



Bolivia

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Capital

La Paz (administrative capital).
Sucre (constitutional and judicial capital).

National Symbols

The Flag

The current flag of Bolivia was originally adopted by Bolivia in 1851. The state flag is a horizontal tricolor of red, yellow, and green with the Bolivian coat of arms in the center. The red stands for Bolivia's animals and its liberating army, while the yellow the nation's mineral resources and the green symbolizes fertility.



Coat of Arms

The Coat of Arms of Bolivia has a central crest surrounded by Bolivian flags, muskets that symbolize the struggle for independence, laurel branches as a symbol of peace, and an Andean condor on top as a symbol of the willingness to defend the nation and its liberty.

The central crest has a border with the name of Bolivia in the top section and ten stars in the bottom, which symbolize the nine

"Departamentos" of provinces and the former province Cobija that was taken over by Chile in 1879. Inside the central crest you can see the silver mountain Potosi (recognized by a mine entrance) with a sun rising above it. It also has an alpaca standing next to a tree and some wheat which are symbolic of the resources of the nation. The alpaca stands on a plain that contrasts with the mountain which is indicative of the type of geography that Bolivia has.



National Flower

The Bolivian national flowers are Cantuta (Catua buxifolia) and Patujo (Heliconia rostrata).

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National Animal

The alpaca is the national animal. It resembles a sheep in appearance, but is larger and has a long erect neck since its origins are the camelids.

History

Independence

Independence was proclaimed in 1809, but sixteen years of struggle followed before the establishment of the republic, named for Simon Bolivar, on August 6th, 1825.

The First President

The first president of Bolivia was Simon Bolivar from August 12th, 1825, to, December 29th, 1825.



Government

Palace of Government

The Palacio Quemado is the Bolivian Palace of Government, located on Plaza Murillo in downtown La Paz. Its nickname, "Palacio

Quemado," or "Burned Palace", originates from the fact that it was set aflame and burned almost to the ground during an uprising in the 1860s. It has been rebuilt and revamped a number of times, but the name stuck. It is located next to the Cathedral of La Paz, and right across from the Legislative Palace, where the Bolivian Congress operates.

Representative Government Institutions

Bolivia is a republic. A democracy with elections held every five years. The 1964 constitution (revised in 1994 and 2004) provides for an executive and a legislature consisting of a 27-member Senate and a 130-member Chamber of Deputies.

The Constitution

Bolivia's 1967 constitution, revised in 1994, provides for balanced executive, legislative, and judicial powers. The traditionally strong executive, however, tends to overshadow the National Congress. The judiciary, consisting of the Supreme Court and departmental and lower courts, has long been riddled with corruption and inefficiency. Through revisions to the constitution in 1994, and subsequent laws, the government has initiated potentially far-reaching reforms in the judicial system and processes.

The Supreme Court

Under the Constitution of 1967, the Supreme Court of Justice has the power to determine the constitutionality of laws, decrees, and resolutions approved by the executive and legislative branches of Government.

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Political Parties

Bolivia has a multi-party system, with numerous parties in which no party has a chance of gaining power by itself, so parties must work with each other to form coalition governments.

Some of the most important political parties are: The Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario or MNR), the Revolutionary Left Movement (Movimiento Izquierdo Revolucionaria or MIR), the Movement Toward Socialism (Movimiento al Socialismo or MAS), the New Republican Force (Nueva Fuerza Republicana or NFR), the Civic Solidarity Union (Union Civica Solidaridad or UCS), and the Nationalist Democratic Action (Accion Democratica Nacionalista or ADN).

Provinces

Bolivia is divided into nine "departamentos." Additionally, the departments are further divided into 100 provinces (provincias), and the provinces are each divided into various numbers of cantons (cantones), and municipalities (municipalidades), which handle local affairs.

The departamentos are : Beni, Chuquisaca, Cochabamba, La Paz, Oruro, Pando, Potosí,

Santa Cruz, and Tarija.

La Paz, the administrative capital, with a population of 2,350,466 inhabitants is situated at the western border of Bolivia, sharing Lake Titicaca with Peru. It contains the mighty Cordillera Real that reaches altitudes of 6.6 kilometers (4.1 miles).



