Bolivia

Medical Summary

The health risk information presented here is summarized from Shoreland Travax®, a decision-support tool used by health care providers to perform a detailed health risk analysis based on specific locations, individual travel styles, and traveler risk behaviors. Travax provides practitioners current, independently researched malaria risk and prevention recommendations in a map-based format that goes beyond the annual WHO and CDC statements included here. Not included here are current reports from Travax of disease outbreaks or environmental events that may pose elevated risks to travelers’ health and safety. The Providers section of this site offers a directory of health care providers who utilize Shoreland Travax for travel health counseling. Learn more about the detailed reports and maps available from these practitioners (includes links to samples).

General Information

Bolivia is a developing nation in the lower half of the world's economies. Located in central South America southwest of Brazil, its climate varies with altitude. Lower eastern areas have a hot, humid, semi-tropical climate.

Immunizations

Yellow Fever

Requirement: A vaccination certificate is required for travelers 1 year of age and older coming from countries with risk of YF transmission. Note: Bolivia's government has implemented an entry requirement for proof of YF vaccination for all travelers, despite Bolivia's published declaration to the contrary under the International Health Regulations. Enforcement of this non-IHR requirement for all arrivals is at the discretion of the border official on duty at the point of entry.

Official Status: listed by WHO as a country where YF transmission risk is present.

Other Vaccines

Depending on your itinerary, your personal risk factors, and the length of your visit, your health care provider may offer you vaccination against hepatitis A, hepatitis B, influenza, measles, mumps, rubella, rabies, or typhoid fever. Routine immunizations, such as those that prevent tetanus/diphtheria or "childhood" diseases, should be reviewed and updated as needed.

Malaria

The following is current information as reported by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

WHO—International Travel and Health (current online update, Country List)

(2016) Malaria risk due predominantly (94%) to *P. vivax* exists throughout the year in the whole country below 2500 m. *P. falciparum* exists in Santa Cruz and in the northern departments of Beni and Pando, especially in the localities of Guayaramerín and Riberalta.

Recommended prevention in risk areas: **B** - Risk of *P. vivax* malaria only. Mosquito bite prevention plus chloroquine chemoprophylaxis.

aAlternatively, for travel to rural areas with low risk of malaria infection, mosquito bite prevention can be combined with stand–by emergency treatment (SBET).

Recommended prevention in Beni, Pando and Santa Cruz: **C** – Risk of *P. falciparum* malaria, in combination with reported chloroquine and sulfadoxine–pyrimethamine resistance. Mosquito bite prevention plus atovaquone–proguanil or doxycycline or mefloquine chemoprophylaxis (select according to reported side effects and contraindications).

aAlternatively, for travel to rural areas with low risk of malaria infection, mosquito bite prevention can be combined with stand–by emergency treatment (SBET).
Areas with malaria: All areas < 2,500 m (8,202 ft). None in the city of La Paz.

- Estimated relative risk of malaria for US travelers: Low.
- Drug resistance\(^4\): Chloroquine.
- Malaria species: \(P. \text{ vivax}\) 93%, \(P. \text{ falciparum}\) 7%.
- Recommended chemoprophylaxis: Atovaquone-proguanil, doxycycline, mefloquine, or primaquine.\(^5\)

\(^4\) Refers to \(P. \text{ falciparum}\) malaria unless otherwise noted.
\(^5\) Primaquine can cause hemolytic anemia in people with glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD) deficiency. Patients must be screened for G6PD deficiency before starting primaquine.

**Other Concerns**

**Travelers' Diarrhea**

High risk exists throughout the country, with moderate risk in deluxe accommodations. Food and beverage precautions may reduce the likelihood of illness.

Travelers should carry loperamide for self-treatment of diarrhea and, if risk is moderate to high, an antibiotic to add if diarrhea is severe. Consult a knowledgeable health care provider regarding which antibiotic is appropriate for you and most effective for your destination.

**Insect- and Arthropod-Borne Diseases**

Chagas’ disease (American trypanosomiasis), chikungunya, dengue, leishmaniasis, West Nile virus and Zika may pose a risk. Personal protective measures are important.

**Other Disease and Health Risks**

Additional concerns include air pollution, altitude illness, hantavirus, leptospirosis, plague and tuberculosis.

