medium-weight, waterproof, sturdy hiking boots with padded ankle, good arch support, and a lug sole traction. Your hiking boots should be waterproofed, well broken in, and suitable for prolonged walking on rocky terrain and possibly snow.
- Running shoes are NOT appropriate for this trip.
- Tennis shoes or Teva-type sandals to wear in camp (optional).
- Gaiters.

Travel accessories

- Wide mouth water bottles, 1-litre

capacity. Bring two and make sure they are leak-proof, heavy-duty plastic.

- Toiletry kit—soap, toothbrush, etc.
- Moisturising lotion. The air in Patagonia is very dry.
- Insect repellent.
- Sunglasses. (suitable for strong UV conditions).
- Sunscreen of SPF 30 or higher.
- Sunscreen lip balm of SPF 20 or higher.
- Small torch with spare batteries.
- Plastic bags of various sizes for keeping things sorted out in your backpack.
- Zip-lock bags work well (they're also great for camera gear).
- Small medical kit. Personal first aid kit to include: painkillers, plasters, antibiotic cream, rehydration salts and any personal medication.

Optional travel accessories

- Camera and memory cards or film.
- Binoculars.
- Daypack.
- Hiking poles (Rubber tipped). These are helpful to relieve the impact on your knees during long downhill.

Tipping

- Tipping is always a personal choice and based solely on the service provided. However, detailed below are the conventions as suggested locally:

For the Inca Trail in the Andes, the suggested rates are as follows:

- US\$20 per porter distributed amongst the group.
- US\$20 per person to the cook.
- US\$25 per person to the guide.

This works out at a total of approximately US\$85-\$100 depending upon the number in the group. Please also note that the

weight a porter may carry of an individual client's personal belongings is set at 8kg (in addition they will be carrying camping and cooking equipment to a maximum weight of 16kg). We would also encourage you to donate any unwanted outdoor clothes or sleeping bags to the porters.

For the W Trek in Patagonia, the suggested rates are approximately US\$10-15 per guest per day as a tipping guideline for the Ecocamp, with around half of this going to the main guide and rest distributed amongst the drivers, porters and staff.

2. MONEY

Our advice to clients is the same as that which we follow ourselves when travelling: for most destinations in Latin America, it is easiest to take a mixture of cash (US dollars or euros which can be exchanged for local currency) and credit/debit cards (multiple cards, in case of any problems). We do not recommend travellers cheques which can be very difficult to exchange.

We also suggest keeping loose change and small denominations in local currency upon arrival for tipping and other small purchases.

Please see specific currency section under each country overview.

2.1 Cash

It is a good idea to carry as many US dollars cash as your insurance limit will allow – Dollars are easier to change into local currency than Sterling and lower denomination notes more readily exchanged. The exception to the rule is Cuba where pounds can be exchanged and Argentina where lower denominations can be a problem.

Do not take out from your home country, or accept as change in Latin America, any US dollar notes that are dirty, damaged (even a tiny rip) or defaced. You will not be able to spend or exchange them.

There are many counterfeit \$50 and \$100 dollar bills in circulation in Latin America, It is extremely difficult to spot a forged bill, but you should be aware that they may be slightly discoloured, printed on inferior paper or lacking a watermark.

2.2 Credit and debit cards

Credit cards are widely accepted to make payments in larger hotels, better

restaurants, souvenir shops and stores. They are also acceptable as 'proof of funds' at some borders. Visa is the most widely accepted for both purchases and cash advances, followed by MasterCard. American Express is not as widely accepted.

Credit card purchases are charged at the official rate of exchange, which can be lower than that generally available in exchange houses. There may also be taxes or surcharges added (up to 10%). Cash advances are straightforward on Visa, MasterCard and American Express in most countries. Advances are widely available using ATM's (cajero automático), for which Cirrus, Maestro, Plus and Delta cards may also be used. The rate of exchange is often the most favourable, and long bank queues can be avoided.

Before leaving you should check with your bank or credit card company whether they impose any handling charges. Make sure you have a separate note of the number and validity of your cards, as well as the phone numbers to call should they be lost or stolen. Before departure you should advise your bank that you intend to use your card abroad (and in which countries). Some banks detect an irregular spending pattern, assume the card stolen and suspend the account, which can take days to sort out. Check your account carefully on return from Latin America to ascertain that payments for the card are legitimate. Despite it being theoretically possible to 'live off' your credit card, we also advise you to take sufficient funds in cash (preferably as much as your travel insurance provider will cover you for) for the following reasons:

- It is generally cheaper to use cash than cards due to bank fees
- In some places it can be difficult and time-consuming to obtain a cash advance.

- When a currency is unstable, credit card transactions may be temporarily suspended.
- If a credit card is lost, it usually takes at least 4 working days to have a replacement sent, and this service is not always available.
- ATM's often run out of cash, or are out-of-order and may impose transaction limits after a certain time in the evening.
- In some countries, credit cards impose limits on the amount of cash you can withdraw per day.

2.3 Local currency

Generally speaking, it is not advisable to try to acquire Latin American currency before you travel (ie in the UK). If a currency is available in high street banks or foreign exchange outlets the exchange rate is usually very poor (and they will not be interested in buying any Latin American currency back when you return).

You should be able to change dollars at the airport or land frontier upon arrival. In Central America, small denominations of US\$ cash are often as readily accepted as the local currency, although may incorporate small rounding up of prices.

If travelling between neighbouring countries in Latin America any surplus local currencies can usually be exchanged into the next local currency, but normally only at border posts or airports, and at a loss. It is best not to have too much local currency left over at the end of your trip. It is not always easy to buy back dollars, though this facility has improved over the past few years.

2.4 Travellers cheques

Travellers cheques are increasingly less favoured by travellers who find their use cumbersome in comparison with bank

cards, difficult to exchange and we no longer recommend their use as a means of obtaining local currency.

2.5 Cost of living

The cost of living in Latin America differs enormously between countries and can fluctuate wildly over time within a single country or region. Please see the estimated budgets in the country sections which are estimates at the time of writing and exchange rates.

As is the case the world over, it should be mentioned that sometimes services directed at tourists (e.g. hotels and restaurants) are disproportionately more expensive.

The price of restaurant meals in Latin America varies as much as it does in Europe. At the bottom of the scale, cheap, filling and often none-too-hygienic meals can be obtained in markets, for just a couple of dollars. This is usually the best source of regional food, but be aware of the high risk of stomach upsets.

