

South America, Mexico, Costa Rica & Panama

Know Before You Go

A step by step guide to your Trafalgar trip.

Your insider's journey begins...

Thank you for choosing Trafalgar to show you the insider's view of South America, Mexico, Costa Rica & Panama. A wealth of experience has taught us that your journey begins well before you leave home, so we have compiled this guide to provide you with as much information as possible to help you prepare for your travels. We look forward to welcoming you on the trip of a lifetime!



Before you go...

Travel Documents

A couple of weeks prior to your holiday you will receive your Trafalgar wallet with your travel documents and literature. These documents are valuable and contain a wealth of advice and essential information to make your holiday as enjoyable as possible. Please read them carefully before your departure.

Passports and Visas

You are responsible for all visas, permits, necessary health requirements, and any other documents as required by laws, regulations and orders of the countries visited. All guests require a passport valid for 6 months beyond the conclusion of their trip, along with appropriate visas. Some of our itineraries enter a country more than once, so multiple-entry visas may be required for some countries. Please contact your travel agent or applicable government authorities to get necessary travel information. See below for details of reciprocity fees applicable in Argentina and Chile.

Argentina

US, Canadian & Australian passport-holders entering Argentina by land or air must pre-pay a reciprocity fee (160, 75 & 100 USD, respectively) online prior to their arrival. Visit **www.provinciapagos.com.ar**, register, pay and print your receipt to show upon arrival as proof of purchase. Once paid, the fee permits multiple entries into Argentina for ten years in accordance with United States visa reciprocity.

Chile

Citizens of the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand need only a valid passport to enter Chile. However, US, Canadian, Australian, Mexican & Albanian passport-holders must pay a reciprocity fee (140, 132, 95, 23 & 230 USD, respectively) upon arrival in Santiago. The fee is paid in cash and subject to change at any time. Visitors from the UK and New Zealand do not pay a fee. The one-time fee is good for the life of a traveller's passport, and is charged when entering through the Santiago airport only. Travellers crossing over land do not pay this fee. The fee should be paid by credit card at the airport counter to the left of Customs.

Before entering Chile, travellers will be requested to fill out a tourist card that allows visitors to stay for 90 days. This card must be retained as it will need to be presented to Customs when leaving the country.

Travel Insurance

We strongly recommend that you take out a comprehensive travel insurance policy that covers you the entire time you are away from home. Your policy should cover the following:

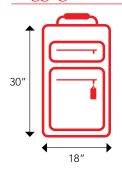
- Trip cancellation or curtailment
- Loss or damage to property and baggage
- Loss of cash, traveller's cheques, etc.
- Medical costs, personal accident and evacuation

Please ensure you pack a copy of your policy, contact phone numbers and instructions on how to claim in the unlikely event that it is necessary.

Trafalgar's Express Check-In

Trafalgar's Express Check-In is an online check-in tool that allows you to provide all your essential details and preferences to Trafalgar, prior to your departure, so that you don't have to fill in any additional forms on the first day of your holiday. In order for your Travel Director to receive your information, we recommend that you complete Express Check-In at least 15 days prior to your departure date. If it is already less than 15 days before your departure, please complete the registration form, print it and hand it to your Travel Director on the first day of your guided holiday. Check-in takes 5-10 minutes. Visit www.trafalgar.com/express

Luggage



Porterage for one suitcase is included in the holiday price. Your bag should have dimensions not exceeding 30x18x10" 76x45x25 cm. For South America programs that do not go to the Galápagos, the maximum weight is 50 lbs (23 kg). For South America programs that include the Galápagos, the maximum weight is 44 lbs (20 kg). Please refer to your Trafalgar traveller documents for full details.





Your understanding and cooperation is appreciated, particularly as it is necessary for your safety and comfort. If a second suitcase is carried, or if it exceeds the permitted weight and /or dimensions, it is subject to capacity of the coach and may be declined or incur a fee. Please see the full booking terms and conditions on the inside back cover of the brochure your trip relates to.

Please note that airport porterage at the beginning and end of your guided holiday is not included. No responsibility is accepted for loss of or damage to baggage or any of your belongings. Baggage insurance is recommended.

Airlines may have additional restrictions and may impose additional charges if you choose to check any baggage. Please contact your airline or refer to its website for detailed information regarding your airline's checked baggage policies.

Packing

When travelling as a couple, pack each suitcase with day and evening clothing for each person, so that in the unlikely event one of your suitcases is lost or misplaced on your flight, you'll still be able to manage.