**Consular Advice**

The material below includes information from the U.S. Department of State (DOS), U.K. Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), and Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), as well as from additional open-source material. Standard safety precautions that apply to all international travel can be found in the Library article Safety and Security.

**Terrorism Risk**

No intrinsic risk of attack by terrorist groups exists, but unforeseen attacks are possible.

**Crime**

High risk of violent crime (armed robbery and sexual assault) exists throughout the country, especially in areas frequented by tourists, particularly in Coronilla Hill in Cochabamba, Cementerio General in La Paz, clubs, hostels, and on public transportation.

High risk of petty crime exists throughout the country, especially in central La Paz, areas frequented by tourists, and on public transportation.

Express kidnappings to force cash withdrawals at ATMs occur throughout the country, especially in La Paz and at land border crossings with Argentina, Chile, and Peru (including the towns of Copacabana and Desaguadero).

Scams involving false identity (such as criminals posing as police officers) and requests to export parcels that contain hidden narcotics have been reported.

Risk exists of robberies and/or assaults occurring after consuming intentionally drugged food or drink; tourists are frequently targeted.
Civil Unrest
The political situation in Bolivia is unpredictable. Protests, strikes, and other civic actions are not uncommon. Roadblocks are a common occurrence throughout Bolivia and can cause significant disruptions to transportation, even in remote parts of the country. Blockades can arise with no warning; travelers should not attempt to cross them. All roads in the border areas, especially in the area between Bolivia and Peru, and roads leading to La Paz’s International airport, located in El Alto, are particularly vulnerable to blockades. Food and fuel shortages have been reported in recent years in most of Bolivia.

Unsafe Areas
In the Chapare area between Santa Cruz and Cochabamba and in the Yungas Region, northeast of La Paz, violence and civil unrest, mainly associated with drug trafficking activities, may cause delays and risks to travelers. In the departments of Santa Cruz, Pando, and Beni, the police presence has been intensified due to increases in drug-related crimes. Tensions also exist in areas along the border with Peru.

Other Safety Threats
Exercise extreme care when trekking or climbing in Bolivia. Solo trekking is the most significant factor contributing to injuries and robberies. The safest option is to join an organized group and/or use a reputable firm to provide an experienced guide and porter who can communicate in both Spanish and English.

Bolivia offers a number of adventure activities, including mountain biking, salt flat tours, and jungle expeditions. There are no government-implemented minimum standards for tour operators, so tourists should take care in choosing their operator. For mountain biking on the so-called ‘Road of Death’, ensure that the bicycles are in good condition, and that the guides are fully equipped with safety equipment and first-aid kits. Check any exclusions to travel insurance policies.

Travelers are advised against going on illegal prison tours, as there are no safety guarantees no authorities to help should a problem arise within the prison.

Beware of illegal bars.

Transportation Safety
High risk of traffic-related injury or death exists. The road-traffic death rate is 12 to 24 per 100,000 population. The rate is < 10 in most high-income countries. Speed laws are poorly enforced. Driving at night is not advised. Seek local advice before traveling on roads outside urban areas after dark.

Traffic flows on the right-hand side of the road. Travelers (including drivers and pedestrians) accustomed to traffic moving on the opposite side should be vigilant when navigating traffic.

Airline Safety
U.S. Federal Aviation Administration has determined that the civil aviation authority of this country oversees its air carriers in accordance with minimum international safety standards.

Natural Disasters
Travel during the rainy season (November through March) is extremely difficult, as many roads become impassable. Heavy rains may contribute to dangerous landslides.

Consular Information
Selected Embassies or Consulates in Bolivia
- United States: [+591] 2-216-8000; bolivia.usembassy.gov
- Canada: [+591] 2-241-5141
- United Kingdom: [+591] 2-243-3424; ukinbolivia.fco.gov.uk/en
- Australia: [+591] 7061-0626

Bolivia's Embassies or Consulates in Selected Countries
- In the U.S.: www.bolivia-usa.org
- In Canada: [+1] 613-236-5730
- In the U.K.: www.bolivianembassy.co.uk
- In Australia: [+02] 9247-4235
Visa/HIV Testing

Visa applicants may need to meet specific requirements. Review the application and contact the appropriate embassy or consulate with questions. The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Bolivia.

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