

1. FLIGHTS

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

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

On all 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 (rather than your missing it).

1.1 Seating

Most US carriers flying to Latin America (American Airlines, Continental Airlines and United Airlines) allow you to reserve seats when buying your ticket. However, only a few European carriers currently offer this facility. In the event that your carrier does permit seat reservation, you can choose your seat online with your name and booking locator (we can supply you with this if you bought your flights through us).

For health and safety reasons, passengers cannot reserve emergency exit seats in advance. However, you can usually make a special request

for these seats at the time of check-in/when boarding the flight.

1.2 Online Check-in

Increasingly airlines are providing passengers with an online check-in facility on their websites, whereby you can print off your boarding card in advance and go to the fast-drop baggage facility at the airport, whether at point of departure in the UK or when you are returning from Latin America. This facility is usually available either 30 or 24 hours before departure time and is recommended to save your standing in interminable queues. You will need your name, e-ticket number and/or reservation locator code, depending on the airline.

1.3 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). You will not need a clean set of clothes for every day of the trip as all good hotels have laundry facilities. It is useful to have luggage that can be locked, however see section 1.6 if you are travelling via the USA.

1.4 Luggage Transfers

If any of your flights involve a change of plane, there is always the possibility that you and your checked luggage will arrive separately. See 'Delayed Baggage' for what to do if your baggage arrives late.

Try to use distinctive baggage that will be easier to describe if it goes astray, and label your bags clearly with your name and hotel destination. If you are moving fairly quickly on to your next port of call add this information to the luggage label. Place a duplicate label inside each piece of luggage.

Pack strategically by carrying some essentials as part of your hand luggage:

Household and car keys (including electric key fob), travel documents including passport, itinerary and any important contact details, essential medicines for the journey, wallets or purses with money and credit cards, any regular medication you may take and one full change of clothing.

1.5 Document Checklist

Check you have the following in your hand luggage before departure:

- Airline tickets/e-ticket receipts. Although it is not strictly necessary to take copies of e-ticket receipts, 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 tailor-made extensions to escorted group tours these are usually given during the initial transfer service in each area)
- Cash and travellers' cheques (US\$ – except Cuba). (Please refer to Travellers' Cheques section – 3.4)
- Credit/debit cards. (Please see Credit Cards section – 3.2)
- Insurance documents

- Passport plus a photocopy of the pages of your passport containing personal information, and any relevant visas
- Vaccination certificates. (Please refer to Health and Vaccinations section – 2)

We strongly recommend that items you cannot afford to lose be kept in a money belt – worn inside your clothing.

Please keep separately any travellers' cheques purchase slips, a copy of the relevant pages of your passport, and a copy of any relevant visas.

1.6 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 in your hand luggage. Lighters and matches are also prohibited.

For the latest information on hand luggage restrictions please check the Department for Transport website www.dft.gov.uk/transportforyou/airtravel/airportsecurity

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. Plastic cable ties are a good alternative, but think about how you will open it at the other end, when you can't carry scissors or even nail-clippers in your hand luggage.

If you buy alcohol (duty free or otherwise) at your departure airport, there's a high chance that it will be confiscated if you're changing planes (transiting) in Europe or the USA. They won't tell you this in Latin America when you buy it!

1.7 Airport Transfers

If you are travelling on an escorted group tour and you are due to arrive on a transatlantic flight at the destination airport on the first day of your group itinerary, you will be met at the airport in Latin America by your tour leader or a Journey Latin America representative.

It is your own responsibility to make your way to your outbound departure airport (e.g. from the UK), make connections as required and seek out our representative upon arrival. He/she will either be holding up a Journey Latin America brochure or a card with your name or that of the tour.

If you have made your own flight arrangements, are a group tour client arriving on any day other than the first day of the Latin American itinerary or if you are on a bespoke itinerary, you may have booked a private transfer and will be met by a Journey Latin America ground agent. In this case you should look out for a card bearing the name of Journey Latin America and the agency liaising with you. The agent's name will be printed on your Journey Latin America final itinerary.

If 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.

On arrival in **Cuba** at Havana International Airport, you'll be met by a representative from a state-owned company called 'Havanatur'. There is a possibility that the representative will be assisting other passengers who have arrived from your flight or at the company desk. Look for a board displaying the company name (Havanatur) as opposed to Journey Latin America, or indeed your own name. You will find the desk located in the main terminal building.

If you are going to be met at the airport in Latin America, by a tour leader or private transfer, remember that you might not be instantly

recognisable. Please try to have the Journey Latin America baggage labels clearly visible on your luggage.

1.8 Baggage Allowances

Baggage allowances vary from one carrier to another – please refer to your final documents for allowances on your individual flights.

'Checked' baggage means luggage which is carried in the hold. 'Hand' baggage is what you carry onto the plane with you.

Infants 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.

As a very general rule, most international carriers – as well as domestic carriers in Latin America – allow on average around 23kg in Economy Class, for both internal and international flights. Aerolíneas Argentinas only permit 15kg hold 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 and to some of the jungle lodges in Central America.

Please see below for destinations where luggage capacity can be reduced, owing to the size of aircraft used for domestic flights:

Belize

Passengers are permitted to carry one piece of hand luggage and two pieces in the hold with 16kg (35lb) per piece. Any carry-on luggage should be no more than 13½kg (30lb) and no greater in size than 158cm (d) x 76cm (w) x

38cm (h). Excess and oversized baggage is evaluated, charged and shipped on a space-available basis.

Costa Rica

For internal flights within Costa Rica, baggage is restricted to 25lb (11.3kg). Our local representatives will store the excess luggage while you are on portions of the trip that involve flights.

Galápagos Islands

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

Guyana

Checked baggage is restricted to 9kg, so it is better to pack light. Our local representatives can store the excess luggage while you are on portions of the trip that involve flights.

Nicaragua

Passengers are permitted to carry one piece of hand luggage and no more than 11.3kg (25lb) in the hold. Passengers are charged per pound of checked luggage above the 25lbs. Our local suppliers will store the excess luggage while you are on portions of the trip that involve flights or boats.

Panama

Domestically within Panama, passengers are permitted to carry one piece of hand luggage of 4.5kg (10lb) and no more than 11.3kg (25lb) in the hold. Passengers are charged US\$1.00 per extra pound of checked luggage above the 25lbs. Our local suppliers will store the excess luggage while you are on portions of the trip that involve flights or boats.

The charges for excess weight can be substantial, so please make sure that you

are aware of baggage allowances before you travel. See airlines' websites for information on large or unusual baggage.

1.9 Delayed Baggage

If your baggage has been delayed, we advise you to fill in the appropriate 'baggage irregularity form' with the airline responsible. 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 have to claim on insurance.

1.10 Reconfirming Flights

If you are making your own flight/transfer arrangements (i.e. you haven't booked them through us), we recommend reconfirming flight times and itineraries in case of any airline schedule changes. If in doubt, contact our local representatives.

1.11 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.

International airport taxes 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. The table below lists international airport taxes payable as of November 2009. (Please note that these do fluctuate quite frequently).

