

South/Central America Travel Notes

General Notes

This is the combination of notes from three separate trips. Source 1 is two separate groups who combined notes, one in 2024 (Oscar and Elodie, if their names come up) and Frank (2025). Source 2 is Nikhil - I don't know more about him, but I was given his comprehensive notes.

To note - If you see 'Selina's hostel' referenced on here, they have gone bust, and Sociatel has bought some up

Brazil

São Paulo

Accommodation:

- Stayed at Selina Aurora the first night — super dodgy area, didn't love it. [Source 1]
- Moved to Selina Villa Madalena — much nicer hostel but very digital nomad-y. Got bed bugs there though. [Source 1]
- If you're after a party hostel, go for O de Casa. [Source 1]

Activities & Tips:

- Didn't do much sightseeing — mostly visited Oscar's family. [Source 1]
- Beco do Batman (Boca del Batman) at night is sick — really lively atmosphere. [Source 1]
 - You can get a pint of caipirinha for ~£2, and the street is full of bars and people hanging out. Super fun vibe. [Source 1]

Rio de Janeiro

Accommodation:

- Stayed at Discovery Hostel — SUCH good vibes, really social with a good happy hour and decent night-time atmosphere. [Source 1]
 - Only downside: not many loos. [Source 1]
- Heard that Books Hostel is a better choice if you're looking for a bigger party scene. [Source 1]

Activities & Tips:

- Did an amazing walking tour that covered the whole downtown area — would recommend. [Source 1]
- Went out one night in Lapa — epic night out. [Source 1]
 - Just be really cautious when heading home — area is very dodgy at night. [Source 1]
- Super hot the entire time. [Source 1]
- Didn't have much time to explore more. [Source 1]

Paraty

Accommodation:

- Stayed at Casa Viva — insanely nice hostel. Beautiful pool, super social atmosphere. [Source 1]
 - A bit far from town, and no Ubers, so be prepared for a long walk from the bus stop. [Source 1]

Activities & Tips:

- The town itself is very pretty, but not loads to do. [Source 1]
- Definitely recommend doing the boat trip. [Source 1]
- Try the pastels sold on the street — around 50p each. [Source 1]
- Don't stay more than 2 days — enough time to enjoy what it has to offer. [Source 1]

Florianópolis

Accommodation:

- Stayed at Geckos Hostel — loved it, though mainly because of the people we met. [Source 1]
 - Good kitchen, aircon (a lifesaver), but no bed curtains. [Source 1]

Activities & Tips:

- Loved the vibe of the island, but not much to do, and it rains a lot, so we spent a good amount of time inside. [Source 1]
- Great shot bar on the main strip — all the shots are labelled with flavours, but you have no idea what's actually in them. Very fun. [Source 1]
- Campeche Island and Beach — stunning, but you have to queue super early in the morning as they only allow the first 100 people to go. We missed it, but it looked amazing. [Source 1]
- Did the waterfall hike — the waterfall isn't mind-blowing but it's a nice walk. [Source 1]
 - After the walk, had lunch in a restaurant, then got a free boat ride back to the start point. [Source 1]

General Brazil Tips

- Bus travel along the coast is super easy, but DO NOT use BusBud — prices are much higher. [Source 1]
 - Book your tickets at the bus station or through the actual bus company's website — about half the price. [Source 1]
- Long-distance buses aren't very comfy. [Source 1]
 - If you can, pay extra to sit downstairs — we didn't, but really wish we had. [Source 1]

Argentina

Border Crossing from Uruguay

- Took the ferry — super easy, about an hour and cost £35.
- there well early as you go through both Argentinian and Uruguayan border control. Nearly missed it. [Source 1]

Buenos Aires

Accommodation:

- Stayed in Viajero Hostel — really good vibes. [Source 1]
- Also booked an Airbnb in Palermo — super cheap and a great area to stay in. [Source 1]

Activities & Tips:

