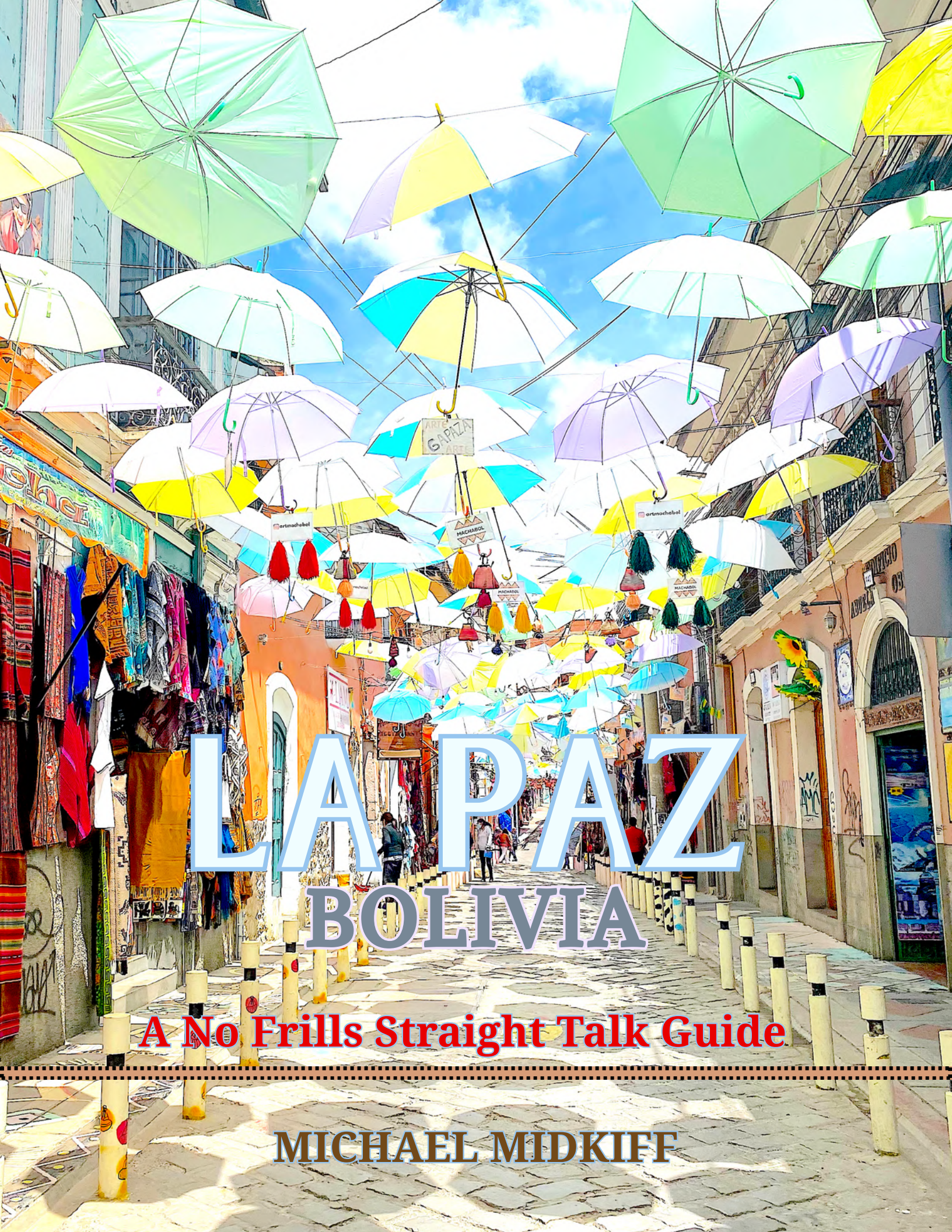




LA PAZ BOLIVIA

A No Frills Straight Talk Guide

MICHAEL MIDKIFF

Welcome to La Paz!



Congratulations, fellow adventurer! If you're considering La Paz, Bolivia, as your next playground—it's an extraordinary city where the skies meet the mountains, with vibrant cultures, and llamas occasionally stop traffic.

La Paz is a quirky, breathtaking (literally, thanks to altitude!) destination that offers expats an exciting and affordable lifestyle.

General Overview

First things first, La Paz isn't officially Bolivia's capital that's Sucre

(confusing, right?), but it functions like one, housing the government and acting as the economic heart of the country. Perched impressively between 12,000 to 13,000 feet above sea level, the city is surrounded by the majestic Andes and crowned by snow-capped peaks. Expect dramatic landscapes, beautiful colorful street markets, and locals warmly wrapped in vibrant alpaca wool.

