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BOLIVIA VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Introduction

This Handbook was written to provide you with useful information regarding your participation in an Amizade sponsored program. It answers many of the frequently asked questions by previous participants. We encourage your feedback on how it can be improved for future participants. Please read this entire handbook carefully and contact our office if you have any questions.

Amizade's Mission & Vision

Amizade encourages intercultural exploration and understanding through community-driven service-learning courses and volunteer programs. Amizade imagines a world in which all people have the opportunity to explore and grow, realize their ability to make change, and embrace their responsibility to build a better world.

Amizade's Commitment

At the heart of Amizade is the sincere belief that intercultural understanding & the development of global citizens is essential to our increasingly connected global world. We are committed to providing you with an intercultural experience that allows you to make concrete contributions to a community resulting in a deeper understanding of your role in the global community.

Approach to Service

Ethic of Service

Amizade strives to promote an "ethic of service" on all our programs. This means that we envision the entire experience as one of service to our fellow human beings. There will be scheduled time for completing service projects on each program but we also encourage you to carry your ethic of service with you throughout the program. You can do this by volunteering to help with food preparation, cleaning, or various other daily tasks.

As guests in the host community, Amizade volunteers are encouraged to act respectfully in all community interactions. The global service experience provides a unique opportunity to learn from the traditions, beliefs, and customs of a new community. Since most Amizade volunteers come from outside of the community, they are often seen as "ambassadors" representing their countries and are able to use this opportunity to share positively about their culture. At the same time, volunteers have the unique opportunity of experiencing another culture while taking the time to absorb and respect new world views.

Volunteer Opportunities

While in Bolivia, volunteers' service will vary depending on their program type. Volunteers may help to work with disabled youth at CEOLI or they may assist in the orphanage at Millennium. Individuals that are volunteering as part of a group program typically work on a construction project, currently the construction of the Quechua high school in Viloma. Please refer to your specific program sheet for more detailed information about your volunteer program.

The On-Site Experience

Amizade Staff

Amizade programs are staffed by a variety of motivated, trained people. We encourage you to get to know the staff members that will be coordinating your volunteer program. Any concerns or questions during the in-country experience should be directed to the appropriate Amizade staff.

Site Director, Jean Carla Costas

The site director is the primary program contact responsible for coordinating volunteers. The site director is responsible for coordination of logistics such as greeting volunteers, arranging housing and meals, setting up cultural experiences with local community members, and leading reflection discussions. Coordination also involves setting up the service project, arranging transportation to and from various locations, partnering with local masons and builders, procuring building supplies, and any other related planning. Jean Carla will work closely with volunteer placements when they first arrive to help arrange everything. For customized group programs, she will be with the group for the majority of the time.

On-Site Orientation

Upon arrival in Bolivia, Amizade will hold a program orientation for all volunteers. Many issues such as health, safety, and security will be addressed as well as site logistics, standard procedures, and other important information that will benefit each volunteer to know.

Group Living

Amizade programs generally have a strong core element built around group living. For many people, living, volunteering, studying, completing projects, and spending leisure time in a group may be new. Therefore we ask all Amizade volunteers to approach group interaction with flexibility, openness, and constructive communication. We strive to respect each other's space and needs while also supporting each other to achieve personal goals on the program.

Flexibility

Flexibility on behalf of the participants is the most important element on an Amizade program. Itineraries may change at the last minute in order to meet current community needs or participate in unexpected opportunities for recreational, educational, or cultural exploration. Many aspects of traveling are unpredictable and time-consuming, so be prepared to enjoy the unexpected surprises and embrace the opportunities they provide!

Housing

Individuals participating in a volunteer placement will be housed with a local family in a homestay. Volunteers participating in a group project will share a room with one or two volunteers at Casa de Retiros. If necessary, single room accommodations can be provided for an additional fee.

Meals

Eating abroad is an adventure of new tastes, smells, and meals! Since you are living as part of the community, you will have the opportunity to try genuine local dishes. You may be eating the same or similar food regularly if that is the local custom.