- Palermo is the nicest area — super safe and good for walking. [Source 1]
- Went out a lot — get taxis back at night as it's not super safe. Watch your belongings during the day too. [Source 1]
- San Telmo Sunday Market is amazing — loads of great food, especially cheap and delicious empanadas. [Source 1]

- Go to Pizza Guerrin — cheese and onion flavour recommended. You can do half-and-half pizzas, and one between two is enough, they're super filling. [Source 1]
- Visit the parks and do a walking tour. [Source 1]
- Try to see a football match or visit Boca Stadium — tickets have to be sourced locally and it can be dodgy, so be cautious. [Source 1]

Mendoza

Getting There:

- Took a long bus from Buenos Aires — around 20 hours, not very comfy, but funny experience. [Source 1]

Accommodation:

- Stayed at Gorillas Hostel — social, super comfy beds, but pricier than others. [Source 1]
- Also stayed at Lagares Hostel — basic but good staff, breakfast included. [Source 2]

Activities & Tips:

- Bike tour through vineyards — really fun and ends with a free wine happy hour. [Both Sources]
- Horseback tour at a ranch — unlimited steak and wine after, bookable via the hostel. Felt like a cowboy. [Source 2]
- The town is cosy and relaxed, with bars and cheap food on one main strip (name forgotten). [Source 2]
- Mendoza nightlife is mostly reggaeton, and there are secret parties if you talk to the right people. [Source 2]

Salta & Tilcara

Getting There:

- Took a bus to Salta, then hired a car (credit card required!) and drove to Tilcara. [Both Sources]

Accommodation:

- Stayed in an Airbnb in Tilcara — super fun. [Source 1]
- Also stayed in Apapacho Hostel — good vibes. [Source 2]

Activities & Tips:

- Driving through Salta was amazing. [Source 1]
- Would've liked to split time between different towns — not much to do near where we stayed, just ended up drunk every night. [Source 1]
- Car hire and petrol were very cheap. [Source 1]

Tilcara:

- waterfall, canyon, and rainbow mountain. [Source 2]
- the Argentinian salt flats — a bit of a trek but worth it. [Both Sources]
- Altitude can hit hard — even in the car, felt rough. [Source 2]

Border Crossing to Bolivia:

- Took an early bus from Salta to La Quiaca, the Argentinian border town. [Source 2]
- Crossing took 6–7 hours. [Source 2]
- Got a bus straight to La Paz afterwards — do not stay in the border town. [Source 2]
- The border is very strict — we needed two copies of six forms each, check requirements in advance. [Source 2]

General Argentina Tips

- Argentina is almost cash-only. [Source 2]

- Use the Western Union app to get pesos — works through an informal “blue dollar” market and gives double the value. Legit and widely used. [Source 2]
- Makes everything super cheap.
- Must-try food/drinks: Steak, red wine. Try fernet if you want, but it’s rough. [Source 2]

Chile

Santiago

Accommodation:

- Stayed in an Airbnb just to have an address for isolation. [Source 2]
- If you have to stay in Santiago, Providencia is the best area — others can be dangerous or anti-tourist. [Source 2]

Activities & Tips:

- Honestly, least favourite city of the whole trip — minimum days recommended. [Source 2]
- Did the Concha y Toro wine tour — surprisingly good fun, thanks to the guide. [Source 2]

Valparaíso

Getting There:

- Took a 2-hour bus from Santiago. [Source 2]

Accommodation:

- Stayed at Hostal Po — nice staff, ran bar crawls and pisco socials. [Source 2]

Activities & Tips:

- Great culture, rich history tied to the revolution. [Source 2]
- Try Patagonia beer cans — blue was the favourite. [Source 2]
- Visit Viña del Mar for a beach day. [Source 2]
- Head to Concón for sandboarding on the dunes — really fun. [Source 2]
- Fauna Bar — amazing view and good cocktails. [Source 2]
- Just wandering the city is great — loads of street art and small museums. [Source 2]
- grab a couple of cans and stroll.
- Eat at Delicias Express — 41 empanada flavours, had them every day for lunch. [Source 2]
- There's a boat trip available but not worth doing. [Source 2]