International airport taxes in US\$: collected locally:-

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Argentina | \$18.00 |
| Belize | Included |
| Bolivia | \$24.00 |
| Brazil | Included |
| Chile | Included |
| Colombia | \$33.00 |
| Costa Rica | \$26.00 |
| Cuba | \$25.00 |
| Ecuador | \$40.80 |
| (\$27.75 from Guayaquil) | |
| El Salvador | \$25.00 |
| Falkland Islands | £20.00 |
| Guatemala | \$3.00 |
| Honduras | \$25.00 |
| Mexico | \$18.29 |
| Depending upon airport (usually included for flights departing from Mexico City Airport) | |
| Nicaragua | \$25.00 |
| Panama | \$20.00 |
| Paraguay | \$25.00 |
| Peru | \$30.25 |
| Uruguay | \$31.00 |
| Venezuela | \$51.16 |

If not already paid at ticket issuance (and depends on the airline)

Domestic Airport Taxes

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.

Domestic taxes are generally payable either upon checking-in (e.g. Brazil) or post checking-in at a separate airport tax kiosk (e.g. Peru, Bolivia and Argentina). In some cases the tax is payable prior to checking-in at a separate kiosk – check with others in the queue. As proof of payment you will usually be given a sticker or receipt that will be checked when entering the departure area.

For passengers departing from the UK, the government-imposed Air Passenger Duty for intercontinental flights is collected by us and has been included in the price you pay. For more information, visit the HM Revenue and Customs website: www.hmrc.gov.uk

Please note that all the above figures may be subject to change during the life of this dossier.

2. HEALTH AND VACCINATIONS

2.1 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 are going to travel off the beaten track, you should take with you a well-equipped first-aid kit. 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.

2.2 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

Yellow fever vaccinations are available at yellow fever vaccination clinics and occasionally at GPs' 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 £45.

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 of all MASTA Travel Clinics 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

Period of validity of recommended vaccines

- **Yellow fever** 10 years
- **Typhoid** 3 years
- **Hepatitis A** 10–20 years (depending on the vaccine)
- **Polio** 10 years
- **Tetanus** 10 years

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 to prove that you have been inoculated against yellow fever.

2.3 Yellow Fever

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. If you

prefer something natural, Mosiguard can be effective. Many other brands, e.g. Boots' own or Autan, have only 10-15% deet and are therefore not very effective. Some repellents have up to a 95% concentration – this is very powerful and should not be used for long periods. It also has a deleterious effect on leather, plastics and Lycra.

Argentina

A yellow fever inoculation is recommended for north-eastern areas of Argentina bordering Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay – Iguazú Falls, Misiones province and the Iberá wetlands, as well as the provinces of Formosa, Chaco, Corrientes and Salta in the northwest.

Bolivia

The Bolivian government announced on 24 June 2009 that foreigners entering areas which had been designated “high risk” for yellow fever would need a valid yellow fever certificate. These areas include all of the regions of Santa Cruz, Pando and Beni, and much of Cochabamba, Tarija and northern La Paz departments. The highland region of the country, including the cities of La Paz, Potosí and Oruro, Lake Titicaca and the Salar de Uyuni, is not affected. The Bolivian authorities are requesting that all travellers who arrive from Brazil or Paraguay should show valid yellow fever vaccination certificates.

Brazil

For Brazil, an international certificate of vaccination against yellow fever is essential from travellers who, within three months prior to their arrival in Brazil, have been to any of the following countries:

Latin America: Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Panama, Peru, Suriname.

Worldwide: Angola, Cameroon, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Republic, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Sudan, Zaire.

A yellow fever vaccination is **compulsory** for travellers visiting the following areas of Brazil: Acre, Amazonas (Manaus), Amapá, Distrito Federal (Brasília), Goiás, Maranhão (São Luiz), Minas Gerais (Ouro Preto, Belo Horizonte), Mato Grosso do Sul (Pantanal), Mato Grosso, Pará (Belém), Rondônia, Roraima, Tocantins. Vaccination against yellow fever is recommended for all travellers when visiting the following states of Brazil: Bahia (Salvador), Espírito Santo, Paraná (Foz do Iguaçu, Curitiba), Piauí, Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, São Paulo.

Vaccination must take place at least 10 days prior to the date of entry to Brazil for the certificate to become valid. An international proof of vaccination against polio is necessary for children entering Brazil aged between three months and six years. For more details of official vaccination requirements, please refer to the website of the Brazilian Embassy: www.brazil.org.uk/tourism/visasvaccinations.html

Easter Island (Chile)

A valid certificate of vaccination against yellow fever is required for entry to Easter Island if, during the last 10 years, you have visited any country where yellow fever is present.

Ecuador

On 21 May 2008, the Ecuadorian Health Ministry recommended yellow fever vaccinations for all travellers to the provinces of the Amazon basin.

Panama

There is conflicting advice about the need for yellow fever vaccination when travelling to Panama. There is a risk of yellow fever transmission in the provinces of Bocas del

Toro, San Blas, and eastern Panama (this does not include Panama City and the Canal Zone). As such, you should take precautions when travelling to these areas.

Paraguay

Recent outbreaks of dengue fever have been reported in Paraguay. In addition, a yellow fever inoculation is recommended. You should take precautions at all times against being bitten by mosquitoes. Details can be found on the NaTHNaC website: www.nathnac.org/ds/c_pages/country_page_PY.htm#vpr_yf

Peru

There is a risk of yellow fever in areas east of the Andes Mountains and jungle areas below 2,300m (Chachapoyas, Iquitos, Tambopata). This does not include the cities of Cusco and Machu Picchu.

Central America

The six Central American nations (Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama) now require that travellers arriving from yellow fever countries have a current international certificate of vaccination for yellow fever.

2.4 Malaria

Malaria is passed by mosquitoes; you should take extra precautions against being bitten (see 2.3).

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 antimalarials 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.**

2.5 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 passed by mosquitoes; you should take extra precautions against being bitten (see 2.3).

2.6 Altitude Sickness

At altitudes over 2500m you will probably start to feel breathless. Above 3000m, marked breathlessness, pins and needles and palpitations are a common response. A minority of people may experience dizziness, headache, slight nosebleed, nausea or vomiting. The likelihood of experiencing these symptoms can be minimised by slow ascent, resting upon arrival for at least a few hours, avoiding alcohol and eating lightly for a day or so. Local remedies are available. They include various local drugs and “maté de coca” (an infusion of coca leaves). **Please note that on no account should you attempt to bring these tea bags 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.

Our advice is to take some of your usual headache pills with you and to simply take it easy. Should the symptoms be severe and prolonged, you must descend to a lower altitude. Acetazolamide (commonly known as Diamox) can be used to treat altitude sickness and is obtainable locally. Previous clients have found this to be helpful.

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 20). 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.

2.7 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 and 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. 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.

2.8 General

Water-purifying tablets, e.g. Sterotabs, 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 have a high intake of liquids in tropical and semi-tropical regions. You should also be aware of the fact 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 sun block.

3. 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 (as many different cards as possible, in case of any problems). For further advice, please read on:

3.1 Cash

It is a good idea to carry as many US dollars cash as your insurance limit will allow – it is easier to change into local currency than travellers' cheques and you will receive better rates of exchange. Small denominations are easier to change. One-dollar bills can be useful for tipping porters or paying fees on borders.