Expat Neighborhoods and Walkability

Sopocachi: Trendy, artistic, and highly walkable, Sopocachi is the hipster heart of La Paz. Its vibrant streets boast cafés, galleries, bars, and eateries within easy walking distance. Prices here are slightly higher due to its popularity among expats and locals alike.

Calacoto: Popular among diplomats and families, Calacoto offers quieter streets and upscale housing. While walkable in terms of local amenities like shops and restaurants, you'll likely rely on taxis or public transport for longer distances.

Historic Area: Located around Plaza Murillo, the historic center is bustling with government buildings, museums, and impressive colonial architecture. It's walkable and packed with

history but becomes quiet after dark, so it's best to explore during daylight hours.

San Miguel (Zona Sur): This is the neighborhood where I personally stayed, and I LOVED it. Modern, upscale, and highly walkable, San Miguel feels like a relaxed suburb. It offers extensive shopping centers, cafés, gyms, and green spaces within a short stroll, making it extremely comfortable and convenient for daily living.

Colonial Area: This lively section, particularly around Calle Sagárnaga, bursts with colors, vendors, local crafts, and bustling street life. It's fantastic for strolling, shopping, and enjoying the vibrant street markets.

Monthly Expense Breakdown

Essential Expenses:

- Rent (1 bedroom, furnished apartment): \$400-600
- Utilities (electricity, heating, water): \$50-80
- Cable TV & Internet: \$40
- Mobile Phone: \$15-25
- Groceries: \$150-250
- Eating Out (casual dining, weekly): \$80-120

Total Essential Expenses: ~\$735-\$1,115 USD

Optional Expenses:

- Entertainment: \$50
- Medical Insurance (private): \$60-90
- Gym Membership: \$25-40
- Transportation: \$40-70

Total with Optional Expenses: ~\$910-\$1,365 USD



Restaurants

Top 10 Restaurant Recommendations



Gustu provides an extraordinary gourmet dining experience, creatively combining traditional Bolivian ingredients in contemporary dishes, with prices around \$15-30 per dish.



Ali Pacha is known for inventive vegan cuisine, surprising even dedicated meat-eaters, with dishes typically priced between \$8-15.



Luciernagas serves authentic Bolivian dishes accompanied by vibrant live music, with meals averaging \$5-10.



Vinapho offers Vietnamese and Asian-fusion cuisine, providing a delightful change of pace with dishes priced from \$6-12.



Café Typica is a laid-back brunch favorite, perfect for coffee, pastries, and sandwiches, costing around \$3-8 per visit.



Anticuchos street stalls offer an authentic local experience, selling grilled beef hearts at remarkably affordable prices, usually around \$1-2 per skewer.



Aladdin Sharma and Gyros Restaurant located on the Main Street in San Miguel and has the best Swarma I've ever had anywhere on the planet! \$1.50-\$4.00



Aladdin Gyros

Restaurants



La Cueva is popular with locals, featuring tasty pizzas and craft beers in a relaxed atmosphere, priced between \$5-12.



Namas Té offers vegetarian and vegan-friendly options, ideal for health-conscious diners, with dishes typically costing \$4-8.



Dumbo provides a casual, family-friendly atmosphere, serving traditional Bolivian comfort food at affordable prices, usually \$3-7 per meal.



San Miguel Tipica
coffee



Dumbo's
Restaurant

Getting Around La Paz

Sky Train (Teleférico): The best thing since sliced bread (or coca tea)! Efficient, scenic, and affordable (~0.50 USD per ride), it allows you to avoid traffic while enjoying stunning views and shorter commutes.

The Sky Train was by far my favorite way of getting around. I honestly think this is one of the very best values I've seen in all of South America! The views are AMAZING!! And it's such a bargain it's difficult to believe.



Sky Train Routes



Other Transport Options: Taxis and radio-taxis are inexpensive (under \$5 USD typically). Minibuses and micros are budget-friendly but crowded. Walking is practical for short distances and great for acclimating.

Entertainment Recommendations

Entertainment options in La Paz include enjoying craft beer at Diesel Nacional, jazz nights at Thelonious Jazz Bar, or lively evenings at Mongo's in Calacoto.

Popular activities include exploring the intriguing Witches' Market, marveling at the otherworldly Valle de la Luna, attending quirky Cholita Wrestling events, discovering history along Calle Jaén's museums, and admiring spectacular views of Mount Illimani.

Thrill-seekers can rappel down Hotel Presidente with Urban Rush Bolivia, while photographers and shoppers will love the colorful umbrella-lined street of Calle Sagárnaga.



