

# Volunteers' FAQ

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# Before you arrive

## Best time to come to Cochabamba

In terms of weather, Cochabamba has a good climate all year round. The rainy season is from October to February but it never rains enough to hinder activities. In terms of working at Proyecto Horizonte, the best time to come is between February and November, since the school, daycare centre and all other associated services close for the summer holidays and there is limited staff in operation. Many people from the community travel therefore community development services are also reduced.

## Flights and connections to Cochabamba

The major international airports in Bolivia are Santa Cruz and La Paz. It is generally much cheaper to buy your international flights to one of these two airports and then book flights to Cochabamba separately. The main services to Cochabamba are provided by BOA ([www.boa.bo/](http://www.boa.bo/)) and Amazonas ([www.amazonas.com/](http://www.amazonas.com/)) which generally cost around \$50.

Alternatively, you might choose to travel by bus from either La Paz (7-8 hours) or Santa Cruz (10 hours). There are very good connections to both cities, with several busses running departing several times a day for around US\$7-10 or less. If you opt for more comfortable buses referred to as “bus-cama” (“bus-bed”), you are likely to pay a little more, but your bus ride is going to be very comfortable. Bus tickets are purchased directly at the bus terminal. It is recommended to choose bus service operators that are more reputable such as Copacabana and Bolivar.

## Visas – less than 3 months

Bolivian tourist visa is not required for citizens of “Group 1” countries (e.g. Australia, NZ, most European countries, and Canada) for a stay up to 30 days. Routine procedure is that tourists will receive a 30 day stamp at the border and will then need to go to the immigration office to extend the visa to the full 90 days.

“Group 2” countries which include the U.S. need a tourist entry visa. US citizens will be charged US\$135 for a 5 year visa but must still adhere to the 90 days rule. You will also receive a 30 day stamp and then will need to go to the immigration to obtain an extension.

\*N.B. Bolivian visa requirements have recently changed. We do our best to keep this FAQ up to date, however we strongly advise all prospective volunteers to consult the Bolivian embassy in their country to validate visa requirements. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you are having any difficulties.

## Visas - more than 3 months

### *Fine*

For those on a tourist visa, it is possible to overstay and pay a fine of 20bs (approx. US\$3) for each day over 90 days when leaving. If you choose this option, you should be aware that you cannot leave and return to Bolivia after these 90 days. Please note that if you choose to overstay and pay a fine, there will not be any legal implications as you will not be considered illegal. Many of our volunteers chose this option when deciding to stay longer.

### *Special purpose visa & 1yr temporary residency*

The special purpose visa can only be obtained outside of Bolivia, and each consulate has different requirements and fees. This is a 30-day entry visa which gives the right to apply for 1-year temporary residency upon arrival to Bolivia. The residency visa costs approximately 1350bs (US\$190) and requires a number of documents including a contract with Proyecto Horizonte that we will provide, a medical certificate, a certified criminal history check from your home country, bank statements for a period of 6 months and a declaration of solvency signed by a local notary. These documents will cost around 700bs to obtain. Obtaining residency can be a time-consuming process

[www.proyecto Horizonte.org](http://www.proyecto Horizonte.org) - [info@proyecto Horizonte.org](mailto:info@proyecto Horizonte.org)

*N.B. Exchange rate approx. 7bs = \$1US or 10bs = £1*

that can take more than 30 days, in which case you will have to pay a fine of 20bs per day until your application is accepted. Depending on the time of year that you are applying, it can mean that you have to wait multiple times in the immigration office for up to 6 hours at a time.



### **Vaccinations**

The yellow fever vaccination is officially required to enter Bolivia and you will need to carry your certificate with you on arrival and exit. However, do not be surprised if it does not get checked. Other travel vaccinations which are recommended for the region include: hepatitis A&B, typhoid, tetanus and rabies. A number of these should be administered months in advance, so be sure to check well in advance of your departure. In Cochabamba you do not need malaria tablets, however, please consider bringing some if you plan on traveling to more tropical areas such as Santa Cruz.

### **What to bring**

Cochabamba has a very mild climate but in the winter it can get colder in the mornings and at night and therefore warm clothing is needed. Most other necessities can be found cheaply in Bolivia if you forget something. Workwise, if you are planning to help out with communications, marketing or other work that requires a computer, it is best that you bring your own laptop as computer access is limited on-site.

### **Donations in Kind**

Many volunteers want to bring a donation in-kind. We are always in need of sports equipment, especially footballs, while dynamic games like puzzles that help stimulate children are also very useful. Old electrical equipment such as radios and laptops are also very welcome. Please do check to see if there is anything else that we specifically need at the time of your visit. Having said this, please keep in mind that most things are cheaper to buy in Bolivia than to bring from outside and we may have a specific need at the time of your arrival.

# Living in Cochabamba



## Accommodation

Proyecto Horizonte does not provide accommodation; however, we have contacts with homestays and shared apartments. It is up to the personal preference of the volunteer in which arrangement they would like to live. Homestays offer a chance to improve your Spanish and have a more local experience. Shared apartments are mainly shared with other volunteers. Prices for homestay and shared apartments range from \$150-\$240. We can also assist you in looking for other accommodation options.