We do not recommend your taking any currency other than US dollars – except in Cuba (see Local Currency, 3.3 on the next page), as they can be difficult to exchange. **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 South America, especially in Colombia, Peru and Bolivia. There have even been (very rare) cases when banks have issued forgeries to customers. 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. \$100 bills are not accepted in Colombia and those whose serial number begins with CB are routinely refused in the rest of Latin America.

Even though the official currency of Ecuador is the US dollar, most people (including banks) will

not accept \$100 bills, therefore we recommend asking for smaller denomination notes when obtaining dollars.

3.2 Credit and Debit Cards

Credit cards are widely accepted to make payments in larger hotels, better restaurants, souvenir shops and stores, and to obtain cash advances. They are also acceptable as 'proof of funds' at borders. Visa is the most widely accepted for both purchases and cash advances, followed by MasterCard. American Express is not as widely accepted but can be used to purchase additional travellers' cheques should you run out.

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 (around 5%). Cash advances are straightforward on Visa, MasterCard and American Express in most countries. Advances are widely available using ATMs (*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. It is also worthwhile advising 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:

- 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
- ATMs often run out of cash, or are out of order
- In Cuba, credit cards impose limits on the amount of cash you can withdraw. Also, credit cards issued by US companies are not accepted (please see separate **Cuba** money advice section below). This is also true of travellers' cheques. Again, Visa and MasterCard are the best cards to take.

3.3 Local Currency

Generally speaking, it is not advisable to try to acquire Latin American currency before you travel (i.e. 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). Strikes notwithstanding, you should be able to change dollars and/or travellers' cheques at the airport/land frontier, upon arrival. In Central America, small denominations of US\$ cash are often as readily accepted as the local currency.

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. In some countries such as Venezuela, you will need to keep your official exchange

slips in order to change money back (please see separate **Venezuela** money advice section below).

Currencies have stabilised as governments have adopted more monetarist policies, and the once ubiquitous black market has now virtually disappeared from the streets of Latin America. There is also a far smaller variation in exchange rates on offer at different types of outlet (e.g. banks, exchange houses, souvenir shops, airports etc) than previously. It may be a good idea to pack a small calculator so when you change US\$ cash at the exchange rate of the day you can work out how much you should receive for yourself. This could work as a deterrent to avoid scams. Please note that as a backup, it is also possible to get cash advances on Visa or MasterCard.

3.4 Travellers' Cheques

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

If you do prefer to take travellers' cheques, with the exception of **Cuba** you should take US dollar cheques only (American Express is by far the most widely accepted brand) which you should be able to order from your home bank as long as you give them sufficient notice. It is advisable to take a variety of denominations. Do not forget to bring the receipt of purchase with you (carried separately), as you will need this in the event of cheques being lost or stolen. Occasionally, banks ask to see these receipts before cashing your cheques.

3.5 Money Advice by Country

Colombia

Please note that it is very difficult to exchange travellers' cheques in Colombia. Cash cards with

the Cirrus symbol are accepted by most cash machines and credit cards are widely accepted.

Cuba

Visitors to Cuba should carry as much cash in small denomination notes of sterling and/or euros as their travel insurance policy will cover – both sterling and euros are accepted in most banks and some of the larger hotels. These currencies are changed into “*pesos convertibles* – CUCs” – a Cuban “dollar”. There's usually an exchange fee too.

US dollars are changeable in Cuba but large commissions are automatically charged, often without warning, so it's advisable not to take dollars. Credit cards (not from US banks) are accepted in some places but also carry heavy commissions. American Express travellers' cheques are widely accepted but have to be in euros and not US dollars.

There are ATM machines in Havana and other major cities such as Trinidad and Santiago de Cuba but their reliability is questionable so it is often safer and easier to get a cash advance over the counter of a bank or *cadeca* exchange house with your passport and credit card. Airport departure tax in Cuba has to be paid in CUCs.

Note also that there is a Cuban peso (*peso cubano*), which is the currency Cubans use in their own local shops. Unless you're going to try and buy bread or fruit in a local shop, you shouldn't need any Cuban pesos.

Venezuela

Venezuelan bolívares (BsF) are obtainable, but not easily, in the UK. However, we advise you to take US\$ in cash (as much as your insurance will cover you for), because it's difficult to change travellers' cheques even in large cities outside Caracas, and many ATMs don't recognise British credit/debit cards. In cities, cards are acceptable in shops and restaurants – at the official rate.

Parallel-market (black market) traders often offer rates which are much more attractive than banks and bureaux de change (*cambios*), 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 a 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 also that you'll need to provide official exchange slips if you want to change money back from bolívares.

At the time of going to press in Jan 2010, Venezuela announced a devaluation of the bolívar against the US dollar. In theory, this should make things cheaper for visitors with hard currency, but it's too early to tell. Our web version of this dossier is updated more regularly than the print version. Please enquire.

Sources:

Wikitravel gives a useful overview – see the section on money <http://wikitravel.org/en/Venezuela>

FCO Advice: <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/south-america/venezuela>

3.6 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. As a general guideline, the cost of living for a tourist in Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba and Belize tends to be similar on average to the UK. Honduras, Ecuador, Mexico, Guatemala, Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, Argentina, Venezuela, Guyana and Suriname are generally cheaper (French Guiana is in the Euro zone). It should be mentioned that sometimes services directed

at tourists (e.g. hotels and restaurants) are disproportionately more expensive.

If you are on an escorted group tour, please consult your final letter or trip dossier for advice on daily expenses. 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, often 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. Modern snack bars, often of the fast-food variety, are much safer, if uninspiring.

A bit more upmarket, you will find restaurants with pleasant décor, uniformed waiters, and menus offering both international and local dishes, but you will pay on a scale of US\$10 (Bolivia, Ecuador) to US\$30 (Chile) for a full meal. Large towns will always have a supply of expensive restaurants with French or Italian menus. In some cities, such as Lima, Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires, these would be similarly priced to their equivalents in Europe.

Special tastes are catered for to a certain degree, more so in common tourist destinations. Chinese restaurants are everywhere and mostly cheap. 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.

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. From many airports you can buy special fixed-price tickets inside the airport building so you know you are not being overcharged. Otherwise, be sure to agree on a price before taking an unmetered cab.

4. TIPPING

The Spanish word for tip is '*propina*' – a synonym of 'reward' – and derivative from the Latin word "propinare" meaning to give something. The Portuguese word is '*gorjeta*'. We cannot stress enough that tipping is a personal choice and should be 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, porters, hairdressers, room-service and maid-service in hotels. For everyone, with the possible exception of guides, it is more convenient to receive a tip in local currency.

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 (e.g. 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 bags. Calculate an amount of currency equal to about \$1.00 for every two bags.

If you are happy with the housekeeping you may want to consider tipping the maid between US\$0.50 – \$1.00 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 people relying on their tip as a significant proportion of their income, or they may be students working their way through college, retired people, or part-timers supplementing their income from other sources. 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 meal and a drink in that country is reasonable (as a general rule of thumb, around \$5.00 per couple per half-day); if you are in a smaller group or a full-day tour, you might double this amount (\$10.00 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 – often since employers assume that gratuities will be given – but, refraining from giving a tip 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.