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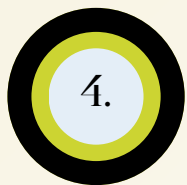
Witches' Market (Mercado de las Brujas): Immerse yourself in unique cultural experiences, exploring herbal remedies, vibrant textiles, handcrafted goods, and even llama fetuses traditionally used for prosperity rituals.



Valle de la Luna (Moon Valley): A short drive from the city, explore lunar-like landscapes sculpted by natural erosion over thousands of years. Perfect for photography and leisurely walks



Calle Jaén Museums: Stroll the beautifully preserved colonial street, Calle Jaén, filled with museums like Museo del Oro (Gold Museum) and Museo Costumbrista, showcasing Bolivia's rich history.



Mount Illimani Views: Capture stunning panoramas of La Paz with Illimani towering majestically behind. Mirador Killi Killi offers easy access, and organized hikes are available for adventure seekers.

Additional Fun Spots:



- Calle Sagárnaga: I absolutely LOVED this place. Famous for colorful umbrellas floating above, creating a vibrant backdrop ideal for shopping and photographs. This is a must see. It's truly magical so make sure not to miss it!
- Urban Rush Bolivia: Thrill-seekers can rappel down Hotel Presidente for heart-pumping excitement and incredible city views.
- Anticuchos Street Stalls: Try local delicacies like anticuchos (grilled beef hearts), a beloved street food among locals and visitors alike. And yes, I tried it... It tasted like beef but honestly I had a difficult time getting past what I was eating.. 😊

Nearby Weekend Adventures

 Lake Titicaca: I took a tour out on lake Titicaca where I went to Native Islands where the people live as they have for hundreds if not thousands of years in houses made of reeds from the lake. Even their boats are made of reeds and they're quite fancy! It's truly a sight to see and unique in so many ways. I loved this particular tour!! Just two hours from La Paz, offers scenic landscapes, historical ruins, and traditional communities perfect for weekend explorations.

 The Tiwanaku archaeological site: about 90 minutes away, provides deep insights into pre-Incan civilization. The lush region of Coroico and Yungas, approximately three hours from La Paz, features cloud forests, coffee plantations, rich biodiversity, and exhilarating mountain biking adventures along the Death Road.

 Tiwanaku Archaeological Site (1.5 hours): Investigate mysterious pre-Incan ruins, a UNESCO World Heritage site filled with fascinating historical insights.

 Coroico and Yungas (3 hours): Escape to lush cloud forests, explore coffee plantations, wildlife spotting, or brave the Death Road for mountain biking thrills.

Medical Facilities for Expats

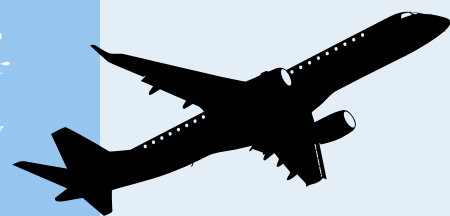


Clinica del Sur and Clinica Alemana provide modern, affordable healthcare, significantly cheaper (50-70% less) than in the U.S. or Europe, with excellent quality and English-speaking medical staff.

Visa Requirements and Long-term Stay for Americans

American citizens traveling to Bolivia must obtain a visa, either in advance through a Bolivian consulate in the U.S. or upon arrival at major Bolivian airports. Necessary documents include a valid passport (with at least six months remaining), passport-sized photos, travel itinerary, confirmed accommodation bookings, and it says proof of financial stability (although they didn't ask me personally about finances) just sayin..

For longer stays, here's what Bolivia offers



Long-Term Visa Options

- **Specific Purpose Visa:** Suitable for expats intending to work, study, or volunteer. Requires additional documentation from your sponsoring organization.
- **Temporary Residency Visa:** Valid for one to two years, renewable. Common for expats seeking long-term stays for work, study, retirement, or business.
- **Permanent Residency Visa:** Available after two years of temporary residency. Ideal for long-term expats who have firmly decided to settle in Bolivia.

Final Thoughts

La Paz is a fabulous city offering retirees and nomads a high-quality, culturally immersive lifestyle at an affordable cost.

Its vibrant neighborhoods, diverse dining options, scenic beauty, and accessible healthcare make La Paz an exciting but also practical home away from home.

You'll need a little time to adjust to the altitude. I found if I just concentrated on breathing deeper, I had zero issue.

I really loved my time there and am planning on going back!

Welcome to your Bolivian adventure!

Remember to breathe deeply, and embrace the altitude!



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