## Food

Various options are available in terms of food. Volunteers are welcome to eat lunch at our premises for about \$1.20 on weekdays. Below are a few examples of prices for alternatives:

Lunch in a local restaurant in Ushpa - 10bs  
Lunch in a local restaurant in city – 16 to 25bs  
Dinner in restaurant – 30 to 60bs

Fresh produce and groceries are really inexpensive at the markets, while supermarkets are relatively expensive (particularly for branded goods, for which prices are sometimes comparable to the US or Europe).

\*N.B. for vegetarians – the Bolivian diet is meat-based and within the community at Ushpa there are no vegetarian options, therefore we always recommended bringing food from home. In the city there are a number of restaurants that offer vegetarian meals (mainly pizza and pasta).

## Transport

Transport in and around the city is very cheap, with a single journey on a bus or in a trufi-taxi costing 2bs.

To and from Ushpa-Ushpa by public transport – between 2bs and 4bs each way  
Taxi within the city – between 7 and 12bs  
Taxi to and from Cochabamba airport – 20-35bs

## Phone

Mobile phones are available from 200bs and SIM cards cost 5-10bs to purchase (usually including some credit). SMS and calls are cheap. Once you have a local SIM card, data packages are very easy and cheap to purchase which means that you can have internet access on your phone at all times if you have a smartphone.

## Internet

**For those with a computer**, most apartments will have wi-fi or a cable connection and there is wi-fi at our premises. You may consider buying a pen-drive that provides mobile internet and costs 250bs, while the cheapest monthly plan is 140bs/month. The majority of the cafes and restaurants in the city centre also have wi-fi.

**For those without a computer**, there are lots of internet cafes in the city, which charge around 2bs/hour. There is also internet connection at Ushpa, but limited access to computers.

## Spanish lessons

We have Spanish teachers that we recommend to our volunteers. They provide private lessons in the house of the volunteer or in a café, depending on your preference, and cost 120bs for a 2-hour lesson. There is, however, no obligation to use our recommended teachers.



## Security

Cochabamba is a relatively safe city but has areas where you should not go at night and areas where you should take more care with your personal belongings. It is not uncommon to be pickpocketed but anything more serious than this is rare if you take the necessary precautions. We will give you some safety guideline on arrival to help you be aware of the surroundings.

# Working at PH

## Location

The community of Uspha-Uspha is located 10km outside of the city centre and can be reached by public transport. The journey to and from the city takes between 35 and 60 minutes, depending on the time of day. Once in Uspha, all of Proyecto Horizonte's different functions are within walking distance. Sometimes, volunteers will be doing work that doesn't require them to be in Uspha (for example, marketing), in which case they may prefer to work from home/ the city centre. Having said this, we do think it is important for our volunteers to spend some time in the community so that they understand the organisation and our work.

## Work hours/ schedule

We have a huge range of different programs and activities which all require significant time commitments by both staff and volunteers. These may include working on-site (at the daycare centre, school or health centre, for example) or off-site completing other project work like marketing or administrative tasks. Volunteers can also expect to sometimes get involved in project activities and events that take place on the weekends.

The number of working hours and schedule depends on each volunteer and the activities they choose to be involved in. The volunteer time commitment could therefore range from a few hours a week to full-time. We offer a very flexible schedule that allows volunteers to take Spanish lessons, complete university tasks and enjoy their time in Bolivia. However, we ask that on committing to a schedule, volunteers are then responsible for completing this schedule. To give a rough idea, if working in the daycare centre, school or health centre, it's normal for volunteers to be onsite between 3 and 5 days per week, for around 5 hours per day. It is not uncommon for volunteers to work across a few different areas of the project, although we do advise not to distribute your time or energy too thinly!

The most important thing is to be clear and realistic about the commitment you can make and keep others informed so that plans could be made accordingly and deadlines could be met. Please take a look at our volunteers' blog for an idea of the range of activities our past volunteers have been involved in. They would be more than happy for you to get in touch if you'd like to ask more specific questions: [proyectorizonte-volunteers.blogspot.com](http://proyectorizonte-volunteers.blogspot.com).

## Colleagues

There are around 25 staff members of Proyecto Horizonte, and up to 15 volunteers at any one time as well as the many teachers that we work with in the 2 schools and day care centre. In your daily activities you can expect to spend much of your time with the Bolivian staff, as volunteers will generally be working in different areas of the project.

## **Language**

There are limited staff who speak English and therefore whilst we accept volunteers who do not speak Spanish, it makes a significant difference to the experience of volunteers and the work that they are able to be involved in at Proyecto Horizonte. Therefore, we do recommend that you start taking Spanish classes upon your arrival if your knowledge of Spanish is very basic. The language spoken amongst volunteers is, of course, dependant on the volunteer group.

## **Dress Code**

The dress code for work is more conservative than the style of dress that can be worn in the city. Long pants and shirts with sleeves is a rough guideline.