Naturalist Guides (Cruise/Jungle)

The convention is usually US\$10 per person per day, although this is only a suggestion as we understand that tipping is a personal choice. You will be given specific guidance on board a cruise – some companies recommend US\$15 per day per person for the crew, and the same again for your guides. This is often aimed at Americans, 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.

Inca Trail Trek

For the **Inca Trail**, there are specific conventions concerning tipping. The accepted rates are as follows:

If you are part of a group, each group member should allow:

- US\$5 per person, per porter (ratio is 1 client: 1 porter)
- US\$10 per person to the cook
- US\$10 per person to the guide

However, if you are part of a very small group, you may consider increasing these amounts.

If you are on a privately escorted trip, you should allow:

- US\$25 for the porter
- US\$10 for the cook
- US\$50 for the guide

This works out at a total of US\$85, irrespective of whether you are alone, or with another person. Please note also that the weight a porter may carry of an individual client's personal belongings has recently been 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.

Bargaining

Bargaining is normal procedure in most street and indoor markets, though no fair generalization can be made about the amount by which the price can be reduced. Tourists can usually expect to have to pay more than locals. In Peru, the asking price is often more than 50% more than the minimum that the vendor is prepared to accept, while the Otavalo Indians in Ecuador and street traders in Bolivia rarely come down more than 10%.

Street side vendors working from a makeshift or portable stall and selling items such as cigarettes, sweets and fruit are often extremely poor.

5. CLIMATE

Information on weather and climate is an important consideration in choosing what to pack.

Climate information is based on data and observations going back decades, and may hide variations from year to year and month to month. Our climate grid (please see page 22) shows average maximums and minimums, altitudes, and focuses on cities rather than countries (transposed to western Europe, Chile would stretch from Norway to Tunisia). It is worth noting that climate is different from weather; weather in every country (not least of all the UK!) can show variation from the accepted climate from time to time.

The following is intended to give a (non-exhaustive) flavour of what to expect, but you may find it useful to refer to some of the statistical information on our website (Destinations – Essentials). There are a number of very useful websites which can give you detailed information on today's and the next few days' weather for cities around the world – sometimes quite small places. The anticipated weather for specific dates can be checked on websites such as: www.bbc.co.uk/weather or www.worldweather.org

Terms like 'winter' and 'summer' are of limited value in countries that fall within the tropics (as all of Central America and all of northern South America do) as conditions vary not just with the time of year, but according to latitude and altitude. Winter only really has a meaning in Argentina and Chile (Jun-Sep) and northern Mexico (Dec-Mar).

Terms like 'wet season' and 'dry season' are more useful, as well as being self explanatory.

Argentina

Buenos Aires 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. The **Patagonia** region is very unpredictable with more 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.

Belize

There are great seasonal variations in rainfall in Belize. April and May are the driest months in a dry season that runs from November to May. In June and July heavy showers are to be expected. Hurricanes threaten between August and November but are very few and far between. Temperatures are high all year around, often exceeding 30°C, although slightly cooler between November and March.

Bolivia

The Bolivian highlands have 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 November to March; outside these months there is usually sunshine on the highland (*altiplano*). The north-east slopes of the Andes are semi-tropical, while the eastern lowlands are generally hot, with occasional cold snaps. The Amazon lowlands, to the north, are tropical.

Brazil

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 and temperatures will be 32-42°C.

Iguaçu is in a subtropical region with 2 main seasons; summer, from Aug-Apr, is hot (temp 27°C) and humid, and winter, from May-Sep, is cooler (occasionally much cooler) and drier. Throughout the year it is generally sunny.

The north of the country, principally the **Amazon**, enjoys a drier season from June to September (although this is when the river levels are highest). In the Amazon temperatures rarely drop below 23°C.

Chile

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

Patagonia and the **Lake District** have an extremely unpredictable 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. Temperatures rarely top 14°C even in the summer time.

Atacama is dry throughout the year with clear, sunny skies. Inland, temperatures never rise too high because of the altitude, and it can get very cold at night.

Colombia

Bogotá, at 2650m above sea level, has a temperate climate; it is usually warm during the day but the evenings can be cool.

The dry season on the north (Caribbean) coast lasts from December to March, when temperatures reach 30°C.

Cartagena is hot throughout the year, although it is at its hottest and most humid between Aug-Nov.

Costa Rica

In common with its tropical neighbours, Costa Rica enjoys two principal climatic seasons – dry, and wet ('green'). However, what makes Costa Rican weather so different from other Central American countries is the prevalence of microclimates – owing to the greatly varying altitudes – which render the weather somewhat difficult to predict.

Generally speaking, temperatures (mid-to-high 20s) and humidity are high on the coasts but the higher altitude locations inland are cooler and less humid.

Rainfall varies dramatically according to topography but usually falls in intense bursts of a couple of hours. Rains are heaviest in September and October. On the Caribbean side of the continental divide rainfall can be expected at any time, but the drier months are Feb-Jun.

Cuba and the Caribbean

Cuba has a tropical climate and is mostly hot and sunny throughout the year, although it is susceptible to storms and hurricanes from August through to November.

The humidity and high temperatures (up to 33°C) in July and August can be enervating. From December to April the weather is more benign, with temperatures as low as 20°C, and there can be some cool and drizzly days. Most rain falls between June and September.

Ecuador

There are two seasons, wet and dry. The dry season in the highlands lasts from June to September, and on the coast from May to December. The coast is especially hot, wet and humid from January to April.

Although Feb-Apr is traditionally the green (wet) season, there is a chance of showers throughout

the year, and in Quito you will probably experience all seasons in one day.

Quito and the Central Highlands enjoy relatively high temperatures – in spite of the altitude – owing to their position on the Equator.

It can rain at any time in the jungle but the wettest months are Apr-Jun. Temperatures in the upland areas are spring-like and nights can be cold. In the Amazon and Pacific lowlands, temperatures of 30°C are not uncommon.

Galápagos Islands

From Jan-Apr, the Galápagos Islands are hot with short heavy showers. From May to July and October to December it is cloudier; in August and September it's often cloudy and cool, and a stiff breeze makes the waters choppier. Since the water is cooler from May-Dec, a shortie wetsuit is advisable for snorkelling during these months (the better ships make them available to clients).

El Salvador

The dry season runs from late November to April. 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.

Guatemala

The climate in Guatemala varies greatly according to the altitude. In the highlands (900-2500m) – including **Antigua, Guatemala City** and **Lake Atitlán** – the days are mild and sunny and the nights cool, with most rain falling between May and October.

On the coast high temperatures, humidity and

all-year-round rainfall can be expected alongside a powerful sun. The lowland jungle area of the Petén (including **Tikal**) has a dry season from November to May; March and April are hot and dry.

Guyana

Weather in 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 to June and December to February. The south and the **Rupununi** has only one wet season – from May to July.

Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama

Situated well within the tropics, all these countries have a typically tropical climate with high temperatures all year round at low altitudes. Temperatures are significantly modified by altitude – higher up it can be very cool 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. Panama benefits from being outside the hurricane belt.