Depending on your program type, meals will vary. Please refer to your specific program sheet to see your meal schedule.

Note to Vegetarians

Vegetarianism is not very common in Bolivia. Often eating vegetarian means that an individual will receive additional rice instead of meat! Amizade will make every effort to provide vegetarian options, but sometimes they will need to be supplemented with further protein and vitamins. We encourage vegetarians to bring healthy snacks and vitamins with them. Please indicate your dietary needs and restrictions on your Amizade Medical Form so we can best prepare for you.

Transportation on Site

For Individual placements, volunteers will have the choice of walking, taking the bus or a taxi. Some past volunteers have chosen to purchase a bike for the time that they are in Bolivia. Paying the fees for

transportation is the responsibility of volunteers. For group programs, transportation will be arranged for the duration of the program and will be provided by Amizade's trufi driver, Raul.

Laundry

Laundry service will be available during your program. The sun is used to dry clothes so you may want to consider bringing clothes that are durable and do not require special care. For group programs, you usually will get your clothes back 2-4 days after it is collected. You may want to label your clothes - especially underwear and socks.

Climate and Weather

Because of the extreme geographical variations, Bolivia has a wide range of climatic patterns. Generally, temperatures are cool, with the rainy period extending from November to March in most of the country. The cities of La Paz and Potosí often experience very cold temperatures and sometimes snow, while the Altiplano region is prone to severe flooding. During the dry period the climate is pleasant, though clear skies can cause nighttime temperatures to drop. In the lowlands, the weather is hot and sunny, with the occasional cloudburst helping to cool things down. Dressing in layers is the best way to approach the variations in climate.

Cultural and Recreational Activities

There are plenty of things to do in and around Cochabamba. Volunteers may engage in a unique experience by visiting, La Cancha, the largest open-air market in all of South America. Volunteers have opportunities to explore the market and purchase almost anything including Quechua art and handicrafts.

Volunteers may choose to visit local museums, go on a city tour, or visit Cristo de la Concordia, which offers an amazing view of Cochabamba. At night, many of the local nightclubs have dances that range from local folk music to other Latin music. Live music can be found in various places around town and usually starts around 11:00 P.M. American movies are often available in Cochabamba, in English with Spanish subtitles.

Please note that payments for recreational activities, unless indicated on the itinerary, are the responsibility of the individual volunteers. Amizade staff will be happy to provide volunteers with information about possible recreational activities as well as transportation if it is necessary.



Culture and History

Bolivia's ethnic distribution is estimated to be 56%-70% indigenous people and 30%-42% European and mixed. The largest of the approximately three-dozen indigenous groups are the Quechua (2.5 million), Aymara (2 million), Chiquitano (180,000), and Guarani (125,000). There are small German, former Yugoslav, Asian, Middle Eastern, and other minorities, many of whose members descend from families that have lived in Bolivia for several generations.

Bolivia is one of the least-developed countries in South America. Almost two-thirds of its people, many of whom are subsistence farmers, live in poverty. Population density ranges from less than one person per square kilometer in the southeastern plains to about 10 per square kilometer (25 per sq. mi.) in the central highlands. The annual population growth rate is about 2.74% (2002).

La Paz is at the highest elevation of the world's capital cities--3,600 meters (11,800 ft.) above sea level. The adjacent city of El Alto, at 4,200 meters above sea level, is one of the fastest-growing in the hemisphere. Cochabamba is 2,290 meters (7,500 ft.) above sea level. Santa Cruz, the commercial and industrial hub of the eastern lowlands, also is experiencing rapid population and economic growth.

The great majority of Bolivians are Roman Catholic (the official religion), although Protestant denominations are strongly expanding. Many indigenous communities interweave pre-Columbian and Christian symbols in their religious practices. About half of the people speak Spanish as their first

language. Approximately 90% of the children attend primary school but often for a year or less. The literacy rate is low in many rural areas.