A bit more upmarket, you will find restaurants with pleasant décor, uniformed waiters and menus offering both international and local dishes. Large towns will always have a supply of expensive restaurants similarly priced to their equivalents in Europe.

Special tastes are catered for to a certain degree, more so in specifically tourist destinations. Vegetarians are catered for sporadically, and though menus are often unimaginative, they are rarely at the expensive end of the scale. It is extremely difficult to find a range of gluten- and wheat-free products in Latin America, though at higher-end hotels most such requirements can be catered for with sufficient notice.

Since taxi fares vary widely, you should always find out how the tariffs operate before you get in. Some taxis in large cities use a meter. They are usually cheaper than in the UK. Otherwise, be sure to agree on a price before taking an unmetered cab.

2.6 Bargaining

Bargaining is normal procedure in most street and indoor markets, though no fair generalisation can be made about the amount by which the price can be reduced. Tourists can usually expect to have to pay more than locals.

Street side vendors working from a makeshift or portable stall and selling items such as cigarettes, sweets and fruit are usually extremely poor so bargaining is not appropriate.

3.TIPPING

The Spanish word for tip is 'propina' -a synonym of 'reward'. The Portuguese word is '*gorjeta*'. We cannot stress enough that tipping is a personal choice and based upon the quality of service provided. Nobody should expect a tip and

do not feel obligated to give one if you are unsatisfied with the service.

It is difficult to give firm guidelines as to how much to tip a provider of services in Latin America, as the cost of living varies widely from country to country. However, over the years a significant number of our clients have mentioned that they would have appreciated more advice on tipping. For that reason we cautiously present the following guidelines to help plan your holiday budget.

General

It is normal practice in Latin America

to tip anyone who provides a service, including waiters, guides, drivers, porters, and room-service. For everyone it is more convenient to receive a tip in local currency.

Since many employers assume that gratuities will be given, refraining from tipping as a statement to discourage such practice will only serve to deprive the workers in question of an amount upon which they have normally come to rely.

If several people have been involved, it is better to tip each one individually rather than expect one to share out the gratuity among the others (eg porters on hiking trips, guides and drivers).

With this in mind, previous clients have commented that it is useful to take a number of sealable envelopes into which you can put the individual tips before passing them on.

Hotels

- Tip hotel porters for handling bag calculate an amount of currency equal to about \$1 for every two bags.
- If you are happy with the housekeeping you may want to consider tipping the maid between US\$0.50 – \$1 per night.
- You might also tip the concierge staff if you have used them to arrange dinner reservations, transportation or leisure activities.

Taxi drivers

- Though it is not obligatory to tip taxi drivers, it is common practice to round up the fare, and indeed, it is usual to agree rates in advance if the taxi does not have a meter or it is turned off.

Restaurants

- The general rule of thumb for restaurants is to leave 10%, though a service charge equal to or slightly above that is usually added to the

final bill. Even when service charge is included, it is customary to round it up to the nearest full figure. However, in smaller cafes, there is usually no service charge included on the bill.

Local guides

- Local guides may be relying on their tip as a significant proportion of their income. Most people prefer to tip according to their level of satisfaction with the service. However the following rule of thumb may be helpful: if you are in a group of more than four people, accompanied on a half-day tour by an English-speaking guide, a tip in local currency to the value of a standard meal and a drink in that country is reasonable (as a general guide, around \$5 per couple per half-day); if you are in a smaller group or a full-day tour, you might double this amount (\$10 per couple). Many clients who have been particularly satisfied give more.

Drivers

- Don't forget your driver who, in many cases, may have shown extreme skill on difficult roads. In general terms, he/she should be tipped a lower amount than the guide. Wages paid to people in employment of this type are normally very low.

4. HEALTH & VACCINATIONS

4.1 General health

General safety and sanitary standards in Latin America are often not as high as those in Europe. Public health facilities are available, but these are often only rudimentary. In most countries, private facilities are both modern and of an excellent standard, and many private doctors have had training in Europe or

the United States. It is therefore essential that you take out comprehensive health insurance so you can make use of private health care.

In isolated places, there are few facilities of any kind, and if you intend to travel off the beaten track, you should take with you a well-equipped first aid kit. (See paragraph 4.12 below). Virtually all first aid posts, surgeries, health centres and hospitals now use only disposable needles which the staff will unwrap in front of you, so it is not necessary to come armed with these. Pharmacies in Latin America are well stocked and most products (even antibiotics) can be bought over the counter. Check the validity dates on the packaging.

4.2 Travel Health & Vaccinations

All the inoculations/vaccinations you will need (with the common exception of yellow fever), are available from your local GP or from a travel clinic (these centres will make a charge). Your GP will normally require notice to acquire them. In the UK, GPs usually refer to www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk - the same resource we use.

Yellow fever vaccinations are available at yellow fever vaccination clinics and occasionally at GP's surgeries. There often appears to be a shortage of the yellow fever vaccine, so you should guard against this by having the vaccination as early as possible before travelling. The charge does vary but on average costs about £50.

The following travel clinics provide inoculation services as well as advice on healthcare whilst abroad. Please call to make an appointment.

Nomad Travel Clinics: Full details can be found at www.nomadtravel.co.uk/pages/nomad-travel-clinics.

MASTA Travel Clinics: For details look at their website www.masta-travel-health.com, or email enquiries@masta.org

For the latest information on endemic diseases, like malaria, dengue fever and vaccination requirements for Latin America you can check the NHS Fit for Travel website: www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk or the websites of the National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) at: www.nathnac.org/travel/index.htm

Period of validity of recommended vaccines:

Yellow fever: Life (WHO amended their advice in July 16 from a 10-year validity).

Typhoid: 3 years

Hepatitis A: 10-20 years (depending on the vaccine)

Polio: 10 years

Tetanus: 10 years

4.3 Yellow fever

Yellow fever is a viral infection that is spread by the bite of an infected *Aedes aegypti* mosquito which mainly bites during daylight hours. Travellers are advised to use personal protective measures when entering areas where yellow fever is present. This includes using insect repellents and wearing appropriate clothing. (See paragraph 4.8).

A vaccine called Stamaril is available for travellers to protect against yellow fever. Certain countries have yellow fever requirements. Always carry with you your International Certificate of Vaccination, signed by a doctor and validated with an official stamp, as you may be required by local health authorities or border control to prove that you have been inoculated against yellow fever.