Mexico

South of the Tropic of Cancer, which slices the country in half, there is a humid and hot climate along the coasts, especially from May to September, 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 means that it is rarely oppressively hot.

The jungle areas of the **Yucatán** tend to be hot and humid throughout the year; Jul-Sep is the green (wet) season. On the Caribbean coast, high

temperatures are cooled by trade winds. Aug-Nov is traditionally hurricane season.

Paraguay

The climate of this low-lying country is subtropical and continental – expect extremes! Dec-Mar is extremely hot and humid, with average temperatures in February reaching 35°C. From July to September, temperatures are extremely variable and it can be cold in the daytime and very cold at night. Most precipitation falls between October and April but it can rain at any time of the year.

Peru

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 February) – note that rains tend to be in short, heavy bursts, rather than continual showers, with rains clearing towards the end of April. Nights are cold throughout the year at altitude.

Lima has a perpetual 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 40°C. In May there is often a layer of low cloud over the rainforest.

Suriname

Suriname has a tropical humid climate with dry and rainy seasons. There is a short rainy season in December and January and again from April to July.

The most pleasant times to visit Suriname are the dry seasons from February to April and from

August to November. Throughout the year the average daily temperature varies between 21 and 32°C.

Suriname lies outside the hurricane zone and the most extreme weather condition is the *sibibusi* (which means forest broom), a heavy rain shower that passes quickly.

Uruguay

The weather is mild all the year around. Temperatures range from 10-16°C in the southern hemisphere winter, while in the summer (Nov-Mar) they hover in the mid-twenties. 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 during July and August when there are prolonged wet periods.

Venezuela

Caracas and the Caribbean coast is dry and rain is infrequent. In the **Llanos** region of the Orinoco valley there is a typical hot, tropical climate with a single wetter season between Apr-Oct.

The Gran Sabana region (**Angel Falls**) is best avoided in July and August as they are the wettest months. The dry season is Dec-Apr. The best time to visit the Andes (**Mérida, Hato El Cedral**) is Mar-Jun or Sep-Dec.

5.1 Climate Guide

| | Jan | | | Feb | | | March | | | April | | | May | | | June | | |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | °C Maximum | °C Minimum | Rainy days | °C Maximum | °C Minimum | Rainy days | °C Maximum | °C Minimum | Rainy days | °C Maximum | °C Minimum | Rainy days | °C Maximum | °C Minimum | Rainy days | °C Maximum | °C Minimum | Rainy days |
| Mexico | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mérida | 28 | 17 | 4 | 29 | 17 | 2 | 32 | 19 | 1 | 33 | 21 | 2 | 34 | 22 | 5 | 33 | 22 | 10 |
| Mexico City | 19 | 6 | 2 | 21 | 6 | 1 | 24 | 8 | 2 | 25 | 11 | 6 | 26 | 12 | 9 | 24 | 13 | 14 |
| Guatemala | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Guatemala City | 23 | 11 | 2 | 25 | 12 | 2 | 27 | 14 | 2 | 28 | 14 | 5 | 29 | 16 | 8 | 27 | 16 | 20 |
| Belize | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Belize City | 29 | 21 | 13 | 29 | 20 | 8 | 30 | 21 | 6 | 31 | 24 | 7 | 31 | 24 | 8 | 31 | 24 | 16 |
| Costa Rica | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| San José | 24 | 14 | 1 | 24 | 14 | 0 | 26 | 15 | 1 | 27 | 16 | 4 | 27 | 16 | 17 | 27 | 16 | 20 |
| Panama | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Panama City | 31 | 21 | 2 | 32 | 21 | 1 | 32 | 22 | 1 | 32 | 23 | 5 | 31 | 23 | 12 | 30 | 23 | 15 |
| Nicaragua | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Managua | 26 | 21 | 0.5 | 27 | 22 | 0.5 | 28 | 23 | 0.5 | 29 | 24 | 0.5 | 29 | 25 | 10 | 28 | 24 | 16 |
| Honduras | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| San Pedro Sula | 23 | 20 | 13 | 23 | 20 | 9 | 24 | 22 | 6 | 26 | 23 | 6 | 26 | 24 | 9 | 25 | 24 | 17 |
| Cuba | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Havana | 26 | 18 | 6 | 27 | 18 | 4 | 28 | 19 | 4 | 29 | 21 | 4 | 30 | 22 | 7 | 31 | 23 | 10 |
| Venezuela | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Caracas | 26 | 15 | 4 | 26 | 15 | 3 | 28 | 16 | 2 | 28 | 17 | 4 | 28 | 18 | 8 | 27 | 18 | 13 |
| Colombia | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bogotá | 20 | 6 | 6 | 20 | 7 | 8 | 20 | 8 | 10 | 20 | 9 | 11 | 20 | 9 | 14 | 20 | 8 | 12 |
| Guyana | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Georgetown | 29 | 21 | 16 | 30 | 21 | 10 | 31 | 21 | 10 | 31 | 22 | 12 | 31 | 23 | 19 | 30 | 23 | 23 |
| Brazil | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Manaus | 30 | 23 | 20 | 30 | 23 | 18 | 30 | 23 | 21 | 30 | 23 | 20 | 31 | 24 | 18 | 31 | 23 | 12 |
| Rio De Janeiro | 30 | 23 | 13 | 30 | 23 | 11 | 29 | 23 | 9 | 27 | 21 | 9 | 26 | 20 | 6 | 25 | 18 | 5 |
| Salvador | 29 | 23 | 6 | 29 | 23 | 9 | 29 | 24 | 17 | 28 | 23 | 19 | 27 | 22 | 22 | 26 | 21 | 23 |
| Ecuador | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Quito | 21 | 8 | 9 | 21 | 8 | 11 | 20 | 8 | 11 | 21 | 8 | 15 | 21 | 8 | 10 | 21 | 7 | 9 |
| Galápagos Islands | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Galápagos Islands | 27 | 21 | 7 | 28 | 22 | 8 | 30 | 21 | 15 | 28 | 20 | 12 | 27 | 20 | 6 | 24 | 18 | 2 |
| Peru | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cusco | 20 | 7 | 18 | 21 | 7 | 13 | 21 | 7 | 11 | 22 | 4 | 8 | 21 | 2 | 3 | 21 | 1 | 2 |
| Lima | 25 | 19 | 1 | 26 | 20 | 0 | 26 | 19 | 0 | 24 | 18 | 0 | 21 | 16 | 1 | 19 | 15 | 1 |
| Bolivia | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| La Paz | 18 | 6 | 21 | 18 | 6 | 18 | 18 | 6 | 18 | 19 | 5 | 9 | 17 | 3 | 5 | 17 | 2 | 2 |
| Sucre | 18 | 9 | 19 | 18 | 9 | 15 | 18 | 8 | 11 | 17 | 7 | 7 | 17 | 5 | 1 | 16 | 4 | 1 |
| Chile | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Árica | 26 | 18 | 0 | 26 | 18 | 0 | 25 | 17 | 0 | 23 | 16 | 0 | 21 | 14 | 0 | 19 | 14 | 0 |
| Punta Arenas | 15 | 7 | 6 | 14 | 7 | 5 | 13 | 6 | 7 | 9 | 4 | 9 | 6 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 8 |
| Santiago | 29 | 12 | 0 | 29 | 11 | 0 | 27 | 9 | 1 | 23 | 7 | 1 | 18 | 5 | 5 | 14 | 3 | 6 |
| Argentina | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bariloche | 21 | 8 | 2 | 21 | 8 | 3 | 18 | 6 | 5 | 14 | 4 | 7 | 10 | 2 | 11 | 7 | 1 | 13 |
| Buenos Aires | 30 | 18 | 5 | 29 | 17 | 5 | 26 | 15 | 6 | 22 | 12 | 6 | 18 | 9 | 4 | 15 | 6 | 4 |
| Uruguay | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Punta del Este | 28 | 18 | 8 | 28 | 17 | 7 | 27 | 15 | 11 | 22 | 12 | 11 | 18 | 9 | 9 | 15 | 7 | 9 |