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Ensure that your personal and holiday details are written on a label inside each suitcase (including name, address, telephone number, departure and return flight details). Write only your name and destination address on outside labels.

Make sure that your luggage is in good secure condition, and use a TSA-approved lock for US security checkpoints. When carrying fragile items, use a rigid style suitcase for protection.

Check in only your own suitcases. Do not carry items packed by other people. Never accept packages or articles from anyone unknown to you to carry on board the aircraft.

There are strict airport security regulations on items that may be carried on board aircraft such as liquids/gels and metal objects. Visit the Transport Security Administration's website at **www.tsa.gov** for information on these and other restricted items and how they must be displayed at airport security checkpoints.

We suggest you pack only essential items for daytime use in your hand-baggage, both for your flight and while on the coach. For example, your camera, medicines, anything that you use frequently or is particularly valuable. **Expensive** jewellery, clothing, etc. should be left at home for your peace of mind.

What to Bring

This will depend upon your personal preferences, your destination and the time of year you are travelling (your departure date). Refer to individual country information for details on climate conditions that may affect what you pack. We generally recommend casual, lightweight, drip-dry clothing that requires little or no ironing. T-shirts and shorts are acceptable near the beach and in most resort areas. A long sleeved, loose fitting shirt and long pants will give protection from strong sun or insects in some forests and heavy vegetation areas and for visits to some rural locations or small towns where less modest attire may be frowned upon. Dressing in layers is important to ensure comfort to changing climates. Feel free to pack a dressier outfit for special dinners if you would like.

If a trip includes visits to the mountains, a jacket may be needed. A light pullover or jacket is useful for possible chilly nights in any destination. Two pairs of comfortable walking shoes are recommended for sightseeing.

Below is a list of items to consider packing for your Trafalgar holiday:

Clothing

Swimsuit Undergarments

Sandals
Hat
Sleepwear
Shorts/skirts
Jeans/trousers
Warm jacket
Pullover/cardigan
Waterproof jacket
Good walking shoes
Socks
Plepwear
Sleepwear
Sleepwear
Seans/trousers
Pullover/cardigan
Shirts/blouses
Evening wear

General Items

Spare batteries/charger Camera/memory cards

Medications & Power plug adapters/converter

prescriptions
Toiletries Collapsible umbrella
Insect repellent Sunblock lotion
Travel sewing kit Pocket calculator
Plastic bags Travel alarm clock
Water bottle Sunglasses
(screw top lid)

Washing detergent Thin, non-bulky wallet

Essentials

Passport & Visas Travel insurance policy (where applicable)

Crisp, new USD cash Credit cards

Trafalgar documents Airline tickets/eTickets

NB Do not pack your passport or money in your suitcase.

Tip: Weed out your wallet prior to leaving. Only take the essential identifiers, like your drivers license, and just two credit cards – one to carry, another to be locked in your hotel room safe.

Health

See individual country information for any specific health requirements or recommendations. Any changes in climate or diet can mean intestinal upsets for some travellers. Others experience few difficulties whatever the destination. Hotels and many other places in major cities make certain their food and drink is safe for visitors. However, it is always prudent to watch carefully what you eat and drink while on holiday. Bottled water is available in most locations.

In some remote areas, purified water is offered. Raw fruit and vegetables should always be peeled and, in some rural areas, avoided altogether. Many guests ask their doctor to suggest remedies that can be carried along just in case.

If prescription drugs are needed, make certain the supply will last the duration of the trip and longer. Carry prescription drugs in their original package to avoid customs questions. Divide your medications into two bags and keep one on your person/in your purse, and the other in your luggage. This ensures that if one is lost, your have the other as backup. Also, you may wish to bring an extra pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses in your carry-on luggage.

Although not a general problem, insect bites can be a concern for some travellers. Ask a doctor or pharmacist about insect repellent choices. Similarly, sun protection can be a concern in many destinations. A good-sized sun hat and sunscreen lotion are recommended.

If you have any existing medical conditions, dietary requirements or disability that should be brought to our attention, it is essential that you inform us directly or via your travel agent.

Make Friends Before You Go

When you travel with Trafalgar, you have the opportunity to meet new and interesting people from around the world. You can meet up with your fellow travelling companions by visiting Trafalgar's Online Community. Read posts from fellow travellers in our Online Forum and register for My Community, your private travel group portal. Visit **www.trafalgar.com** and click on the links at the bottom of the page. Register on the Online Community at least 30 days prior to your departure.