4.4 Malaria

Malaria is transmitted by mosquitoes of the genus *Anopheles*; you should take extra precautions against being bitten (see paragraph 4.8). Mosquitoes that transmit malaria typically bite after sunset. Malaria maps for each destination can be found

on www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk.

If you are travelling to coastal and jungle regions within the tropics, you may enter infected zones and should take an appropriate preventative measure. Which anti-malarials to take depends on a number of variables, such as current illnesses and medication, previous illnesses, pregnancy, previous travel and duration of intended stay, so seek advice from your GP or Health Centre before travelling.

4.5 Dengue fever

Dengue fever occurs in Latin America and the Caribbean throughout the year. There has been a marked increase in the number of reported cases in recent years. Dengue fever is transmitted by the *Aedes aegypti* species of mosquito which mainly bites during the day; you should take extra precautions against being bitten (see paragraph 4.8).

4.6 Zika Virus

ZIKV is spread by the *Aedes* species of mosquito which predominantly bites during the day. Based on current knowledge this virus poses no greater threat to most visitors than other mosquito-borne diseases, such as dengue or malaria found in tropical regions around the world and similarly you should take precautions against being bitten (see paragraph 4.8). There are, however, two groups of people who should show caution: those who will be pregnant (or may be pregnant) during, or immediately following, their visit and those with severe chronic illness or immune system disorders. More information can be found at www.cdc.gov/zika/about/index.html

4.7 Chikungunya fever

Introduced to the Americas in 2013, Chikungunya is spread by the *Aedes aegypti* species of mosquito which predominantly bites during the day.

Outbreaks often occur after the rainy season when mosquitoes breed more actively. Within a few days the illness usually resolves and serious complications are uncommon.

4.8 Insect Repellent

You should take precautions at all times against being bitten by mosquitoes. The best widely available insect repellent (in the UK) is the Jungle Formula range. The effectiveness of repellents depends on the percentage of diethyl toluamide (deet), the active ingredient. We recommend no less than 50% deet.

If you prefer something natural, Incognito and Mosiguard can be effective. Many other brands, eg Boots' own or Autan, have only 10-15% deet and are therefore not very effective. Some repellents have up to a 100% concentration – this is very powerful and should not be used for long periods though it also has a deleterious effect on leather, plastics and Lycra. Be sure to wash your hands after applying it.

When sunscreen and DEET are used together, DEET should be applied after sunscreen. The effectiveness of repellent reduces more rapidly than sunscreen, therefore, repellent may have to be reapplied on top of sunscreen.

For those allergic to DEET, alternatives include Icardin, Dimethyl Pthalate or Eucalyptus oil.

Tips to avoid mosquito bites

- Wear clothing that covers as much of the body as possible such as long sleeved clothing and long trousers. Don't go barefoot.
- Wear loose fitting light coloured clothes (insects can reach skin through tight clothing).
- Mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing, so spray an insecticide or repellent on them. Insect repellents should also be used on exposed skin.

- Use fans and air conditioning in bedrooms (at highest speed) – these make it difficult for mosquitoes to fly.
- If sleeping outdoors, a mosquito net (which should be impregnated with insecticide) is a sensible precaution.
- Garlic, Vitamin B and ultrasound devices do not prevent bites.
- In areas where infections are prevalent keep covered up at all times mosquitoes which transmit Zika, dengue and chikungunya infections bite predominantly during the daytime and at dusk; mosquitoes which transmit malaria bite predominantly in the evening and at night.

4.9 Altitude sickness

At altitudes over 2,500m, most travellers notice a headache and dizziness or breathlessness and this usually improves with acclimatisation. So rest, take it easy and stay hydrated (drink plenty of water, avoiding alcohol and caffeine) as you get used to the thin, dry air. If you are pregnant or taking the contraceptive pill, have a medical condition such as heart or lung condition, anaemia, asthma, high blood pressure you should seek the advice of your GP. We also recommend you check your travel insurance covers travel to high altitude. If you're taking the family, remember small children may be less capable of communicating altitude-related symptoms effectively: keep an eye on them too. Further advice on travel to altitude is available on [Nathnac: www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/altitude-illness](http://Nathnac:www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/altitude-illness). Local remedies are available including various local drugs and *mate de coca* (an infusion of coca leaves). Please note that on no account should you attempt to bring these teabags back to the UK or across any border – they contain coca leaves, which are prohibited.

Oxygen is available in good hotels and on

trains, if necessary.

The thin, dry air at altitude also exposes travellers to the risk of sunburn, skin cracking, sore eyes and bunged-up noses. Wear a hat in direct sunlight and use high factor sun cream (minimum sun protection factor of 30). Some people prefer not to wear their contact lenses at altitude. There is also a marked difference in temperature between sun and shade at high altitudes.

4.10 Traveller's diarrhoea

Traveller's diarrhoea can be caused by change of climate, water and food. You can reduce the risk of contracting it by drinking only bottled or sterilised water (never tap water), avoiding ice in drinks, fruit juices to which water has been added, peeling all fruit, not eating salad or seafood and avoiding ice cream not of a recognised brand. If suffering from diarrhoea, it is advisable to eat little but to drink plenty of clean water with mineral replacement supplements, or fizzy drinks (no fruit juice or milk). Rehydration products, such as Dioralyte, should be taken to replenish lost salts. Where unavailable, you can mix an oral hydration solution with 1litre clean water, 6tsp sugar, ½ tsp salt.

If it does not clear up or is accompanied by a fever, you should seek medical advice as you may need to take a course of antibiotics. Take with you some anti-diarrhoea tablets such as Lomotil or Imodium, but we don't recommend these be used as a preventative.

4.11 General

Water-purifying tablets are a useful standby in the jungle, or when trekking off the beaten track, but are ineffective against amoebae and give the water an unpleasant taste. Boiling water for 10 minutes will kill amoebae. Mineral water is available at most jungle lodges that we book. It is important to ensure that you

maintain a high intake of liquids in tropical and semi-tropical regions.

You should also be aware that the sun is much stronger than at temperate latitudes and sunstroke is a danger. Avoid midday sun on tropical beaches, especially in the summer. Take plenty of high-factor sunscreen lotion and sunblock.