6. WHAT TO TAKE

• Money-belt

- Containing those items stated in section 1.5 (Document Checklist)

• Medical kit

- Anti-diarrhoea tablets and Dioralyte sachets of re-hydration salts
- Antiseptic/antibiotic cream
- Insect-bite ointment/insect repellent (please see section on Malaria)
- Lipsalve + sunscreen (high factor with protection against UVA and UVB rays)
- After-sun lotion
- Sticking plaster
- Painkillers
- Personal medication

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

6.1 Clothing – General

When embarking on any of our tours or tailor-made itineraries, the following clothing list may be useful as a guide to what you will need to take. For warmth it is usually better to wear several thin garments rather than one thick one. If your route takes you to both the high Andes (where it is often very cold at night) as well as to jungle or very hot regions, then three or four shirts/t-shirts and one medium-weight jersey is a much better combination than one shirt/t-shirt and one thick jersey. If travelling to Brazil, Yucatán, Belize, Venezuela, Galápagos Islands or the Caribbean and lowlands of Central America you will need to adapt your clothing for primarily hot weather. Pack light cotton t-shirts, shorts, skirts and trousers.

For travel to Patagonia, and high-altitude regions, you can expect some days of severely cold weather, especially in the Chilean/Argentinian winter (June to October) and year-round in the Bolivian or Peruvian highland (*altiplano*). For these trips it is advisable to bring thermal underwear and good quality outer-shell clothing, including gloves, hat and scarf.

6.2 Amazon and Mato Grosso/Pantanal Trips

Temperatures are typically tropical in all months with average midday temperatures in the range 27°C/80°F-32°C/90°F. Frost is almost unknown, although in Mato Grosso/Pantanal occasional cold spells lasting a day or two and known as *friagem* can cause night temperatures to fall below 10°C/50°F from May to September. Rainfall throughout the year is above 1,500mm/60in a year and in much of the region over 2,000mm/80in.

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, like brown, beige and green, which don't highlight you in the landscape, not scaring the animals. Avoid strong colours like 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
- Swim suit

- A light sweater (it gets surprisingly chilly in the rainforest, especially on boat trips)
- Sun hat/cap

Footwear

- Comfortable outdoor shoes/trainers for evening use
- Rubber boots up to size 10 are provided at most lodges.

Foul Weather Gear

- A lightweight raincoat or waterproof poncho
- Cold fronts can sometimes pass through the Amazon and Pantanal 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 with extra batteries/head torch
- Water bottle/canteen
- Antihistamine tablets and an epi-pen for people with serious allergies to stings
- Zip lock bags – to keep things dry
- Swiss army knife (this cannot be taken as hand luggage during your flights).

For some excursions to the jungle and Pantanal 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.

6.3 Galápagos Islands

Clothing requirements onboard boats cruising the Galápagos range from very informal to “smart casual”, depending on the grade of vessel. The smarter boats prefer you not to wear jeans, shorts or trainers for dinner.

Maximum luggage allowance for the flight to the Galápagos is 20kg (one suitcase/bag). The following items would prove useful:-

Clothing

- Lightweight trousers
- Shorts
- Short-sleeved shirts/t-shirts (cotton is cool in hot climates, but light-weight 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
- Swim suit
- Wetsuits are recommended in the cold water months (July to September). 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 sun block
- Sunglasses
- Beach towel and bath towel (most yachts provide bath towel)
- Water bottle/canteen
- Camera and plenty of film or – if digital – plenty of memory! (underwater camera beneficial)
- Binoculars
- Most yachts will provide snorkelling equipment (but if you have your own equipment, we recommend bringing it)

At the luxury/first class end of the spectrum you can use credit cards, and there are laundry facilities. These facilities are not available on budget/tourist class vessels.

6.4 Trekking

If you intend to do any hiking or trekking, you should get into training by doing a few long walks before departure. If you have bought new walking boots, this will provide a chance for you to wear them in. If you are doing any walking in very wet conditions or difficult terrain, you will need waterproof boots or trainers that provide ankle support and have a solid sole.

Before undertaking a hike involving points of high altitude, you should take a few days to acclimatise in a town or village over 3000m. If you have any heart or respiratory conditions, you should consult your doctor before going to high altitudes and should avoid strenuous hiking or trekking altogether.

The hikes that we offer in the south of Chile or Argentina do not involve ascending to high altitudes but the weather conditions can be severe and it can be rough or boggy underfoot. Please be sure you have all the equipment you will need for hiking before leaving your home country, since good quality gear can be difficult to obtain and be more expensive in some destinations. The degree of comfort you feel will be directly related to the effectiveness of your clothing and equipment. If not travelling in a supervised group, the dangers of hypothermia should not be overlooked. In Patagonia it is particularly important that you have windproof garments.

For our group tours, please see individual trip dossiers for detailed equipment and clothing lists. Bespoke clients should ask their travel consultants for specifics though the following general equipment list may be useful:

Clothing

- Should be suitable for different types of weather, light and fast drying.
- Light-weight trousers (consider convertible trousers – where the below-knee can be unzipped)
- Shorts
- Short-sleeved shirts/t-shirts (cotton is cool in hot climates, but light-weight wicking fabric controls perspiration and dries quickly)
- Long-sleeved shirts (as above)

Footwear

- Good quality, well worn-in walking boots
- Trekking/thick socks
- Comfortable outdoor shoes/trainers/Tevas for evening use

Foul Weather Gear

- Rain/wind proof jacket or poncho (consider similar trousers)
- Warm sweater/fleece pullover (layering lighter garments is better than one heavy fleece)
- Gloves and scarf
- Headgear
- Warm hat
- Sun hat/cap

Travel Accessories

- Suntan lotion/sunscreen and lip balm
- Torch with extra batteries
- Insect repellent
- Water bottle/canteen
- Sunglasses (suitable for strong UV conditions)
- Swiss army knife (this cannot be taken as hand luggage during your flights)
- Plastic bags of various sizes for keeping things

sorted out in your baggage. Zip-lock bags work well. (They're also great for camera gear.)

6.5 Camping

For group tours, see individual trip dossiers for details of what you should take if you are joining a trip that involves camping. Bespoke clients should ask for specific information from their travel consultants. As a general rule, sleeping bags are often available locally but we cannot ensure their quality. For that reason some clients prefer to take their own sleeping bag or a sleeping bag liner.

