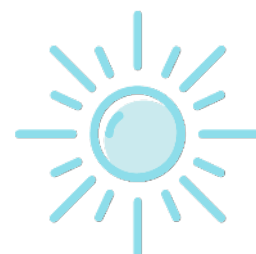


An extremely condensed, highly useful guide with practical travel hacks for anyone who is traveling South America!

Travel Enthusiasts, Bloggers & Hosts of The World Wanderers Podcast

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Amanda & Ryan are travel enthusiasts, bloggers & podcast hosts. It wasn't always this way though...

Amanda & Ryan met while attending business school at the University of Calgary. When they graduated, they took their first big trip together, traveling for 6 months through Europe, Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand.

They returned from their travels with intentions of living life differently. They were stuck on the conventional life path though, working corporate, soul-sucking jobs. Two years later, they quite their jobs, sold their stuff, and headed to South America.

Amanda & Ryan traveled around South America for 6 months, visiting Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay & Brazil. While in the southern hemisphere, Amanda & Ryan learned a thing or two. "The No Bullshit Guide to South America" is a compilation of the tips and tricks, & travel hacks they learned on their travels.

Enjoy!



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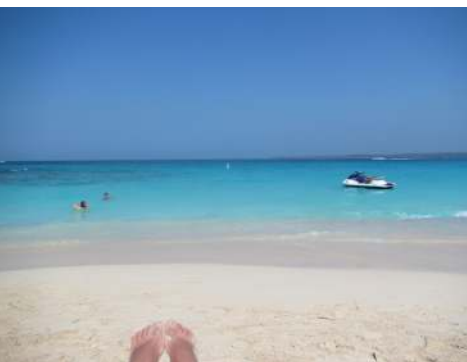
COLOMBIA

Colombia is perhaps South America's most underrated country. Ignore the rumors you have heard (unless they're good!), get on a plane or bus, and get your butt to Colombia. The people, the food, the cities, and the landscapes are amazing and completely worth the visit!

MEDELLIN...we returned twice, and only left because we had to (we had plans in Ecuador!). It's the type of city you don't want to leave because it's so damn cool. Stay in El Poblado at one of the awesome hostels, and check out the plethora of cafes and restaurants in the area. Don't rush your time in Medellin, or you will end up like us, constantly looking at each other, sighing and stating, *"We never should have left Medellin."*

GET OUT OF THE CITY! Regardless of which city you are in, get out of it and enjoy some of Colombia's spectacular scenery. Get out of Santa Marta and visit the Sierra Nevada where you can swim in waterfalls and hike the luscious mountains. Make a stop in Salento, sip coffee, and see 80 foot palm trees. Or, tour one of the nearby beaches or islands outside of Cartagena.

GROCERY SHOPPING 101 Grocery shopping in Colombia is one of the more shocking South American experiences we had. The stores are always packed, and the lines are long. If you're traveling as a duo, do most of your shopping, and as you are getting to the end of your shopping, send one person to stand in line, while the other finishes. Don't worry, the locals do it!



AIRLINE HACKING

Do you like cheap flights? We do! In Colombia, you can't purchase the extremely cheap Viva Colombia airline tickets with foreign credit cards, **BUT** when you get to the payment page, select "Via Baloto". You will receive a reference number, which you will take to the lottery stand in the supermarket, along with your cash to pay for your flight. Once you pay, you will be given a receipt that acts as your ticket for your flight.

A SAMPLE ROUTE

Fly to Bogota, fly using Viva Colombia to Santa Marta, and then take a bus west to Cartagena (this one is only about 4 hours and is much less painful than the bus from Bogota to Santa Marta). Make your way down to Medellin, spend a few days taking in Medellin (or just move there for the rest of your life!) before relaxing in Salento on your way to fiery Cali. Head onwards to Ecuador, or if you're coming from Ecuador, reverse this route!



ECUADOR

From jungle to coast, to volcanic mountains, to big city lights, to giant turtles, this country has almost everything a backpacker could want! It's also extremely cheap, with hostels running for about \$10/night and a big plate of food (menu del dia) for about \$5.

EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCES IN ECUADOR

GALAPAGOS ISLANDS If not only for the massive turtles; however, the snorkeling is pretty unreal as well!