San Pedro de Atacama (Atacama Desert)

Getting There:

- Fly to Calama, then take a 1-hour shuttle or taxi (no Uber) to San Pedro. [Source 2]
- Can also take a 24hr bus if someone messes up your flight booking. [Source 2]

Accommodation:

- Backpackers San Pedro — cute, very small hostel. Big beds, only a fan (no aircon), but nights get cold so it’s fine. [Source 1]
- Hostal Rural — amazing staff, very social and chill crowd. Still in touch with people met here. [Source 2]

Activities & Tips:

- Tours are very expensive and often cancelled due to clouds (e.g. stargazing). [Both Sources]
- Valle de la Luna — cool but not worth the £50 it cost. [Source 1]
- Hire bikes and cycle with a speaker — an amazing way to see the desert. [Source 2]
- load MapsMe and preload the area.
- Devil's Throat — beautiful ride.
 - Laguna Cejar — salty lagoon where you float. Often bundled with other cool spots (like abandoned buses). [Source 2]
 - Dune bugging — absolutely unreal, but powerful motors so don't mess around (someone flipped one). [Source 2]
 - Stargazing — one of the best places in the world for it, but cloud-dependent. [Source 2]
 - Geysers — skip them if you're doing the Bolivia salt flats, they're better there. [Source 2]
 - Try to time your trip for a desert rave — crazy night sky, bonfire, and lots of nitty behaviour. If you're up for it, it's amazing. Bring a speaker in case no one else does. [Source 2]

General Notes:

- Expect to pay more for everything — it's remote and everything is harder to transport in. [Source 2]
 - Spanish is very useful. [Source 2]
 - Very good card infrastructure — cash rarely needed. [Source 2]
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Bolivia

Source 1 general notes: Just a very cool place to go see some awesome environments for cheap. Less drinking and partying than in other countries. Must see Salt flats and La Paz. Sucre and Rurrenbaque (Amazon) and hiking Huayna Potosi. Just do lots of cool excursions. Cash is needed everywhere. Very cheap set meals in local places (soup, meat and rice, dessert).

General Tips

- Cash is king — avoid ATMs if possible.
Check Western Union online for withdrawal rates; in 2025, WU gave almost double the value of ATMs. [Source 1]
- Alternatively, use ATMs, as it's a cash-only country. Still very cheap. [Source 2]
- Must-try experience: £1.10 three-course lunches in sketchy alley shacks. Boukey food, but funny. [Source 2]
- Coca leaves: Totally legal, culturally accepted, and surprisingly effective. Chew them for altitude and energy. [Source 2]

Salt Flats (Uyuni)

- Best done as a 3-day / 2-night tour.
- Book in San Pedro/ Uyuni, NOT online — half the price. [Source 1]
 - Cost: ~£150 [Elodie/ Oscar] £170 Frank
- Tours leave San Pedro at 6am a bit later in Uyuni. Drive to the border (~4000m) — very cold, bring layers. [Source 1]
 - Jeep fits ~6 people. [Both]
 - All tour companies are similar — we used Piedra del Árbol, it was fine. [Source 1]
 - Skyline travel was great [Frank]
 - Bring drinks for the evenings and for stargazing. [Source 2]
 - Take portable chargers, speakers, and warm clothes — it's baltic at night. [Source 2]

- Tours end in Uyuni, which is a dump — do not stay. [Source 1]
 - Good BBQ though. [Source 1]
- Alternate option: Book online with Andes Salt Expeditions — still good. [Source 2]

La Paz

Getting Around & General Vibe:

- Very hilly city, altitude makes you breathless. [Source 1]
- Use the cable cars (teleférico) — super cheap and the views are unreal. [Both]
- Chew coca leaves here — helps with altitude. [Source 2]