7. USEFUL INFORMATION

Telephone Services

Phone calls can be made from most hotels of 3 stars and above, though there is a fee charged for this that may vary from 10 to 100% of the call cost. Most hotels will allow you to make reverse charge (collect) calls as well as use a telephone charge card. Always check with the hotel prior to calling – most make a service charge.

It is cheaper to go the local phone centre (*telefónica*) to make an international call. Procedure and prices vary. Most telephone companies have direct dialling. You will usually receive a plastic tag with a number for the respective booth, make all your calls, then hand in your number and be charged accordingly. There is generally a charge for a collect call from these booths.

Most countries now operate with telephone cards, bought in most kiosks or telephone company shops. These can then be used from pay phones in the street for national and international calls. Be careful in those countries where there is more than one phone company (e.g. Chile) as often the cards are not accepted by other companies. Beware of being sold a “phonecard” which is actually a pre-paid top-up card. If it states the word “*celular*” anywhere on the card, don't buy it.

Similarly, some denominations of phonecards may be insufficient to make international calls. In doubt, ask first! Very occasionally, a “*ficha*” or “*cartão telefônico*”, may have to be bought to make local calls. In Buenos Aires and in Cusco, Peru, small “call shops” seem to be springing up on every street corner. These are cheap and open long hours.

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. The service is constantly improving – there is now coverage, for example, at Machu Picchu and sporadically in the Sacred Valley and Cusco-Puno routes in Peru.

Internet and Email

Internet access is widely available in Latin America (although it is limited in Cuba) in cities and tourist areas, either in internet cafes or from your hotel. Your tour leader or local guide should be able to point you in the direction of the nearest internet centre. More and more hotels offer broadband connections, and usually provide cables if their service is not wireless.

Electrical Voltage

110-120 volts: Cuba (older buildings), Mexico, Guatemala (mostly), El Salvador (flat pin plugs), Honduras (flat pin plugs), Nicaragua, Costa Rica (flat pin plugs), Panama, most parts of Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Belize, and Bolivia (outside of La Paz).

220-240 volts: Cuba (newer hotels), Panama (modern homes and hotels), Argentina, Bolivia (in La Paz), the north-east of Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay.

Standard British plugs will need an adapter to two-pin plugs. The sockets usually accept both round and flat pins, but some on 110 voltage are flat pin only, so you will need an adapter with both (worldwide adapter). You can buy these in electrical shops, branches of Boots (in the UK), luggage shops and at airports.

For quick-reference see:

<http://electricaloutlet.org/>

Photography

The majority of travellers now have digital cameras. Memory cards (often expensive) and batteries can be bought at many of the principal tourist destinations, but do not rely on this – bring them from home. If you need to free up memory space, there are outlets in many main towns where you can download your images onto discs.

Film for old-style cameras should be purchased before you go if you use transparencies, as slide film can be hard to come by. Film for prints is almost universally available but can be more expensive, especially at main tourist sites. It is advisable to buy from shops where it looks as though they have a reasonably good turnover of film, and don't store it in very warm conditions – check the expiry date! If you are going to a jungle area it is advisable to buy some fast film (e.g. 400 ASA) in advance. The canopy cover of rainforest regions makes photography very difficult if you are using 100 ASA speed film. Conversely, a clear day in the high Andes will make slow film, (e.g. 100 ASA) a better bet. If possible, do not develop your film in Latin America, as the service is frequently sub-standard.

Laundry

Most hotels except the very cheapest have a laundry service, and they usually take between 10 and 24 hours to return your clothes. Hotel laundry services tend to be expensive, but can be more convenient and often offer a faster service than the cheaper launderettes which can often be found nearby.

8. RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

What is Responsible Travel?

In recent years 'Responsible Travel' has become a very familiar term, but what is it?

To put it simply, it is our responsibility to ensure we offer holidays that are sensitive to the environments and communities you visit, and it is your responsibility as a traveller to ensure you tread carefully, respecting local laws and customs and avoiding any negative impact on the local environment.

Our Responsibility

To us, Responsible 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 through to local economies. In 2008 we were awarded AITO's prestigious 5-star Responsible Tourism status, in recognition of our efforts in this area.

We, and everyone we ask to deliver services to you, take pride in offering responsible holidays with minimal impact on the environment, support for community development, and in ensuring good working conditions. We relay our RT policy to all of our suppliers and they in turn sign an agreement of best practice.

For more information about our Responsible Travel initiatives, please visit the Responsible Travel section on our website for more information:

www.journeylatinamerica.co.uk/rt.aspx

How You Can Get Involved

Clients often ask us what they can do to ensure they travel responsibly. The following is best practice:

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!
- Consider offsetting the carbon emissions from your transatlantic flight using the TICOS scheme.

Whilst on your travels remember...

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 e.g. hardwoods, shells, exotic feathers, coral, furs or eggs.

Eating out

- Choose smaller local restaurants, bars and cafes where possible so your money benefits local people.
- Sample the local cuisine using local produce.

Out and About

- Remember to respect local traditions and culture.
- 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, mostly, poor.
- Giving money to children on the street only encourages begging; instead consider donating to schools or local conservation or charitable organisations.

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 in a Mayan ruin. They are there for your safety and also to preserve the local wildlife and help to avoid further erosion of the landscape.

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. Many hotels have water '*garrafoles*' 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.

9. RECOMMENDED READING

ARGENTINA

Labyrinths

– *Jorge Luis Borges*

The best short stories by the father of modern Latin American fiction.

The Uttermost End of the Earth

– *Lucas Bridges*

An interesting history of the settlement of Tierra del Fuego in the 19th century by British missionaries. Includes some fascinating anecdotes about their interaction with the native Indians.

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.

Santa Evita

– *Tomás Eloy Martínez*

A highly readable exploration of the myth of Eva Perón in Argentine society.

BOLIVIA

Bolivian Diary

– *Ernesto Che Guevara*

These 1966 and 1967 diaries were written during Che's attempt to establish a guerrilla insurrectionary movement in Bolivia.

Sons of the Moon: A Journey in the Andes

– *Henry Shuckman*

An account of the author's trip to visit the Aymara – a people living in a remote, isolated region of the mountains in Bolivia.

BRAZIL

Dona Flor and her Two Husbands

– *Jorge Amado*

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

Futebol: The Brazilian Way of Life

– *Alex Bellos*

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

Rebellion in the Backlands

– *Euclides Da Cunha*

Da Cunha reflects on his experience of the aftermath of the Canudos war: a historical episode of 1896-97 that culminated in the extermination of a religious sect that had effectively denied the legitimacy of the Brazilian Republic.

The Testament

– *John Grisham*

An ageing multimillionaire knows his greedy children are circling like vultures as he waits to die. As his beneficiary he chooses an unknown missionary living deep in the wilds of Brazil. Accurate descriptions of the Brazilian Pantanal abound.

The Hour of the Star

– *Clarice Lispector*

This lucid, charming book tells the story of Macabea, a typist who does not know how to type. She represents the under-classes in Brazil. The book gives a clear insight into life in the country.

