



Bolivia



Full name: Republic of Bolivia

Population: 9.7 million (UN, 2008) It

Capital: Sucre (official), La Paz (administrative)

La Paz is situated at an altitude of 3,630 m and is the highest administrative capital city in the world.

Largest city: Santa Cruz

Area: 1.1 million sq km (424,164 sq miles)

Major languages: Spanish, Quechua, Aymara, Guarani.

Ethnic groups: Bolivia has the largest proportion of indigenous people, who make up around two-thirds of the population. Quechua 30%, Mestizo 30%, Aymara 25% White 15%.

Major religion: Roman Catholic 95%, Evangelical 5%.

Life expectancy: 63 years (men), 68 years (women) (UN)

Birth rate: 23.3 births/1000

Literacy rate: 87.2%

Population below poverty line 64%

Average annual income US\$2900

Monetary unit: 1 boliviano = 100 centavos

Main exports: Soyabeans, natural gas, zinc, gold, silver, lead, tin, antimony, wood, sugar. The US is the largest trading partner of Bolivia. Bolivia is also the world's largest cultivator of coca.

President: Evo Morales



History

Bolivia was once a part of the ancient Inca empire. After the Spaniards defeated the Incas in the 16th century, Bolivia's predominantly Indian population was reduced to slavery. The remoteness of the Andes helped protect the Bolivian Indians from the European diseases that decimated other South American Indians. But the existence of a large indigenous group forced to live under the thumb of their colonizers created a stratified society that continues to this day.

Dress

Many Bolivian women of indigenous descent wear a layered skirt called a pollera which was originally a Spanish peasant skirt that the colonial authorities forced the Bolivian women to wear. Now it is a symbol of pride in being indigenous and a status symbol. Another fashion is the bowler hat, which was adopted from the British.

Landscapes

- Bolivia is a landlocked nation and has been since 1879 when it lost its coastal region to Chile. Bolivia contains many ecological zones, including the western highlands in The Andes, and the Bolivian Altiplano.
- It is the highest and most isolated country in South America Almost and half the population of Bolivia resides on Altiplano plateau, with an average altitude of 3,658 m.
- The Highest point is the Nevado Sajama at 6452m.
- Lake Titicaca is located on the border between Bolivia and Peru and is the highest navigable lake in the world.
- The Salar de Uyuni, the world's largest salt flat is also found in the southwest corner of the country.
- The Yungas Road is known as the World's Most Dangerous Road.
- Each year at least 25 vehicles plunge off the steep road and more than 100 people per year lose their lives.

Economy

Poverty is rife and there are regional disparities in wealth distribution. Though it is rich in mineral and energy resources, Bolivia is one of South America's poorest countries. Wealthy urban elites, who are mostly of Spanish ancestry, have traditionally dominated political and economic life, whereas most Bolivians are low-income subsistence farmers, miners, small traders or artisans.

Recent Politics

Evo Morales is the first indigenous president; before he came to power political fallout had helped to topple two presidents. In May 2006 President Morales put the energy industry under state control. Foreign energy firms were given six months to sell at least 51% of their holding to the state and negotiate new contracts or leave the country. Bolivia underwent further radical change in January 2009, when voters backed President Morales' project for a new const institution that aimed to give greater rights to the indigenous majority population.

Food and Drink Bolivia's main meal is lunch, which often consists of potato or rice. Some of the most popular and traditional foods are: A **salteña**, a pastry enjoyed for breakfast .They look a little like a medium sized, baked turnover, and they are usually filled with any combination of meat and potatoes. **Humitas** consist of damp, sweetened corn meal wrapped inside a corn husk or banana leaf and then boiled or steamed. Bolivia's famous drink is **Chica** which is made through the fermentation of corn, traditionally chewed in the Chica maker's mouth to aid the breakdown of starch into maltose!



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