The cultural development of what is present-day Bolivia is divided into three distinct periods: pre-Columbian, colonial, and republican. Important archaeological ruins, gold and silver ornaments, stone monuments, ceramics, and weavings remain from several important pre-Columbian cultures. Major ruins include Tiwanaku, Samaipata, Incallajta, and Iskanwaya. The country abounds in other sites that are difficult to reach and have seen little archaeological exploration.

The Spanish brought their own tradition of religious art which, in the hands of local indigenous and mestizo builders and artisans, developed into a rich and distinctive style of architecture, painting, and sculpture known as "Mestizo Baroque." The colonial period produced not only the paintings of Perez de Holguin, Flores, Bitti, and others but also the works of skilled but unknown stonecutters, woodcarvers, goldsmiths, and silversmiths. An important body of native baroque religious music of the colonial period was recovered in recent years and has been performed internationally to wide acclaim since 1994.

Bolivian artists of stature in the 20th century include, among others, Guzman de Rojas, Arturo Borda, Maria Luisa Pacheco, and Marina Nunez del Prado. Bolivia has rich folklore. Its regional folk music is distinctive and varied. The "devil dances" at the annual carnival of Oruro are one of the great folkloric events of South America, as is the lesser known carnival at Tarabuco.

Bolivia's History

Civilization in the Bolivian Andes is thought to stretch back some 21,000 years. The most influential Pre-Columbian cultures were the Tiahuanaco, who were based around Lake Titicaca and who ruled the region between AD 600-1200, and the Incas, who headed a vast empire comprising most of Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador and northern Chile.

The Spanish conquest of the country began in 1531 under Francisco Pizarro. The conquistadors made rapid progress, exploiting the trust (and later the disunity) of the Indians to secure the territory that within two years became known as Alto Peru. In 1544, deposits of silver were discovered at Potosí. The wealth generated by this find underwrote the Spanish economy (and the extravagance of its monarchs) for more than two centuries. However, conditions for the mine workers were appalling, with most of the enslaved Indians and Africans dying within a few years of working there.

The spur toward achieving independence from the profligate Spanish administration finally came in the form of Simón Bolívar's lieutenant Antonio José de Sucre, who waged the battle of Ayacucho in 1824. Bolivia was formally declared a republic the following year.

Bolivia's territory had always been coveted by its neighbors, encompassing as it did over 2 million sq km (780,000 sq mi). Chile's desire for more land first bore fruit in the War of the Pacific, which it fought with Bolivia between 1879 and 1884. Chile triumphed, securing 850km (527mi) of coastline and robbing Bolivia of the port of Antofagasta, leaving the country landlocked. Soon after, Peru, Brazil and Argentina also began hacking away at Bolivia's borders.

In 1932, a border dispute with Paraguay over oil deposits in the Chaco region stripped Bolivia of further land. The ensuing Chaco War (1932-35) also served to foment civil unrest within the country, promulgating reformist associations and leading to a series of coups by reform-minded military leaders.

Perhaps the most significant development during this time was the formation of the populist Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR). In 1951, the MNR, under the leadership of Víctor Paz Estenssoro, prevailed in the general elections but was stymied by a last-minute coup. The coup provoked a popular armed revolt which became known as the April Revolution of 1952. The military was subsequently defeated and Paz Estenssoro was brought back.

In 1964, a military junta headed by General René Barrientos overthrew the MNR. Military regimes subsequently came and went with monotonous regularity until the election of the leftist civilian Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR) under Dr Hernán Siles Zuazo in 1982. Three years later Zuazo was

defeated by Paz Estenssoro, who immediately sought to curb the stratospheric inflation levels (at one point reaching 35,000% annually) and implemented austerity measures.