4.12 Medical kit

- Anti-diarrhoea tablets and Dioralyte sachets of rehydration salts
- Antiseptic/antibiotic cream
- Insect bite ointment and insect repellent (please see section 4.8)
- Sunscreen of SPF 30 or higher.
- Sunscreen lip balm of SPF 20 or higher.
- After-sun lotion
- Sticking plasters
- Painkillers
- Alcohol based hand sanitizer
- Personal medication

NB: Most of these items and many more can be purchased over the counter in pharmacies throughout Latin America.

5. SAFETY

At Journey Latin America we are continually working with our accommodation and ground service providers to endeavour to raise safety standards as much as possible and we will do our best to ensure that your holiday is safe and trouble-free. As part of our commitment, we do ask that you take that little bit of extra care whilst away.

We want you to have an enjoyable holiday but please remember that when you are overseas you should exercise more care than you do at home. Part of the enjoyment of travelling abroad is

experiencing a different way of life and cultures but it may also mean experiencing lower safety and hygiene standards than those we are used to in the UK.

For the latest travel advice from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office check www.gov.uk/travelaware and follow @FCOtravel on Twitter and Facebook.com/FCOtravel.



Travel and Transportation

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

To reduce the risk of DVT on long haul flights drink plenty of water and follow simple exercises or occasionally move around the cabin.

Transport safety

- In vehicles always wear a seat belt if one is provided-though it is not compulsory in many countries to do so and we cannot guarantee that vehicles will be fitted with seat belts.
- We have worked alongside our local partners to ensure driving standards are safe. If you are unhappy with the standard of driving please inform the driver immediately and report this to us or our local representatives.

Accommodation

Fire safety

- Ensure you know where your nearest fire exit is.
- Check the location of the nearest fire extinguisher.

- Study the fire instructions in your room.

Glass safety

- Glass doors and windows may not be toughened glass.
- Take care in bright sunlight, it may not be obvious doors/windows are closed.
- Check to see if anti-collisions stickers are in place at adult & child height.

Balcony safety

- Never lean over, sit or climb on the balcony.
- Balcony heights vary from country to country – Families with small children should request ground floor rooms whenever possible.

If you are unhappy with the balcony then please request to be moved rooms.

Pool safety

- Familiarise yourself with the pool and its layout, deep and shallow ends.
- Take note of the depth markings and any hazards such as submerged objects or non-slip surfaces.
- Most pools do not have life guards, so please take care and ensure you know how to raise help.
- Observe pool rules and information signs at all times.

Gas safety

- Carbon monoxide (CO) is a highly poisonous odourless gas capable of escaping from stoves, fires, boilers and some heaters if not properly installed or maintained.
- An indication that gas appliances are not working properly include having a lazy yellow or orange flame instead of a crisp blue flame or black stains around the appliance.

- CO alarms are rare overseas so you might consider taking one with you.

Out and About

Food safety

In order to avoid the possibility of stomach upsets...

- Make sure your food has been thoroughly cooked.
- Hot food should be hot, cold food should be cold.
- Avoid any uncooked food, except fruit and vegetables you can peel or shell yourself.
- Always drink bottled water and ensure the seal is intact when purchasing.
- Use boiled or bottled water for brushing your teeth.
- Avoid ice in drinks as this is generally made from unsafe tap water.
- Avoid purchasing food from street vendors.

Excursion safety

- Always follow the instructions of the guide and any safety briefing.
- If you are concerned about the safety of an activity, do not participate and contact our local representatives or Journey Latin America as soon as possible.

Personal safety

- Ask our local representatives for guidance on arrival.
- Check the foreign and Commonwealth Office 'Travel Advice by Country' at www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice
- Avoid walking in poorly lit areas.
- Be aware, stay away from situations where you do not feel comfortable.
- Avoid carrying too much money and/or valuables.
- Use of a money belt is encouraged at all

times.

- Ensure your room is left secure when you go out and place all valuables in a safety deposit box where available (use of these are often a condition of your insurance policy), or with reception.
- Never leave windows or balcony doors open.
- Ensure your main luggage can be locked when left unattended in rooms, carriages, luggage rooms etc.
- Do not take any valuable jewellery on holiday with you.

Insurance

- Ensure you have appropriate insurance for your holiday and that it covers any activity you intend to undertake.
- If participating in any risk activity, appraise yourself of the safety standards being operated by the supplier.
- Avoid purchasing activities or excursions from anyone not connected to Journey Latin America as they often have unchecked safety standards.
- Any accident or injury should be reported immediately to our local representative or tour leader and Journey Latin America.
- In the event of theft, always obtain a police report for insurance purposes.

Dangers and annoyances

Visits to Latin America are usually trouble free and the majority of crime tends not to affect tourists. As anywhere, visitors should be particularly vigilant to petty theft particularly when walking in urban areas and should avoid unnecessary displays of wealth. The following tips are worth noting:

- Avoid demonstrations if possible. Protests are common in some regions and can arise without warning.
- Beware of bogus taxi drivers '*Piratas*'

especially on arrival at the airport where they can target tired tourists and charge exorbitant fares. If your transfer is booked, ask the local 'representative' to tell you your name, hotel and local supplier rather than volunteering this information to be sure your driver is legitimate.

- Book a taxi through your hotel or use a known radio taxi service. If a taxi has no meter it is better to negotiate the fare in advance. Ask for advice from our local representatives.
- Credit card cloning is on the rise worldwide-try to use ATMs inside banks or shopping centres.
- Counterfeit dollar bills can be a concern and it can be difficult to spot a forged bill: be aware that they may be discoloured, printed on inferior paper or lacking a watermark. Ensure any cash you take with you is in crisp, unmarked notes.
- Be alert to distraction techniques. For example, pickpockets have been known to rob tourists whilst an accomplice pretends to help remove ketchup or mustard that has been 'accidentally' sprayed on them.
- Use hotel safes wherever possible and only carry small amounts of money with you. Keep excess cash well hidden in a money belt.
- In the unlikely event of a robbery do not resist.

Environmental Dangers

Swimming & Snorkelling

Take care when swimming and snorkelling, particularly in the ocean. There are strong currents and undertows in some areas that can make swimming hazardous and many beaches do not have lifeguards.

- Follow the advice from local guides or

hotels.

- Respect the marine environment (see wildlife section)
- Be particularly careful in murky waters
- Use biodegradable sunblock – non-biodegrade lotions can harm wildlife.
- Swim with a 'buddy' and stay close to others.
- If you feel uncomfortable at any point, seek support and get out of the water.