OTAVALO MARKET Don't discredit this little town – it's more than just a market! Avoid the Sunday morning crowds and spend a night in Otavalo discovering all there is to see outside of the colourful market.

QUILOTA CRATER It's beautiful and completely worth the day trip.

GETTING OUT OF QUITO

There is probably some good stuff in Quito, but we didn't find any of it. So, explore for a day, eat some chocolate and then GTFO. Spend your time exploring the other amazing places in Ecuador, such as Otavalo, Banos, and the Galapagos Islands. Or, if you're stuck in Quito for a few days feeling miserable, use it as a transport hub to explore areas like Quilotoa Crater, Cotopaxi National Park, or Banos.



LESSONS WE LEARNED

- Having a large menu del dia for an affordable price for lunch can help you save money on food.
- Ecuadorian chocolate is amazing, and *worth* the splurge.
- Be very weary of eating raw vegetables, especially lettuce, unless you're a fan of diarrhea. Yuck!
- Be careful of your belongings – people will steal your stuff here!

A SAMPLE ROUTE

An ideal route through Ecuador has minimal time spent in Quito. Perhaps you spend a day or two in the beginning eating chocolate and learning some Spanish before making your way to the beautiful Galapagos Islands, Cuenca, Otavalo, Banos, or the coast of Ecuador.



PERU

It doesn't take long to fall in love with this beautiful country. Take time to explore the variety that this magical country has to offer, from lakes to ocean, to desert to mountains to jungle.

NOM, NOM, NOM The food in Peru is undeniably some of the best in South America (if not the entire Southern hemisphere). Make sure to try some fresh ceviche, aji de gallina, alpaca, lucuma, papa a la huancaína, lomo saltado, chica morada, Inca corn, and if you're brave, cuy. We took a cooking class in Lima and this was an enjoyable way to try a bunch of different Peruvian food and learn how it's cooked!



A SAMPLE ROUTE

Bus from Bolivia to the Peruvian side of Lake Titicaca, in Puno. Skip the floating islands (they're a tourist trap!!!!), and head onwards to Cusco, where you should spend a few days before heading off to see Machu Picchu. Bus onwards to Arequipa and hike the Colca Canyon (quick FYI – we probably wouldn't go to the Colca Canyon again, so if you're short on time, skip it!), before making your way to Nazca to see the Nazca Lines and then onwards to Ica and Huacachina. From there make your way to Lima. Detour through the jungle of Iquitos, or continue north to check out more of the Andes Mountains. Or reverse it!

AYAHUASCA

It is becoming more and more popular for travelers to take an interest in trying ayahuasca while in Peru. Make sure to choose a place where you feel comfortable and safe, and ensure that it is legitimate. Better safe than sorry! We had a great ayahuasca experience with Sacred Valley Tribe in Pisac.

THE TRUTH ABOUT MACHU PICCHU

Machu Picchu is obviously Peru's most famous tourist destination, and it is 100% worth a visit, but don't get caught up in the idea that you have to do the Inca Trail. There are a ton of other cool tours and trails that you can hike to get to Machu Picchu, such as the Inca Jungle Trek, Salkantay, or perhaps just doing Machu Picchu on your own from the base of Aguas Calientes and hiking Machu Picchu mountain and Huana Picchu. Whatever you decide to do when it comes to Machu Picchu, make sure it is right for YOU!



BOLIVIA

Easily the most affordable and most poverty stricken country we visited in South America, yet some of the most spectacular landscapes in the world. Bolivia is home to the world's largest salt flats, the world's highest lake, mysterious ruins and the dead road... what's not to love?

THE SALT FLATS ARE COOL ... But don't forget about the rest of Bolivia too! Lake Titicaca is undeniably beautiful, and the pampas in Rurrenabaque offers a one of a kind experience (how often do you get to swim with pink dolphins and fish for piranhas?). The Death Road is also one of our best travel experiences!



UPSET STOMACH ... DIARRHEA ...

Everyone we met in South America was sick in Bolivia. EVERYONE. Bring travellers diarrhea medication, avoid raw vegetables, and wash your hands constantly.