Bolivia is currently vying to strengthen its regional links and is a supporter of a South American common market. Its reputation as a cocaine-producing country in the early 1990s complicated relations with the US, and this strained relationship exacerbated a severe recession that peaked in 1999 with a record 20% unemployment. Inflation has since been reduced to around 4% annually. A huge gulf still separates this divided society, with half the population immersed in the contemporary world and half who remain subsistent peasants.

In August 2002, Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada won the presidential election. He was replaced by Carlos Mesa the following year after 80 people were killed and hundreds more injured during protests against the export of natural gas. Mesa continued the export initiative however, and a referendum in mid-2004 suggested that, despite previous protests, he had the qualified support of the electorate.

Preparing for Your Program

Transportation to Site

You will be flying in and out of the Cochabamba, Bolivia airport. An Amizade staff person will meet you at the airport to transport you to the program site. All volunteers are required to arrive on or before the scheduled program start date and depart on or after the scheduled finish date. If volunteers arrive early or stay late, the individual volunteer will need to make his/her own arrangements for food, lodging, and airport transfer.

Travel Documents

The following information is for US citizens going abroad. If you are a non-US citizen, you must check with the consulate in your country regarding travel documents including passport and visa requirements.

Passport and Visa

All volunteers will need the following to enter Bolivia:

- 1.) Valid Passport (must be valid for at least six (6) months)
- 2.) Bolivian Tourist Visa

A valid U.S. passport and Tourist Visa are required to enter and depart Bolivia. U.S. citizens whose passports are lost or stolen in Bolivia must obtain a new passport and present it, together with a police report of the loss or theft, to the Bolivian government immigration office in La Paz, Cochabamba, or Santa Cruz in order to obtain permission to depart. An exit tax must be paid at the airport when departing Bolivia. For volunteers who are staying longer than 90 days, an Amizade staff member will assist you in extending your visa once you are in Cochabamba.



Please visit the following website for information on the visa requirements for US Citizens traveling abroad: <http://www.bolivia-usa.org/>.

Please be prepared in case of losing your wallet, passport, or other travel documents. Bring copies of all your important travel documents and monetary documents, especially your passport, and store one set of copies in your luggage while leaving another set of copies with your emergency contact at home.

Health & Safety

General Notes

- Traveling often affects one's health so it is imperative that all volunteers are in good physical condition.
- Typical travel ailments include stomach upsets and diarrhea, bug bites, jet lag, minor cuts, scrapes, bruises, and sunburn. Please feel free to bring travel-sized portions of over the

- counter medicines such as headache medicine, stomach medicines, sun block, bug spray, band-aids, etc.
- An on-site Amizade staff member will have a first aid kit.
 - Check with your medical physician regarding further information about healthy travel abroad.

Immunizations

Participants in Amizade programs are solely responsible for receiving immunizations. Amizade defers all recommendations to the current recommendations and requirements from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). All participants are expected to consult the CDC for required and recommended immunizations for the country or countries they will be visiting for their Amizade program. See your doctor at least 4–6 weeks before your trip to allow time for immunizations to take effect.

The following information was taken from the CDC website, www.cdc.gov, on July 26, 2006. Please check the website for up to date information.

Recommended Vaccinations:

- [Hepatitis A](#) or immune globulin (IG).
- [Hepatitis B](#), if you might be exposed to blood (for example, health-care workers), have sexual contact with the local population, stay >6 months in the region, or be exposed through medical treatment. [Hepatitis B](#) vaccine is now recommended for all infants and for children ages 11–12 years who did not complete the series as infants.
- [Rabies](#), if you might be exposed to wild or domestic animals through your work or recreation.
- [Typhoid](#), particularly if you are visiting developing countries in this region.
- As needed, booster doses for [tetanus-diphtheria](#) and [measles](#).
- [Malaria](#), (Amizade note: Malaria is not present in Cochabamba, however, if you plan to travel to the lowlands, including Santa Cruz, it is highly recommended)

Required Vaccinations:

- [Yellow fever](#) vaccination

For more information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Rd.
Atlanta, GA 30333 USA
(404) 639-3311 (404) 639-3312 (TTY)

Public Inquiries 1-404-639-3534 and 1-800-311-3435
National Immunization Hotline (English) 1-800-232-2522
National Immunization Hotline (Spanish) 1-800-232-0233
Traveler's Health 1-877-394-8747

Traveler's Health Website: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm>

Email form: <http://www.cdc.gov/netinfo.htm>

Prescription Medicines

If you have prescription medicines, bring them in the original prescription bottles with your name on them and bring an ample supply for the duration of your program. In some countries, certain medicines are not as readily available.