Accommodation:

- Stayed at Wild Rover — very fun, party-heavy. [Source 1]
- Alternatively, Selina Hostel — nice, calm, and reliable chain. [Source 2]

Activities:

- Witches Market — includes stalls with dead baby llamas. [Both]
- Death Road biking — amazing. Use company “Downhill Extreme” and go full send, bikes are proper suspension mountain bikes. [Source 2]
- Football match at Bolivar — sit in the ultras section for chaos. [Source 1]
- Cable car to the markets — more great views. [Source 1]
- Nightlife: Mostly hostel-based and Route 36. Outside nightlife limited. [Source 1]
- Optional: Look for “Crazy Dave” outside the prison for a funny underground tour (tip-based). [Source 2]

Rurrenabaque (Amazon)

Travel:

- Took a 16-hour bus, part of it on Death Road. [Source 1]
 - Local buses are rough — upgrade if possible, worth it. [Source 1]

Tours:

- Tours booked by Witches Market, La Paz — cheaper. [Source 1]
- Two options:
 - Pampas (wetlands) — more animals, hotter, boat-based. [Source 1]
 - Jungle — less wildlife, more hiking. We did this. [Source 1]
 - Saw few animals but was stunning. Piraña fishing, which we ate for lunch.
 - Ridiculously hot.
- Recommendation: Do both tours if possible — only £50 more. [Source 1]
- Food was incredible. [Source 1]

Copacabana (Lake Titicaca)

- Stopover after Uyuni.
- Chilled spot, good for laundry and rest before Peru. [Source 2]
- Take a 15 min taxi to the border in the morning. [Source 2]

Peru

Best food on Average in South America, unreal hiking across the country, so focus here if that's what you want.

Lake Titicaca / Uros Islands

- Cross from Bolivia into Peru — border is chill. [Source 2]
- Options: Bus to Puno then boat to Uros Islands., La Paz straight to Cusco
- Do a homestay on the floating islands — pricier, but culturally enriching. [Source 2]
 - Locals cook for you. [Source 2]
- Optional activities:
 - Visit other indigenous islands.
 - Kayaking around the lake. [Source 2]
- Boat back to Puno.
Do NOT stay in Puno — it's clapped. [Source 2]
- Continue to Cusco. [Source 2]

Cusco

Accommodation:

- Wild Rover Cusco — fun but slightly out of town

Food:

- Jacks Café — huge portions, best brunch. Share one dish [Source 1]
- Nero de la 375 — Unreal chaotic group meal with locals - get a chicken platter. Unmissable for dinner and so cheap [Source 1]
- KION — Peruvian-Chinese, great value. [Source 2]
- KusyKay — great service and llama burger. [Source 2]
- KINTARO — amazing sushi. [Source 2]
- Cuy (guinea pig) — share it, it's pricey but tasty. [Source 2]
- Skip pizza. [Source 2]
- Café D'wasi — brilliant for brunch. [Source 2]
- Organika — get the frappuccino. [Source 2]

Activities:

- San Pedro Market, walking tour, San Cristobal hike, ViewHouse for sunset drinks. [Source 2]
- ATV Salt Mines Tour, Sacred Valley day tour, Rainbow Mountain ATV or hike. [Source 2]
- Football shirt shopping — haggle. [Source 2]

Nightlife:

- Changos — best club. English tunes. [Source 2]
- Good pub deals. Molly's > Paddy's Bar. [Source 2]

Machu Picchu:

- Book all tours through Machu Picchu Reservations. [Source 2]
- Don't do 1- or 2-day tour — rushed. [Source 2]
- Jungle Trek (3-4 days) recommended — biking, rafting, zipline, hiking, summit. [Source 2]
- Salkantay Trek 4 days — longer, harder, incredible views. [Source 2]
- Inca Trail — must book months ahead, older crowd. [Source 2]
- Ideal itinerary:
 - 5-6 nights in Cusco
 - MP Trek (leave bags at hostel)
 - 1 night post-trek to recover
 - Fly Cusco > Lima > Bogotá [Source 2]