BE FLEXIBLE! Flexibility with your timeline is key in case you get sick somewhere along the way. If you get sick in Bolivia, you will most likely be out of commission for a few days. It is also best not to jam pack your schedule because flights and buses can be unreliable, and you may find yourself unexpectedly delayed at any point in time. We had to postpone our Death Road bike tour when Ryan was sick, and Amanda missed a guided hike in Sucre when she was sick. In case we weren't clear, EVERYONE gets sick. Plan for it.



A SAMPLE ROUTE

Travel from Chile through Salar de Uyuni into the town of Uyuni, spending as little time as possible in Uyuni itself. Bus from Uyuni to Potosi to check out the mines, and then travel onwards to Sucre. After exploring Sucre for a few days, make your way to La Paz, which you can use as a hub to explore the beautiful surroundings, including Tiwanaku, the Death Road & Rurrenabaque, before making your way onwards to Copacabana on Lake Titicaca. Or do this route reversed if you're coming from Peru!



BRAZIL

This Portuguese speaking country has a culture unique to South America. From Samba to surfing to soccer (or futebol, as they say!), jungle to waterfalls, Brazil has so many spectacular sights to see, foods to try, and places to explore. Brazil is a massive country, more expensive than some of it's surrounding neighbors, so plan accordingly!

GETTING A VISA

As Canadian citizens, we had to arrange our Brazilian visa beforehand, and this was not a simple task. It was expensive and a time consuming process. Before planning your trip to Brazil, check out your countries visa policies, and if you do need a visa, make sure you make it worth your while and stay for a considerable amount of time.

GETTING AROUND

Brazil is a massive country, and the buses aren't the best or most efficient down there. If you are planning to travel from one end of the country to the other, give yourself lots of time, or consider taking planes. Once in the country, it is possible to get pretty reasonable airfare prices that will save you the time and hassle of taking mediocre (crappy) buses!



A SAMPLE ROUTE

Brazil is massive and difficult to plan.... We went from Sao Paulo to Rio de Janeiro, and up north to Salvador de Bahia via bus, stopping along the way. Then, we flew to Iguazu Falls and bussed down to Florianopolis. Our route was random, so perhaps choose the places you want to go and plan a route from there!

BRAZIL IS BETTER One of the coolest sights to see in Brazil is undoubtedly Iguazu Falls. We heard time and time again that "Brazil is better". The sights from Brazil are spectacular, but the Argentinian side also has a lot to offer, so perhaps consider one day on either side of the border to get the full experience of Iguazu Falls.



URUGUAY

Don't forget about Uruguay. Don't write it off simply because it's small though. It's beautiful, colonial and a little bit calmer than some of the other bustling areas of South America.

A SAMPLE ROUTE

Travel from Brazil down to Montevideo, the number one place to visit in Uruguay. Perhaps take a trip to Punta del Este to the east, or visit Salto in the north before making a pit stop in Colonia del Sacramento to catch the ferry onwards to Buenos Aires.



TOO MUCH TIME IN URUGUAY Uruguay is an awesome place to slow things down and chill out for a little bit. Depending on how much time you have and what you're looking to do, you could take a "vacation from your vacation" in Punta del Este. Be warned though – Uruguay, unlike many of the other places in South America, doesn't have a list of tourist attractions a mile long. Gage your time spent in Uruguay wisely, based on what you are looking to do.

GOING BACK IN TIME Colonia del Sacramento is an old school, colonial town that is worth a stop if you are coming or going between Uruguay and Argentina. Hang out at one of the many cafes along the cobblestone roads, and get lost amongst the windy streets and ivy-covered buildings. There isn't a ton to do here, so don't stop for too long though ...





ARGENTINA

From big city lights, to all-night tango, to mountains, waterfalls, and desert, Argentina has a little something for everyone. It is undeniably one of South America's, if not the world's, most beautiful and diverse countries. Between the landscapes, the culture, the people and the food, what's not to love?

THE PARIS OF SOUTH AMERICA Buenos Aires is often described as the Paris of South America. You will hear about how awesome Buenos Aires is from fellow travellers from the first moment that you enter South America, and onwards until you yourself become that raving backpacker. B.A. is without a doubt one of the coolest capital cities in South America. Settle down in B.A. for a few days, take some language lessons (don't book ahead – find them once you're there and you can scope them out yourself), explore the different areas of the city, watch some tango, sip coffee at one of the many trendy coffee shops, stay up all night drinking wine, and take in the sights and sounds of this European-inspired city.