The Best Medicine is “Preventative Medicine”

Throughout the program, please rest, drink plenty of water, and take care to avoid overexposure to the sun. While on the program, let the Amizade staff know if you have any concerns about your health and contact them immediately if you experience a health emergency.

Amizade Medical and Insurance Form

All volunteers are required to complete and submit the Amizade Medical and Insurance Form prior to participation. It is imperative that you complete this form as comprehensively as possible so Amizade staff can best address medical situations on site. On this form you will also list your immunization record. Please consult with your physician regarding your healthy participation in the service work and activities for your program and recommended immunizations.

It is the responsibility of every Amizade participant to make sure that they have adequate medical coverage for the duration of any Amizade program.

Safety

As a volunteer in the community you will have local companions and friends. Volunteers should observe and imitate local customs regarding safety. Regardless of where you are it is best to travel in pairs, especially at night. We highly recommend taking a taxi after dark. Be cautious with your money and make sure you store it in a safe place or money belt.

Trust your instincts. If you do not feel safe in a situation or someone's behavior is making you uncomfortable, get out of the situation immediately. Firmly say "no" to any invitation you do not want and turn away. Ignore persistent overtures.

Money Matters

Currency Converter

For the latest conversion rate for your country, please visit www.xe.com.

Spending Money

Volunteers will not need substantial amounts of spending cash on a regular basis, but will need money for transportation, extra meals, activities, and shopping. **Volunteers can withdraw money from bank machines in Cochabamba as well as make arrangements for withdraws at the bank counter.** It is advised that volunteers check with their home bank to confirm the type of ATM card they carry. The most commonly accepted cards are linked to the Plus and Cirrus bank systems. Also, it is very important to inform your bank that you will be using your card to withdrawal money while in Bolivia. This will help to avoid them from issuing a "hold" on your card which prevents one from withdrawing money.

US currency is accepted in many stores, and there are money exchange booths throughout the city. Volunteers should bring small denominations of US currency (\$20 bills). Visa and MasterCard are accepted at some more established locations, and travelers' checks are exchanged at a lower rate and only at banks. Exchange rates between foreign currencies and the Boliviano (the Bolivian currency) vary daily so it is best not to exchange or withdraw large amounts of money at one time.

Packing List

PLEASE PACK LIGHTLY!

You should bring a maximum of two bags. Ideally, this includes one medium-sized suitcase/duffel bag and a smaller daypack for daily activities. You should be able to carry your luggage comfortably by yourself. Rolling luggage does not always work effectively in developing countries. Please use your best judgment regarding valuables. Amizade does not recommend that volunteers bring expensive jewelry, electronics, laptops, etc. Amizade is not reliable for lost or stolen articles.

Recommended Packing List: (Please keep in mind that if you are on an individual placement, you will not need to bring work clothes for the construction site)

- Documents: passport, airline tickets, personal health insurance information, and ATM/credit cards (and copies of each in a separate place)
- Cash or traveler's checks and money belt or wallet
- Family photos to share with the community
- Postcards of your hometown to share with the community