Earthquakes

In the unlikely event that an earthquake should take place while you are travelling, received practice is to drop to the ground and take cover under sturdy furniture, in a doorway or next to an inside wall, away from windows or objects which may fall. Cover your head with a pillow or your arms and wait for the earthquake to stop, before moving to a safe area outside.

Tropical storms and hurricanes

If travelling to a region where tropical storms can arise, be aware that it's difficult to accurately predict where, when and at what strength these may strike, as they often veer off-course, change their tracking speed and intensify or weaken quite suddenly. It is advisable to follow the advice of our local representatives who will be closely monitoring the situation.

Wildlife

- Respect wildlife – give it space, avoid getting too close or following as you may be considered a threat.
- Do not use the flash on your camera or mobile when taking photos as it may startle the animals.
- We discourage the use of 'selfie sticks' – these can be intrusive to wildlife and in water their reflections can be mistaken for fish by predators - better to focus on the experience.

- Do not feed wildlife or leave behind any food waste.
- Always follow the instructions and advice of the local guide and stick to the specified route.
- Ask your guide beforehand of any potential risks - what will happen in the wildlife interaction, how to behave and the expected behaviour of the animals.
- Wear neutral tones (including swimwear). Bright colours can attract unnecessary attention or scare the animals.

Waivers/Disclaimers

The use of waivers/disclaimers is becoming more common globally, particularly for more active and adventurous activities (eg, snorkelling, zip-lining, rafting etc). In the main these are helpful in drawing participants attention to the nature of any specific risks and what they can do to manage those. However, sometimes disclaimers may include clauses to limit rights in respect of the local operators negligence. We consider these to be unreasonable and, where we can, we discourage such practice. It is however worth noting that such clauses have no jurisdiction under English Law and, under European package travel legislation, booking any activity as part of a package with Journey Latin America ensures we are responsible for the proper performance of all services on the itinerary.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

Telephone services

Phone calls can be made from most hotels of 3 stars and above, though there is a fee charged and it can be expensive. Always check with the hotel prior to calling.

It is cheaper to go the local phone centre (telefónica) to make an international call.

Procedure and prices vary.

Mobile phone coverage abroad depends on your network and phone model. You should contact your service provider for details. Note that in remote areas there will be no mobile coverage or indeed telephone line. The service is constantly improving – there is now coverage, for example, at Machu Picchu.

If your network has no coverage or to avoid roaming charges clients and tour leaders have found it beneficial to purchase a local pay as you go SIM card upon arrival in each country. You will need to ensure your phone is unlocked prior to departure.

Internet and email

Internet access is widely available in Latin America in cities and tourist areas (although limited in Cuba). However, there are notable exceptions such as the Galápagos Islands, Antarctica and remote rainforest destinations, among others. If keeping connected is essential please speak to your travel consultant who can check your itinerary to advise.

7. PHOTOGRAPHY

Practical info:

- Remember to always carry a (fully charged) spare battery. Flash photography and making videos can drain batteries surprisingly quickly. Battery life is also shorter in colder climates (Antarctica, Patagonia, high altitude destinations).
- Make sure you have a waterproof bag large enough to fit both your camera and any electrical or delicate accessories; unexpected and heavy rainstorms can occur in many parts of the continent, even in dry season. Even a supermarket plastic bag is better than nothing!

- The worst thing about losing your camera is never the loss of the actual camera, it's always about the memories that were on the memory card inside. If you can, upload the photos you've taken to the internet (try iCloud, Photobucket, Flickr, Dropbox or even Facebook) or a small laptop at the end of each day's shooting. If you don't have access to the internet, take a USB flash drive with you and use any computer handy to move the images onto it. Remember to keep the USB separate from the camera bag.
- Include a luggage tag (or similar) with your email address on it in your camera bag. That way, if you do misplace your camera bag, there will at least be a chance that whoever finds it can contact you easily and inexpensively (without the need to call a foreign telephone number).
- Similarly, write your email address on your memory cards and any other storage system you may be downloading your images onto whilst away. That way, if you are unlucky enough to lose your camera or storage system whilst away, there is a better chance of being reunited with it.
- If travelling in humid climates (rainforest, cloudforest or anywhere in the Tropics) it is a good idea to pack a silica gel sachet in your camera bag. They can be bought easily online or in a good camera shop.
- When travelling in hot and humid regions, moving from an air-conditioned environment into the heat will often cause your camera lens to fog up as you step outside. It can take quite a while for your camera to warm back up and for the moisture to evaporate – very annoying if you see that perfect but urgent photographic opportunity as soon as you step out of your wildlife lodge's air-conditioned room or an

air-conditioned vehicle. Keeping your camera in a ziplock bag and in as warm an environment as possible (e.g. in the non air-conditioned bathroom with the door to the air-conditioned bedroom closed; keep your camera in the ambient temperature of the trunk, or close to your body if travelling in an air-conditioned vehicle for a long journey).

How to take better photographs

- Light is the most important factor in taking good photos. The best light occurs early in the morning or in the late afternoon when the sun is lower. It is softer then with more contrast and the yellow magenta dominance to the hues makes them richer and more vivid. The best light often comes during a storm or after the rain so don't limit yourself to just sunny days for photography. Rainy or misty conditions can also produce some wonderfully atmospheric photo opportunities. Also, watch how the light falls. A ray of light illuminating your subject can transform a photograph.
- Look for unsightly objects that detract from the main subject and then see if there is a way of omitting them from the frame by repositioning yourself or the camera.
- Follow the 'rule of thirds' which essentially means that instead of automatically placing the main subject in the middle of the frame, it is much more aesthetically pleasing to frame the subject off-centre either one-third or two-thirds of the way across your picture.
- Some cameras will let you place a grid over your view as you shoot. This is a handy guide for following the above-mentioned 'rule of thirds', but also to help keep a straight horizon in your compositions. If you don't have this

function, use a street sign, a paving stone or building as your guide.

- Don't be afraid to come in really close to a subject: it can create a bold photograph without any clutter distracting the eye.
- You will no doubt want to photograph the main sites, but do remember to include some observations of everyday life in your collection; observe the people's dress, the food being sold in the markets, their transport, their crafts, how their houses and gardens are decorated. Photograph entrance tickets in hands & your travel companions looking at maps or signs. You will come back with a much more rounded photographic diary of the place you visited.
- Finally, don't immediately delete a shot simply because it looks dark or appears to be slightly blurred. The viewing screens on many cameras are of a low resolution meaning that you can't necessarily see the true quality of the image until you have downloaded it and viewed it on a computer. Similarly, don't delete an image purely because you didn't get the composition quite right. Image editing software is nowadays very user friendly and widely available meaning that cropping, brightening or sharpening images on your computer back home is easy and can yield fantastic results.
- If you are planning to take video footage of your trip, or shoot in low light then a tripod is an essential piece of kit. It means your footage will be steady and low-light images sharp. You will definitely notice the difference between hand held and tripod steadied footage. The downside is having to carry a tripod but there are many lightweight travel tripods available.