WINE SIPPIN' Mendoza is famous for its supple grapes and delicious wine. Make a stop in Mendoza and take a wine tour through some of the famous wineries in the area. Or, alternatively, rent a bike, grab a few friends and make your own wine tour.

TRADING ON THE BLUE MARKET If you're walking down a major street in Buenos Aires, you are bound to see the various men trying to exchange money for you. Do it! Argentinians want USD, so if you can travel into Argentina with USD from Uruguay or Chile, you will be much better off than simply withdrawing from a bank machine. The Blue Market (the street market) allows for you to exchange your money at a much better rate. Ask around to find a legit place so you don't get ripped off with fake Argentinian pesos (it happens!).

DON'T SKIP THE NORTH Between Buenos Aires, Iguazu Falls, wine tasting in Mendoza, and Patagonia in the south, it is easy to forget about the north of Argentina, or write it off as somewhere you don't need to visit. As you make your way north, the landscape becomes more rugged, barren, and rocky. The weather becomes drier, the cactus' are giant, and the culture becomes a little less Italian-influenced and a lot more similar to the culture in Bolivia.

A SAMPLE ROUTE

Buenos Aires down to Patagonia and then up to Mendoza, or skip Patagonia and head straight to Mendoza and fill up that wine glass! Make your way north with visits to Chile, ensuring you stop in the JuJuy province of Argentina in the north.



CHILE

Perhaps the world's longest and skinniest country, Chile should not be forgotten about. Chile offers the Lakes District in the South, the beach to the west, the mountains to the east, the city of Santiago, and the desert to the north.

A CAPITAL CITY WORTH VISITING

Almost every Latin American capital city feels big and dirty and virtually the same... except Santiago. Santiago is more modern and developed than a lot of other capital cities. It lies just outside of the Andes mountain range, so it offers beautiful views, with easy access to neighboring wineries and Valparaiso on the coast.

LOOOOONGGGG BORDER WAITS

When crossing between Chile and Argentina by bus, be prepared to wait in long lines at the border. And by long lines, we're talking anywhere from 1-6 hours. Prepare by bringing snacks and having enough water for the bus ride, plus the border crossing.



A SAMPLE ROUTE

If travelling from South to North, as we did, make sure to stop in the Lakes District, before heading onwards to Santiago and Valparaiso. From there, make your way up north to San Pedro de Atacama. Alternatively, reverse that! Or, do as we did, and weave your way through Argentina while making your way north or south.

DON'T RUSH IT

Chile is long and beautiful and has tons of amazing things so see, so don't rush it just to say that you've been there. Give yourself time to explore the lakes and mountains in the south, as well as to see Santiago and its surroundings, and then make your way north to San Pedro de Atacama Desert. The landscape here is most definitely worth a visit, and was one of the highlights of our trip.



PATAGONIA

The south end of the continent is divided into two countries, but you won't be traveling them one at a time. As the graffiti we saw on the Chilean-Argentinian Border says "Las Fronteras son imaginarios" (*Borders are imaginary*).

GETTING DOWN THERE It is a loooooong way by bus from Buenos Aires, or from Santiago down to Patagonia. Although the long distance buses are maybe the best in the world, try to fly one way. Check out LADE (<http://www.lade.com.ar>) for cheap flights to and around Argentina, with prices comparable to busing.

DON'T GET GREEDY Just because you are on the continent doesn't mean you need to go to Patagonia. With so much to explore, and a cooler and more variable climate, if all you've got is tank tops and board shorts, it's worth planning a different trip in the future where you have the gear and the time to really enjoy it!

PLAN AHEAD (& WORK ON FLEXIBILITY) Getting around Patagonia can be a hassle. Buses run infrequently between the cities, in the busy summer season you need to buy tickets in advance, and book accommodation as well. In the shoulder season you have more options but you need to watch out for weather and other issues disrupting your plans!

A SAMPLE ROUTE

Fly to Ushuaia, bus to Puerto Arienas, then onto Puerto Natalas for the Torres del Paine trek, then back onto the bus to El Calafate to check out the Perito Moreno Glacier. Bus to El Chalten to hike the Fitz Roy, then return to Calafate and fly with LADE to Bariloche for some more amazing hiking, lakes, German food, and chocolate!





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