- ❑ Water bottle
- ❑ Notebook or journal and pens
- ❑ Travel alarm clock
- ❑ Watch
- ❑ Camera and film
- ❑ Knapsack or book bag
- ❑ Towel and Wash cloth
- ❑ Toiletries – just the basics such as toothbrush, toothpaste, travel-sized shampoo, and soap
- ❑ Prescriptions in original bottles (enough for the entire program)
- ❑ Over-the-counter medications (headache, stomach, band-aids, anti-itch cream)
- ❑ Clothing
 - T-shirts
 - Two pair of pants (one pair for working)
 - One nice outfit
 - Socks and underwear
 - Pajamas
 - One long sleeve shirt, sweatshirt, or jacket
- ❑ Shower shoes or flip-flops
- ❑ Comfortable walking shoes
- ❑ Work boots if applicable (a sturdy hiking boot will work well)
- ❑ Work gloves if applicable
- ❑ Flashlight & batteries
- ❑ Bathing suit
- ❑ Hat, scarf, cold weather items in winter
- ❑ Sun protection: bandanas, hat, sunglasses and sun block
- ❑ Bug spray
- ❑ Shorts and comfortable clothes for warm weather

Gifts

You may choose to bring small gifts or thank you cards for community members. Photographs are generally appreciated around the world so feel free to collect addresses and mail pictures back if possible.

While You Are Away

Culture Shock

Culture shock is a term used to describe the emotional upset that may occur when a person travels to a new culture. When experiencing culture shock, people sometimes feel unsure about what is appropriate in the new culture, confused about how to manage daily tasks (such as banking or telephoning), frustrated with managing language and cultural barriers and generally vulnerable. This experience is normal and affects people at different times throughout a cultural immersion program. Remember to rest, eat and take care of your physical and emotional needs in order to function at your best!

Drug Use

Amizade in no way encourages the use of, or purchase of drugs while visiting any of our sites. As an organization, our primary concern is that of safety for our volunteers. For this reason, we adhere to a drug-free policy for all of our programs. We ask that all volunteers please respect this as a rule of Amizade. Failure to comply with this rule is grounds for removal from the program.

Contacting Home

In most major cities one can find telephone booths that except coins and cards. International/domestic telephone cards can be purchased on site through the ENTEL Telephone Company stores, local kiosk some street vendors. Cards can be brought in increments of \$10, \$20 & \$50. The country code for Bolivia is 591 and the International Dial Direct number is 00. A three minute call to the U.S. is approximately \$8 US station-to-station and \$10 to Europe station-to-station. If you need to be reached in Bolivia or need to make a call out, please allow Amizade to contact the program director. The phone system in Bolivia is pulse, not tone, so dial slowly. Cochabamba is in Eastern Standard Time. The local address and phone is:

Jean Carla Costas
Casilla #1525
Cochabamba, Bolivia
Tel: 011-591-774-18060
Av. Circunvalcion #33 Norte
esq. Walter Zeballos (Prolong. Tarija)

Within Bolivia:

To reach AT&T - dial: 0008010.

To reach MCI - dial: 0008012.

To reach SPRINT - dial: 0008016.

Have your credit card number ready to respond to the operator.

AMIZADE CONTACT INFORMATION

If someone from home needs to contact a volunteer with an emergency message, they can phone the Amizade US office to relay a message.

- **Amizade US Office Phone:** 304-293-6049. This phone line is staffed 8 am - 4:30 pm EST, M-F.
 - Have the person leave:
 - Their name
 - Your name
 - Their phone number
 - The message to be relayed
- **Amizade Emergency Phone #:** 412-853-4032. This phone line is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week during volunteer programs.

To call the United States from Bolivia, dial 00-1-area code-local number. For instance, if you were to call Amizade from Bolivia, you would dial 00-1-304-293-6049.

Returning Home

Reverse Culture Shock

Many participants find that they encounter difficulties when transitioning home. Volunteers will be happy to return home and visit with family and friends but after the initial reunions take place, they often find that they experience problems when trying to communicate the experience they had abroad. Many people feel alienated, knowing that they have grown while many of those around them remain the same. It may help to connect with others who have had similar travel experiences, as they understand the need to talk about the experience in greater detail.