Social Recognition

Historic Figures

Eduardo Abaroa
October, 1838
March, 1879



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Colonel Eduardo Abaroa was Bolivia's foremost hero of the War of the Pacific (1879–1883) in which he was one of the leaders of the civilian resistance to the Chilean invasion at the Battle of Topáter.

The anniversary of Abaroa's heroic death (March 23) is a national holiday in Bolivia.

Social Figures



Los Kjarkas

One of the most popular Andean pop bands in the region's recent history. Their most popular song, "Llorando se fue", with some of its basic melodies and harmonies being based on Bolivian popular music of public domain, was licenced by French producers, Jean Karakos and Olivier Lorsac which resulted in Kaoma's hit, Lambada.



Mamani Mamani

Roberto Mamani Mamani, one of Bolivia's foremost painters, has a very personal sense of mission. His paintings are more than a passive representation of the life-style and culture of the Aymara Indians of the Bolivian altiplano. Through his work, he seeks to

preserve and stimulate an alternative vision to that of the modern, industrialized twentieth century.

Important Festivities

The Oruro Carnival

The Oruro Carnival is the most famous in Bolivia. It takes place during the eight days preceding Ash Wednesday. The Carnival in Oruro originates in the Andean ancestral invocations to Pachamama (mother land), Tio Supay (Satan Uncle), and to the Candelaria Virgin; and it always begins with the "diablada" or devil dance. The "diablada" is a centuries-old ritual that has survived unchanged from colonial days.

In 1970, the government declared Oruro the Folkloric Bolivian Capital. Just recently, UNESCO acknowledged the Carnival of Oruro the Intangible Cultural Patrimony of Humanity.



Tourist Sites

Lake Titicaca

Situated in the high plains that separate Bolivia and Peru, it is a natural frontier between the two countries. It is the highest

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navigable lake in the world at 3,810 m (12,500ft) above sea level and is the biggest in South America, with an area of 8,300 square kilometers (3,200 sq miles). The immense, clear blue waters of Lake Titicaca are quite impressive.

Lake Titicaca, the main witness to the rise of the Incan Empire, holds the legend of Manco Capac and Mama Ocllo, who founded the Incan society high up in Cuzco, a task given to them by their father, the Sun. A story tells that the arrival of the Spanish in the 16th Century caused the indigenous people to hide their treasures at the bottom of the lake in desperation, just as there are rumors that some ruins of cities can also be found there. What is certain is that in the surrounding areas of Koa Island, to the north of Sun Island, they have found artifacts that, according to archaeologists, may indicate that there was a city below the water, but the evidence is too scarce to assure this.



Salar de Uyuni
(Uyuni Salt Flat)

With a surface area of some 12,000 sq. km. (7,500 sq. mi.) and situated to the southwest of Bolivia, the Uyuni Salt Flat is the largest salt bed in the world. It is comprised of approximately 11 layers, each one varying in thickness from 2 to 10 meters (6.5 and 32.8

ft). The crust on the surface is 10 meters thick, and it is estimated that the amount of salt that exists weighs about 64 billion tons.

The Salt Bed is located at an altitude of 3,700 m (12,136 ft), in the western part of Uyuni and it forms an enormous, completely flat, white plain. This infinite extension is what remains of a sea that filled the entire high plateau up to Lake Titicaca, and over the course of millions of years, the sea disappeared. Today, Lake Titicaca, Lake Poopo, and the Coipasa and Uyuni Salt Flats are what is left of that sea. Additionally, the salt flat is situated on a major Lithium reserve and it contains significant quantities of potassium, boron, and magnesium.

Nearby, Colchani is a population dedicated to the artisan development of the salt. 10 km (6.25 miles) further west of Colchani is the Salt Hotel, where everything is made of salt: chairs, beds, tables, walls.

Also on the way, you will find Isla de Pescado (Fish Island), a 10-hour trip from Colchani. It is considered the largest "oasis" in a salt flat presented by such an isolated ecosystem. The island is populated by a number of cacti more than 8 m (26 ft) tall.