8. FLIGHTS

Whilst the majority of flight arrangements run smoothly, inevitably some clients will encounter problems. You should be prepared for the possibility of delays, cancellations or rescheduling and the resulting necessity to reorganise your itinerary.

Please be sure to check flight details on your e-ticket and be at the airport at least three hours before departure, both on outward and inbound international flights.

Passengers travelling via the USA/ Canada must complete the online ESTA/ ETA forms no later than 72 hours before departure. Failure to do so will result in being denied boarding.

On routes requiring a flight change within the USA, you will be expected to pick up or identify your luggage and clear customs without leaving the airport or re-checking in. This applies even when your luggage has been checked through to your final destination.

If for any reason you miss a connection, even if it's not your fault, be careful to check that the airline has not treated you as a no-show. If they do, it will mean that all your onward connections will be automatically cancelled. This can happen even if the airline has cancelled the flight you were originally booked on (as opposed to your having missed it).

8.1 Seating

If you wish to reserve a specific seat (window or aisle) or ensure that you are seated together with your travelling companions, this can usually be purchased on the operating carrier's website. Most international airlines have followed the so-called low cost airlines' policy of charging for seat reservations, some even extending this to Business class cabins (eg British Airways). Depending on the particular aircraft, rows of economy seats with extra

legroom may also be available at charge. Many airlines allow seat selection for free once online check-in has opened, so if you do not wish to pay for a chosen seat in advance, it is worth checking in promptly when more seats are available (circa 30-24 hours before scheduled departure time). However, be warned that some airlines (notably Iberia and BA via Madrid) – if a specific seat has not been purchased in advance – will allocate a random seat once online check-in has opened, at which point it is not possible to change – even for a fee. Journey Latin America has no influence or control over seat allocation and charges, and payments for these extras must be made directly between traveller and airline.

8.2 Online check-in

The vast majority of airlines are providing passengers with the facility to check in online on their websites, whereby you can print off your boarding card in advance. This facility is usually available either 30 or 24 hours before departure. You will need your name, e-ticket number and/or reservation locator code, depending on the airline.

8.3 Luggage

Baggage handling in Latin America is neither worse nor better than anywhere else in the world. Remember that you will probably accumulate luggage as you travel. Accordingly, it is best to pack light, and with spare capacity. Otherwise, as well as having the inconvenience of carrying around a couple of plastic bags full of articles acquired en route, you are also more vulnerable to theft.

We recommend a sturdy suitcase, or soft-sided resilient backpack/holdall (depending upon the nature of your trip). You will also need a daypack (which should be taken as hand luggage if it falls within the permitted dimensions as detailed on

the airlines website). It is useful to have luggage that can be locked, however see section 9.5 if you are travelling via the USA.

Pack strategically by carrying some essentials as part of your hand luggage, namely: Household and car keys, travel documents including passport, itinerary and any important contact details, essential medicines, wallets or purses with money and credit cards and electronics and other valuables. You should also take one full change of clothing.

8.4 Document checklist

Check you have the following in your hand luggage before departure:

- Airline tickets/e-ticket printouts.
Although it is not strictly necessary to take printed e-tickets, you may wish to do so for peace of mind in case of any problems.
- Hotel/service vouchers and final itinerary (for bespoke itineraries or extensions to escorted group tours these are usually given during the initial transfer service in each area).
- Cash
- Credit/debit cards
- Travel insurance documents
- Passport (keep an electronic copy of your passport containing personal information and any relevant visas)
- Vaccination certificates (please read, Section 4: Health and vaccinations).

We strongly recommend that items you cannot afford to lose be kept in a money belt – worn inside your clothing.

8.5 Airport security

Security arrangements at both domestic and international airports have increased greatly in recent years. It is strictly prohibited to carry any sharp objects such as penknives, scissors, syringes or needles in your hand luggage – they should

instead be packed in your main suitcase. Currently, it is prohibited to carry any liquids, creams or gels in containers of more than 100ml in size of your hand luggage. Lighters and matches are also widely prohibited.

For the latest information on hand luggage item restrictions please check the Department for Transport website www.gov.uk/hand-luggage-restrictions. If you have a padlock on your bag, be aware that at airport security (when changing planes or in transit, especially via the USA) your bag may be opened and your padlock destroyed.

8.6 Duty Free

If you buy alcohol (duty free or otherwise) at your departure airport, there's a chance that it will be confiscated if you're changing planes (transiting) in Europe or the USA. They won't tell you this when you buy it!

8.7 Airport transfers

If you are going to be met at the airport in Latin America by a Tour Leader or by private transfer, a guide and/or driver will wait for you in the arrivals hall and identify themselves to you with a Journey Latin America board or a card with your name on it. The agency's name will be printed on your Journey Latin America final itinerary.

In the unlikely event no-one comes up to you immediately, please wait near the Customs exit for somebody to find you. Don't volunteer your name until your contact announces it. In that way you can be sure that you are being met by the correct person.

Remember that you might not be instantly recognisable. Please try to have the Journey Latin America baggage labels clearly visible on your luggage.

8.8 Baggage allowances

Baggage allowances vary from one carrier to another – please refer to your e-tickets for allowances on your individual flights.

'Checked' baggage means luggage which is carried in the hold. 'Hand' luggage is what you carry onto the plane with you. Infants (under 2) have no baggage allowance, but parents are allowed to carry reasonable accoutrements for the baby, free of charge. Children (aged 2-11 years inclusive) have full adult baggage allowance.

Club and First Class passengers have a higher baggage allowance than Economy Class, usually at least 30kg in total.

Some domestic carriers within Latin America do not include checked baggage on their airfares: this must be purchased separately at check-in (or occasionally via the carrier's online web portal). Aerolíneas Argentinas only permit 15kg checked luggage on domestic flights. Airlines operating planes with fewer than twenty seats often have a limit as low as 5kg. This is particularly likely to be the case on flights into small airports in the Amazon basin, Venezuela and to some of the jungle lodges in Central America.