Arequipa

Accommodation:

- Arequipay Backpackers — cute and social, with breakfast and events. [Source 1]
- Selina Hostel — higher-end option. Leave bags here before Colca Canyon. [Source 2]

Activities:

- Colca Canyon Trek:
 - Book through hostels. Outsourcing is no cheaper. [Source 1]
 - Do the 2-day trek, not 1-day. [Source 2]
 - Easy first day, hard second — take a speaker, clothes, flip flops. [Source 2]
- Rafting also recommended here. [Source 1]
- Skip the walking tour — it's terrible. Just explore the pretty colonial city yourself. [Source 1]
- Basic nightlife — bar hopping and karaoke night. [Source 2]

Huacachina

- From Cusco, take bus to Ica, then taxi to Huacachina.
Long journey, susceptible to landslides. [Source 1]

Accommodation:

- Stayed at Bananas — nice but dead vibe. [Source 1]
- Viajero — looked much nicer, same price. [Source 1]
- Wild Rover — the party option. Full session mode. [Source 2]
Avoid Bananas if you're up for partying. [Source 2]

Activities:

- Sandboarding at sunset — so much fun. [Source 1]
- Buggy tours, sandskiing, ATVs, pisco/wine tours. [Source 2]
- Climb dunes at sunset with drinks. [Source 2]
- Optional side trip to Paracas — coastal chill detox. [Source 2]

Lima

- Only had 1 day due to delays. [Source 1]
- Walk the boardwalk at sunset. [Source 1]
- Food is great. [Source 1]
- Skippable if short on time — smelly and not well reviewed by others. [Source 2]

Colombia

Time to Party. Medellin and Cali were our preferred cities. The whole country likes to dance, so go find the local clubs and bars.

Bogotá**General Tips:**

- Mainly a stopover city, not much to do. (S1, S2)
- Lots of traffic; be careful when travelling to/from airport and bus stations. (S1)
- Flew into Bogotá from Lima; Ecuador was dodgy, so skipped it. (S1)
- Use Bogotá as a transit hub to other destinations, especially San Gil. (S2)

Accommodation:

- Stayed at Crazy Crock hostel — central location. (S1)

Activities:

- Went to Gringo Tuesdays party — wild night out. (S1)
- Walking around city is OK, but limited attractions. (S1)

Cali

General Tips:

- Salsa capital of Colombia. Must go if you want to dance salsa and enjoy vibrant nightlife. (S1)
- Night bus from Bogotá or fly in. (S1)

Accommodation:

- Stayed at La Palmeras — Favourite hostel in a city, very social with private salsa lessons and organised evening activities. (S1)

Activities:

- Do private salsa lessons during the day; salsa dancing at night. (S1)
- Go to salsa bars and then reggaeton clubs (1060 club recommended). (S1)
- Must do the party bus on a Friday.
- Afterparties at Café Mi Tierra every night. (S1)
- See the cabaret show Sunday. (S1)

Salento

General Tips:

- Coffee capital, wholesome vibe, very chill. (S1, S2)
- Bring plenty of bug spray. (S2)
- Shuttle from the main square to start of palm tree walk — avoid the harder mountain route. (S1)

Accommodation:

- Stayed at Coffee Boutique hostel — super nice. (S1)
- Yambolambia hostel — friendly hosts, organise tours and breakfasts, party-friendly. (S2)

Activities:

- Horseback tour to coffee plantations — horses gallop down roads. (S1, S2)
- Cocora Valley hike (half day, easy, amazing views). (S2)
- Play Tejo (national sport involving gunpowder) at pool bar — only in Salento. (S2)
- Eat cheap, decent food at El Rincón de Luci. (S1)

Medellín

General Tips:

- Incredible city with culture, nightlife, and history. (S1, S2)
- Stay in Poblado area — safest, best nightlife and food scene. (S2)
- Book football match tickets ASAP through hostel. (S2)

Accommodation:

- Stayed at Los Patios — nicest hostel, organised nights out, football match trips. (S1, S2)
- Stayed at Black Sheep — cheapest, most social hostel ever, beds not great but great atmosphere. (S1)

Activities:

- Do free walking tours: downtown tour (Real City Tours) and Comuna 13 (Zippy Tours) — amazing experience. (S1)
- Pablo Escobar tours available but locals are touchy about it; short tour recommended. (S1)
- Football match attendance — must-do; get tickets via hostel. (S2)
- Nightlife: techno clubs, hostel parties, party bus (stupid but fun). (S2)
- Eat tacos near Los Patios, great burgers (Mr. Pig), and Asian food (Dim Sum Records). (S2)

Guatapé

General Tips:

- Beautiful lakeside town, good to chill. (S2)
- 2-hour bus from Medellín, book on Redbus. (S2)

Accommodation:

- Stayed at Lake View Hostel — good price, helps organise watersports and boat hire. (S2)

Activities:

- Climb the massive rock — easy 25-minute hike with stunning views. (S2)
- Hire boats for self-driving on the lake, bring beers and snacks. (S2)
- Walk around town, especially in the afternoon. (S2)
- Try cinnamon buns at Zocarolls — best sweet in South America. (S2)

San Gil

General Tips:

- Adventure capital with adrenaline activities. (S2)

Accommodation:

- Stayed at Hostel Nirvana — cheap, standard, friendly staff, best place to book adrenaline tours. (S2)

Activities:

- Highest bungee jump in South America (€30). (S2)
- White water rafting levels 5 and 6 — intense and fun. (S2)
- Waterfall rappelling, zip lines, and other adventure sports. (S2)
- Visit nearby Barichara by bus — beautiful small town. (S2)
- Eat at Gringo Mike's — pizzas and burritos highly recommended. (S2)

Minca**General Tips:**

- Rainforest area, very beautiful but buggy. (S1, S2)
- Fly from Salento to Santa Marta; taxi or motorbike to Minca. (S2)

Accommodation:

- Stayed at Journey Hostel — insane place, mostly one night enough. (S1)
- Stayed at Finca Carpe Diem — Paradise-like hostel, helps with activities. (S2)

Activities:

- Explore waterfalls; jump into deep pools. (S2)
- Chocolate farm tour. (S2)
- Watch sunsets from viewpoint recommended by hostel. (S2)
- Chill and party with group — no nightlife otherwise. (S2)

Tayrona National Park**General Tips:**

- Stay near park entrance (El Zaino) to get early entry and reserve hammocks inside park. (S2)
- Bring bug spray. (S2)

Accommodation:

- Stayed at Hierba Buena Eco Lodge outside park — nice host, dinner offered, luggage storage. (S2)

Activities:

- Hike into park to beautiful beaches; can do on horseback if preferred. (S2)
- Sleep in hammocks inside park (reserve early). (S2)

Beach Hostels: Buritaca & Costeño Beach**General Tips:**

- Book these hostels 4+ weeks in advance due to high demand. (S2)

- Best places to relax and party after trekking and culture. (S2)

Accommodation:

- El Río Hostel — on river, wild parties Thurs-Sat, tubing with beers, free extra night if book 2. (S1, S2)
- Costeño Beach Hostel — beautiful beach, rotating hostel parties, sushi, DJs, pool, table tennis. (S2)

Activities:

- Tubing down river with drinks and stops for jumps. (S1, S2)
- Join nightly rotating parties along Costeño beach. (S2)
- Smuggle your own booze from local shops to save money (drinks pricier at hostels). (S2)

Cartagena

General Tips:

- Stunning and colourful city, two days is enough. (S1, S2)
- More expensive than typical Colombian cities but worth it. (S1, S2)

Accommodation:

- Stayed at Republica Hostel — best value, nicer and cheaper than others. (S1)
- Stayed at Viajero Getsemaní — nice but a bit weird, more expensive. (S1)
- Casa Zahri — A/C, free breakfast, pricier but good quality. (S2)

Activities:

- Walk around old city and watch sunset from city walls with a beer. (S1, S2)
- Bar crawl or cheap drinks in Getsemaní (less aesthetic but half price drinks). (S1, S2)
- Sunset drinks at Café del Mar (expensive but amazing atmosphere). (S2)
- Day trips to Playa Blanca — beautiful beach but taxi/boat expensive. (S1)

Food:

- Lia Esquina del Pandebono — best pão de queijo. (S1)
- Coroncorro — fish menu del día recommended. (S1)
- Cartagena is pricier but food quality justifies it. (S1, S2)

San Blas Islands Tour

General Tips:

- One of the best experiences of the entire trip. (S1, S2)
- Book tour well in advance (1 month+) on San Blas Adventures website. (S2)
- Tour starts in Colombia, ends in Panama. (S2)
- Speedboat tour preferred for comfort and socialising over sailing tours. (S2)

- Bring seasickness pills — boat ride rough first two days. (S1, S2)
 - Bring plenty of alcohol; locals rely on it, can restock cheaply on islands. (S1)
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Panama City (Panama)

Much more expensive than most places in Latin America, so we didn't stay long. Thought Panama City was cool in the old colonial town, with some good wildlife in the city. The Caribbean coast (San Blas and Bocas) are beautiful.

General Tips:

- Prices are similar to Europe, expensive compared to Colombia. (S2)
- Not highly rated as a long stay destination, better as a send-off spot. (S2)

Accommodation:

- Magnolia Casco viejo - stay in the old city, its pretty cool to walk around and see bars

Activities:

- Massive send-off party with tour group over two nights. (S2)
 - Panama canal - Very cool
 - Cafe Coca-Cola or La 10 for cheap drinks and food
 - Lots of people travel north to Bocas del Toro, which has a filthy Fridays party
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Nicaragua

Source 1 General notes - less developed than the nearby surf countries of Costa Rica and Panama so cheaper and fewer American tourists. Must see: Ometepe, Granada. The rest of the trip depends on how keen you are on surfing. Cash is still pretty key. Can Chicken bus all over the country no problem. Best place to surf imo, spent 1 month on Playa Maderas north of San Juan del Sur. Popoyo, the Boom and El Transito are also highly recommended for surfing.

Ometepe

General Tips:

- Hippie vibe with late-night partying; very hot, no A/C anywhere on island. (S1)
- Rent scooters or ATVs from the port — cheapest and easiest way to get around. (S1)

Accommodation:

- Stayed at El Pital — chill hostel with good vibes. (S1)
- Rain Dance Hostel — pool parties on Wednesdays, busy nights. (S1)

Activities:

- Hike to waterfall on south volcano. (S1)
- Sunset at Playa Mango. (S1)
- Eat chicken burger and amazing brownies at Café Campestre. (S1)

San Juan del Sur

General Tips:

- Great surfing, cheap board hire. (S1)
- Sunday Funday party is popular but pricey (\$40). (S1)

Accommodation:

- Stayed at Hola Ola Hostel — 4-bed dorm, more spacious than 6-bed. (S1)
- Stayed out of town at Hostel Clandestino for a quiet surf vibe. (S1)

Activities:

- Surf daily, lessons available. (S1)
- Karaoke at Tuanis bar. (S1)
- Eat at Reina del Sur 24-hour buffet — cheap and good. (S1)
- Seafood rice at La Lancha — share between two. (S1)
- Sunday funday party - \$40 and not worth it unless it looks really busy in high season (European winter)

Granada

General Tips:

- Tourist town with good food and nightlife. (S1)
- Steep 10-15 min climb to Treehouse bar, best at sunset. (S1)
- Friday Treehouse rave and boat Party
- Taxi prices very cheap but haggle hard. (S1)