CHILE

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*

Drawn to Patagonia since an early childhood fascination with his grandmother's scrap of hairy Giant Sloth skin, Chatwin is intrigued by odd miners, Darwin, the Welsh and the log cabin built by Butch Cassidy. (The book covers Chilean and Argentinian Patagonia: the famous Milodon Cave is actually in Chile.)

Curfew

– *José Donoso*

Accounts of life under the Pinochet dictatorship.

The Nanny and the Iceberg

– *Ariel Dorfman*

A humorous account of an exiled Chilean returning to his motherland following the end of the dictatorship, and his struggles to win the affections of his father and a beautiful Chilean girl.

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, after 12 years, under a false identity.

Twenty Love Songs and a Song of Despair

– *Pablo Neruda*

Some of the most beautiful love poems ever written. Every Chilean can recite at least half a dozen of these poems.

My Invented Country

– *Isabel Allende*

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

Eight Men and a Duck

– *Nick Thorpe*

A very readable book about the author's trip from mainland Chile to Easter Island in a reed boat made on Lake Titicaca.

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.

COLOMBIA & VENEZUELA

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 cocaine trade. Nicholl relates his quest for "The Great Cocaine Story" with madcap energy and vividness in this classic travel book.

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.

CUBA

Our Man in Havana: An Entertainment

– *Graham Greene*

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.

Selected Poems

– *Nicolás Guillén*

Fidel's official poet laureate of the Cuban revolution.

The Old Man and the Sea

– *Ernest Hemingway*

Hemingway was at his shining best when he wrote about the fearless old man, Santiago, and his epic personal battle with a hooked marlin. Inspirational stuff even if you're not a fisherman.

Cuban Music: From Son and Rumba to the Buena Vista Social Club and Timba Cubana

– *Maya Roy*

An account of Cuban music through the ages; includes an extremely interesting and updated section on contemporary Cuban music from a social perspective.

Cuba: The Test of Time

– *Jean Stubbs*

A short analysis of the first 30 years of the Cuban Revolution from the historical and economic viewpoint. Still fascinating and useful even without the upheaval of the '90s.

CENTRAL AMERICA

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.

Selected Writings

– *Rubén Darío*

Originally from Nicaragua, Darío is considered the father of Latin American poetry.

Green Mansions

– *W H Hudson*

A poignant meditation on the loss of wilderness. First published in 1904.

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, which claimed the lives of her brother, mother, and father.

The Full Montezuma

– *Peter Moore*

An Australian backpacker's odyssey through Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean with the Girl Next Door, dodging political riots, cockroaches and hurricanes along the way.

Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey

– *Salman Rushdie*

Travel tales and social commentary set in Nicaragua. Stirring and original in its simple descriptions of the country that provides an impressionistic picture of the country in bright, patchwork colours unavailable in usual journalistic dispatches.

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.

MEXICO

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.

The Old Gringo

– *Carlos Fuentes*

Interweaving politics, history and the mysterious death of writer Ambrose Bierce, Carlos Fuentes' novel is a love story set within the rebel army of Pancho Villa during the Mexican Civil War of 1913.

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 Labyrinth of Solitude

– *Octavio Paz*

An attempt to define the identity of the Mexican people through culture and history.

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.

PERU

Deep Rivers

– *Jose María Arguedas*

An account of the influence of pre-Hispanic cultures on modern life in Peru. Good descriptions of Cusco and the Sacred Valley.

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 (Canto General)

– *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 Dancer Upstairs

– *Nicholas Shakespeare*

A thriller and detective story set in the era of the Shining Path guerrilla movement.

Touching the Void

– *Joe Simpson*

The story (recently made into a film) of a climbing accident in Northern Peru when Simpson's partner was forced to cut the rope.

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.

Cochineal Red

– *Hugh Thomson*

A journey back from the world of the Incas to the first dawn of Andean civilisation.

Peregrination of a Pariah: 1833-1834

– *Flora Tristan*

A lively and fascinating eye-witness account of life in 19th-century Peru.

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 this highly acclaimed author.)

GENERAL

The Trail to Titicaca

– *Rupert Atlee*

A bicycle journey through Chile, Argentina and Bolivia in aid of Leukaemia research.

Reasons of State

– *Alejo Carpentier*

A novel that looks into the classic despotic Latin American dictator.

Papillon

– *Henri Charrière*

The author's memoirs, now considered to be an amalgam of many stories from the forçats condemned to the notorious penal colony in French Guiana. A bestseller in its time.

The Voyage of the Beagle

– *Charles Darwin*

A landmark of natural history, Darwin's account of a voyage in 1831 to map the coast of South America.

One River: Exploration & Discoveries in the Amazon Rain Forest

– *Wade Davis*

Davis is an ethnobotanist interested in the native use of plants. He has a rare ability to mix technical science writing with a deep knowledge of history, culture and politics and make it flow into coherent narrative. A must for anyone interested in the cultures and history of the Amazon basin.

The War of Don Emmanuel's Nether Parts

– *Louis De Bernières*

Set in a fictitious Latin American country, this novel offers all the tragedy, ribaldry, and humour Bernières can muster from a debauched military, a clueless oligarchy, and an unconventional band of guerrillas. There's a plague of laughing, a flood of magical cats, and a torture-happy colonel. This is the first of a trilogy, and is followed by Señor Vivo and the Coca Lord and The Troublesome Offspring of Cardinal Guzman.

Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent

– *Eduardo Galeano*

A left-wing masterpiece – though some critics hate it. It touches the heart of capitalism and explores it in a way few have dared. More than a history book, it is a compilation of essays that shows how the ‘strong’ abuse and stand over the ‘weak’.

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.

Motorcycle Diaries: A Journey Around South America

– *Che Guevara*

Full of high drama and comedy, Che’s book is the story of a remarkable road journey. Moving examples of Guevara’s idealism and solidarity with the oppressed are recounted in a vivid record that provides an insight into Che’s mind. The film version was released in 2004, starring Gael García Bernal.

The Feast of the Goat

– *Mario Vargas Llosa*

The best dictatorship novel to come from Latin America. An insight into the life of Rafael Trujillo, who ruled the Dominican Republic with an iron fist between 1930 and 1961.

The Endurance

– *Ernest Shackleton*

A first-hand account of the Endurance expedition to the South Pole as the Great War raged in Europe. The ship was crushed by the ice and the men were forced to survive in and escape from one of the world’s most hostile environments.

A Penguin History of Latin America

– *Edwin Williamson*

Williamson combines the sensibility and mastery of language of a man of letters with the rigour and depth of knowledge of an academic historian to give us an introduction into Latin America through her history. An extremely readable synthesis.

Conquistadors

– *Michael Wood*

Wood describes fairly and sensitively the vast gulf that separated the Bronze Age (Aztec and Inca) cultures of Latin America from the Western behemoth that overwhelmed and destroyed them, stressing in particular the near total inability of each society to comprehend the morals and values of the other.

Guidebooks and 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

The Travel Survival Kit series is 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

6 clear maps of Latin America and the Caribbean. Ideal for general use.

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This is by no means an exhaustive list. These books have been recommended by our staff though there are many more. Try browsing **www.amazon.com**. Amazon books also offers a search service for books that may be out of print.

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 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
www.fco.gov.uk