Many international carriers offer a second checked bag at a fee, which can be purchased in advance via the operating carrier's website. However, please bear in mind that any additional checked luggage on the outbound long haul flight will need to be paid for again for each subsequent flight within Latin America, and back home again, according to each airline's own baggage policy.

8.9 Delayed baggage

If your baggage has been delayed, we advise you to fill in the appropriate 'property irregularity report' (PIR) with the airline responsible as soon as possible. There are specific airline computer codes to describe all types of baggage, and visual-aid sheets to assist. Give as much

information as you can and ask them to be as specific as possible about which flight your bags are/will be on. Try to get them to give you a printout of the entries they make in the computer.

Regrettably, tour operators such as ourselves have very little influence over the behaviour of airlines and are usually unable to speed up the process of getting your luggage returned to you. If you are ultra-cautious, you might consider making a list in advance of everything in your bags (including colour, make, size and value of clothes)-it will save you a lot of time if you later end up claiming on insurance.

8.10 Airport taxes

In Latin America, airport taxes are sometimes not included in the ticket price. Airport taxes are, in effect, a tax for the privilege of using the airport (usually when your flight departs) and as such they often have to be paid there.

These can usually be paid in either local currency or US\$. Credit cards are not generally accepted for paying either domestic or international airport taxes. Make sure you leave sufficient US\$ or local currency in cash.

Taxes for internal flights generally have to be paid in local currency. Domestic airport taxes usually range between US\$3 and US\$10, though they can occasionally be more expensive. Unfortunately, it is impossible to give an exact guide as rules differ within each country and city to city.

9. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Our responsibility

To us, sustainable tourism is nothing new. Ever since we started in 1980, we have believed that it's our responsibility to do all we can to protect the places to which we send clients and to ensure that

as much as possible of the money spent filters back to the local economies. We, and everyone we ask to deliver services to you, take considerable pride in offering sustainable holidays with minimal impact on the environment and maximum support for community development, and in ensuring good working conditions. For more information about our initiatives, please visit the sustainable travel section on our website: www.journeylatinamerica.co.uk/information/sustainability

How can you help?

We have seen for ourselves how tourism, if well-managed, eco-friendly and sustainable, can and does benefit the destination. While you are on holiday, just a small effort will help to protect the natural environment, traditions and culture of your destination-the things that make it so special in the first place.

Before you go

- Learn something about the countries you plan to visit to find out about the culture, politics, geography, religion and local customs.
- Try and remove unnecessary packaging from any products you are taking with you, and dispose of it at home first. Recycling has yet to really take off in Latin America so the less you leave the better!
- Offset the carbon emissions from your transatlantic flight by supporting our carbon reduction project.

Out and about

- Ask permission before photographing indigenous people and events, particularly religious processions.
- Ask for an address and send photos to the people you photographed-many won't have photos of their families.
- Simple gifts for children, such as

crayons, balloons, colouring books or even a mini football can bring a huge smile to a child's face. Resist handing out sweets as dental care is often inaccessible.

- Giving money to children on the street only encourages begging; instead consider donating to schools or local conservation or charitable organisations.
- Pack for a Purpose (www.packforapurpose.org) provides travellers with information about taking supplies for community-based projects in a number of countries in Latin America and around the globe. We sell a number of properties where supplies can be dropped at the accommodation and delivered directly to the chosen project.

In the market

- Buy local handicrafts and support local artisans.
- When bargaining, remember that a small saving for you could make a big difference for the seller.
- Don't buy ancient artefacts or anything made with endangered animals or plants eg hardwoods, shells, exotic feathers, coral, furs or eggs.

Eating out

- Where possible, choose smaller local restaurants, bars and cafes; your money will benefit individuals instead of chains, plus you will enjoy a far more authentic gastronomic experience by sampling typical dishes at very reasonable prices.

Speaking with people

- Why not try and learn some of the lingo? Speaking a few words of the local language, even if it is just 'hola' or 'gracias', will change the way people react to you. You'll get a much warmer welcome and this in turn can enrich

your experience and interaction with the local people.

- Traditions and ways of life differ greatly across the cultures of Latin America. As a rule of thumb, people in lowland regions are more gregarious and relaxed than those who live a more austere life in the mountains, and many Latin Americans are modest and camera-shy.
- Please try to be sensitive to local customs. The pace of life outside the main cities is slower than in the UK, and you may have to draw on your reserves of patience in some situations.
- There is still widespread poverty in many countries: you may like to consider taking clothes, shoes or toys with you that you might be happy to leave behind.

Minimise your environmental impact

- Stick to the paths and walkways whether you are in the jungle, on a mountain trek or at a ruin. They are there for your safety and also to preserve the local wildlife and help to avoid further erosion of the landscape.
- When snorkelling or diving take care not to touch marine life and coral.

In your hotel

- Clean water is a precious resource, so use it sparingly. Try and take quick showers rather than baths as this helps to save water.
- Advise your hotel that you don't need towels or sheets laundered daily. This can save on water and energy.
- Conserve electricity by switching off lights, air-conditioning or heating when you leave your room.
- Use environmentally friendly shampoos and detergents, particularly when you are outside big cities 'in the wild' and your shower water is going to end up in

a river!

- Try to reuse and refill your drinking water bottles where possible or bring your own water canteen. Many hotels have water ‘garrafrones’ filled with treated ‘agua potable’ that is perfectly safe to drink. If your hotel does not, you could leave a suggestion that they provide one.

10. GUIDEBOOKS & MAPS

Below is a brief summary of some of the publishers that provide guidebooks and maps to Latin America. Their publications are widely available in major bookshops, or online.

Footprint

Publishers of the South American Handbook since 1923, Footprint now produces single country titles too. The most comprehensive guides for budget, upmarket and business travellers alike. Compact and updated regularly. Highly recommended.

Lonely Planet

Generally aimed at the independent traveller. Travel tips, clear street maps and cheap food and accommodation listings make these books good value for money. Lonely Planet also produces phrasebooks, city guides and travel atlases.

Rough Guides

Useful off-the-beaten-track information and excellent sections on history, music and literature. What they lack in practical tips Rough Guides make up for in background information.

Insight Guides

Glossy, coffee table guides containing excellent photographs and cultural and historical essays.

Bradt

Aimed at walkers, naturalists and adventurous travellers. More emphasis is laid on useful maps and trail-routes than practicalities. A good read and useful companion to the general travel books.