Accommodation:

- Lots of good, highly rated ones, can stay at the treehouse one for the treehouse rave

Activities:

- Visit Treehouse for sunset. (S1)
- Eat cheap local food at a café with deaf servers. (S1)
- Rainforest Cafe

León

General Tips:

- Known for volcano boarding; loud nightlife. (S1)

Accommodation:

- Stayed at Bigfoot Hostel — pod beds, but very loud party atmosphere. (S1)

Activities:

- Do volcano boarding if adrenaline junkie. (S1)
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Guatemala

Antigua

General Tips:

- Stayed at Purpose hostel — cute but beds were awful, mine was U-shaped. (S1)
- Went back and stayed at Casi Casa — SO good, really comfy. (S1)
- People also stayed at Flores hostel, which was nice. (S1)
- Food here is insane: great spots all over town. (S1)

Accommodation:

- Purpose hostel — cute but uncomfortable beds. (S1)
- Casi Casa — much nicer, highly recommended. (S1)
- Flores hostel — good option. (S1)

Activities/Food:

- Hector's Bistro for pizza — share one between two. (S1)
- Kombu Ramen — great ramen. (S1)
- Rinconcito Antigua — local chicken, delicious and cheap. (S1)
- La Pasta Nostra — affordable Italian. (S1)
- Toku Baru — cheap and very tasty falafels. (S1)
- Barriga Llena — amazing gyoza and fried chicken. (S1)

Acatenango Hike

General Tips:

- Lots of different companies running the hike. (S1)
- Did Lava Trails — one of the best base camp views but expensive. (S1)
- Soy Trails is a good middle ground. (S1)
- Tropicana is cheap but the accommodation is poor. (S1)
- It's very cold at the top — bring lots of layers. Most companies provide clothes. (S1)

- Recommend hiring a porter to carry your bag up. (S1)

Lake Atitlán

San Marcos

General Tips:

- Nature reserve is a MUST for swimming with a jump platform. (S1)
- Cute bakeries like Circles Bakery. (S1)
- Really good vegetarian food. (S1)
- Very hippy vibe town. (S1)
- Eagles Nest for yoga and food. (S1)

San Pedro

General Tips:

- Didn't like the town much. (S1)
- Mr Mullets has bad Wild Rover vibes — pub crawl and boat trip are rip-offs; just join at the last bar if you want. (S1)
- Spanish schools run here, mostly mornings — could be a nice thing to do. (S1)

Santa Cruz

General Tips:

- Iguana Perdida and Free Cerveza are main hangouts. (S1)
- Free Cerveza has amazing vibes and free beer 5-7pm daily if you do family dinner. (S1)
- Free paddleboarding and kayaking available. (S1)

Panajachel

General Tips:

- Meh, not really worth it. (S1)
- Selina Hostel here is nice. (S2)

General Tips for Lake Atitlán:

- Super easy to get between towns — just go to a port and wait 2 minutes for a boat (£2.59 one way). (S1)

El Paredón

General Tips:

- It's insanely hot here. (S1)
- Stayed at Mellow and Cocori. (S1)
- Mellow has the best vibes and divine family dinners Mon, Thu, Sat. (S1)
- Mellow has activities every night and Friday parties are good chat. (S1)
- Cocori is nicer but more hotel vibes and food is worse. (S1)
- Definitely pay extra for aircon — it's brutal without it. (S1)
- Some people rent Airbnbs but go to Mellow during the day. (S1)

- Driftwood is a fun party spot with daily volleyball and sunset games but the pools are hot. (S1)
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Biggest Advice for Guatemala and Nicaragua

- Book early! Stuff sells out way earlier than in South America. (S1)
- Free Cerveza and Mellow are especially important to book early. (S1)

"If this document has helped you on your trip, then do me a favour — have a beer for me while you're out there, preferably by the ocean." FP 2025