ITM Road Maps

ITM maps are good if you are travelling to one particular area. They are more detailed and each map is annotated with historical and geographical descriptions.

Collins

Clear maps of Latin America and the Caribbean. Ideal for general use.

11. LANGUAGE GUIDE

A number of clients have recommended the Google Translate app whilst abroad. Users can add words or phrases in English then simply read or listen to your translated phrase in the chosen language. However, here are some simple yet essential phrases you can learn to use on your trip:

Spanish

General

Hi-Hola

Please / Thank you- Por favor / Gracias

Good morning / Good afternoon / Good evening-Buenos días / Buenas tardes / Buenas noches

How are you?-¿Cómo estás?

Nice to meet you-Mucho gusto

I would like-Me gustaría

I need-Yo necesito

Do you have?-¿Tiene?

Where is?-¿Dónde está?

How much does it cost?-¿Cuánto cuesta?

What time is it?-¿Qué hora es?

On the right / On the left / Straight ahead-A la derecha / A la izquierda / Siga derecho

In one block / In two, three, four blocks-A una cuadra / A dos, tres, cuatro cuadras

The bathroom-El baño

Bank / Money / Change / The bill-Banco / Dinero / Cambio / La cuenta

Money

ATM machine-Cajero automático

Are debit/credit cards accepted?-Aceptan tarjeta de débito/crédito?

(What is) the exchange rate-(Cuál es) el tipo de cambio

Do you have small denomination notes please?- Por favor tiene billetes pequeños

Do you have change for...?-tiene cambio para...?

Food & drink

Fish-Pescado

Shellfish-Mariscos

Vegetables-Vegetales

Chicken-Pollo

Meat-Carne (often used to refer to red meats only)

Cheese-Queso

Bread-Pan

Butter-Mantequilla

Pork-Carne de cerdo

Beef-Carne de res

Lamb-Cordero

Well done/Medium/ rare-Muy bien hecho/ medio/crudo

I am Vegetarian-Soy vegetariano/a

I am allergic to ... Soy alérgico/a

Gluten-Gluten

Nuts Nueces

Dairy products-Productos lácteos

Soda (fizzy drink)-Gaseosa

Freshly squeezed juice-Jugo natural

Still/Sparkling water-Agua sin gas / con gas

With/without ice-Con/sin hielo

Ice made with purified water- Hielo hecho con agua purificada

(A glass of) red wine / white wine-(Una copa de) vino tinto/vino blanco

Beer-Cerveza

Directions/meeting & useful phrases

I am looking for-Estoy buscando

Today-Hoy

Tomorrow-Mañana

Yesterday-Ayer

Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sat /Sun- Lunes/Martes/Miércoles/Jueves/Viernes / Sábado/Domingo

When?-Cuándo?

How Many-Cuántos?

In the morning-Por la mañana
In the afternoon-Por la tarde
In the evening/at night-Por la noche
There-Allí / allá
Here-Aquí
This-É sto
My name is-Me llamo
What is your name?-Cómo te llamas?
Goodbye/See you later-Chau / hasta luego

And finally, if all else fails:

I (don't)understand -Yo (no) entiendo
Do you speak English? ¿Habla inglés?

Portuguese

General

Hi-Oi
Please / Thank you- Por favor / Obrigado
Good morning / Good afternoon / Good evening-Bom Dia / Boa tarde / Boa noite
How are you?-Como você está?
Nice to meet you-Muito prazer em te conhecer
I would like-Eu gostaria
I need-Eu preciso
Do you have?-Você tem?
Where is?-Onde é?
How much does it cost?-Quanto custa isso?
What time is it?-Que horas são?
On the right / On the left / Straight ahead-À direita / À esquerda / Diretamente à frente
In one block / In two, three, four blocks-Daqui a um quarteirão / Daqui a dois, três, quatro quarteirões)
The bathroom-O banheiro
Bank / Money / Change / The bill-Banco / Dinheiro / Cambio/ A conta

Money

ATM machine-Caixa automática
Are debit/credit cards accepted?-São aceitos cartões de débito / crédito?
(What is) the exchange rate-(Qual é) a taxa de câmbio
Do you have small denomination notes?-Você tem notas de pequena denominação?
Do you have change for...?-Você tem troco para...?

Food & drink

Fish-Peixe
Shellfish-Marisco
Vegetables-Legumes
Chicken-Frango
Meat-Carne (often used to refer to red meats only)
Cheese-Queijo
Bread-Pão
Butter-Manteiga
Pork-Porco
Beef-Bife
Lamb-Cordeiro
Well done/Medium/ rare-Bem passado / ao ponto / mal passado
I am Vegetarian-Eu sou vegetariano
I am allergic to ... Eu sou alérgica...
Gluten-Glúten
Nuts-Nozes
Dairy products-Produtos lácteos
Soda (fizzy drink)-Refrigerante
Freshly squeezed juice-Suco natural
Still/Sparkling water-Água mineral sem gás / com gás
With/without ice-Com / sem gelo
Ice made with purified water- Gelo feito com água filtrada
(A glass of) red wine / white wine-(Um copo de) vinho tinto / vinho branco
Beer-Cerveja

Directions/meeting & useful phrases

I am looking for-Estou à procura de...

Today-Hoje

Tomorrow-Amanhã

Yesterday-Ontem

Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sat /Sun-
Segunda/ Terça/ Quarta/ Quinta/ Sexta/
Sábado/ Domingo

When?-Quando?

How Many-Quantos?

In the morning-De manhã

In the afternoon-À tarde

In the evening/at night-À noite

There-Lá

Here-Aquí

This-Esta My name is-Meu nome é

What is your name?-Qual é o seu nome

Goodbye/See you later-Adeus, até logo

And finally, if all else fails:

I (don't) understand-Eu (não) entendo

Do you speak English?-Fala inglês?

DISCLAIMER

The information in this dossier has been compiled with all reasonable care and is accurate to the best of our knowledge. We try to update the printed version once a year, but the information is inevitably subject to change without notice. Journey Latin America accepts no responsibility for the dossier's accuracy, and will entertain no claim for compensation, for inconvenience or contingent liability should information prove to be incorrect or out of date. Where possible we have given website addresses for you to check the latest information. See also our website, www.journeylatinamerica.co.uk We suggest you consult the FCO website which gives the latest information and advice on where it is safe to travel: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

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