Budgeting

Trafalgar itineraries include many features that will save you money on your trip – if you study your itinerary pages in the Trafalgar brochure you will see how many highlight visits and other sightseeing is included, as well as meals and entertainment. However, you'll find time to explore independently during your holiday, so we recommend you budget for incidental expenses such as non-included meals, drinks, tips, shopping and optional excursions. If your itinerary has an extension or you are staying additional nights before or after your trip, please ensure to budget accordingly for meals, shopping and entertainment.

Optional Excursions

Experience has shown us that most guests participate in these optional activities and you should therefore budget for them in advance. Please read your travel documents prior to the start of your holiday for prices and information on any optional excursions you may wish to participate in. Prices and availability are subject to change without notice.

Money

Since currency rates fluctuate on a daily basis, contact your bank or foreign exchange service just prior to travel for upto-date information. In general, it is unnecessary to change money into local currencies prior to travel. A better exchange rate may be available in the countries visited. Even so, it may be convenient to have some local currency available immediately upon arrival.

In rural areas and on weekends in some cities, it may not be possible to exchange currency at all. Plan ahead based on the itinerary. Check with your bankcard company regarding possible ATM availability. Make certain the card is activated for international use.

Many places in South America do not accept Traveller's Cheques. It is recommended to use cash and debit/credit cards. Please be sure to notify your bank before you travel. When bargaining, it is best to use clean, crisp US dollar bills.

Credit Cards

Visa and MasterCard are the most commonly accepted cards. Credit cards may not be accepted in smaller establishments, rural areas, etc. Some merchants may include a service charge (over and above the purchase price) for a credit card purchase.

If you make any purchases by credit card, you may be charged based on the exchange rate at the time the credit card company invoices your account and many banks charge an exchange fee. Please remember to keep a copy of your credit card details and emergency contact numbers in your suitcase in case of loss. The following offers some useful tips on using credit cards on your holiday:

- Call your credit card company to advise them you will be travelling, as some companies will block the credit card when they notice unusual charge activity.
- Ensure you memorize your Personal Identification Number (PIN); do not write it down.
- Ensure that your credit card is kept in view at all times when paying for goods and services.
- Retain all copies of receipts/sales vouchers until you have verified them against your statements.
- Make sure your credit card is carried on your person.
- Never leave your credit card unattended in your hotel room, a vehicle or any other place.
- Immediately report the loss or theft of your credit card.

Mail

Prior to departing you should stop your mail or arrange for a neighbour to collect it. A full mailbox can be a treasure trove for hackers and identity thieves.



While you are travelling...

Your Travel Director and Coach Driver

Throughout your Trafalgar guided holiday you will be accompanied by a professional Travel Director and experienced Coach Driver. A Trafalgar Travel Director is more than just a guide. They are seasoned and experienced travellers, specially selected for their in-depth knowledge of the regions you will visit. They will enrich your experience with informative commentary on the history, culture and natural landscape of the region and reveal the hidden places that only an insider would know. They will also introduce you to your travelling companions and make you feel welcome. Trafalgar's Coach Drivers are fully licensed, qualified and experienced professionals who are selected for their impeccable driving skills and record.

Your Holiday

Trafalgar's philosophy is that it's your holiday and you should have the freedom to enjoy yourself as you wish. However, a great deal of planning goes into your itinerary to ensure you see all the main sights in the places visited. Trafalgar ensures you enjoy a full sightseeing experience in all major towns and cities visited on your itinerary. Local sightseeing is conducted by qualified Local Guides who are eager to share their vast knowledge and love of the local history and culture. In other places, your Travel Director will give you a brief orientation drive or walk to familiarise you with the locality, usually on the way to your hotel.

Optional Excursions

While we include many sightseeing activities in the price of your holiday, we also offer a range of optional visits and activities both during your trip and in the gateway cities before and after your holiday. Your travel documents include a comprehensive day-by-day itinerary with full details and costs of the optional excursions available. Please note that some optional excursions cannot be paid for by credit card – your Travel Director will advise you. Also note that optional excursions are operated by third parties and Trafalgar accepts no liability. Please remember that all optional excursions are undertaken at your own risk.

Your Hotels

At Trafalgar, we pride ourselves on our superior hotel selection. Our hotels are centrally located and close to major attractions. As we travel from major cities to remote regions, the standards can vary, however, you can rest assured that the hotels we select are the best available.

On certain occasions, for operational or local reasons, it may be necessary to change your hotel accommodation in a particular location. If this does occur, you will be notified of such changes as soon as possible.

Hotel Accommodation

All hotel rooms are clean and well-serviced. Each room contains a private bathroom with toilet, shower and/or bath and vanity, as well as television and air-conditioning (some Amazon lodges and rainforest accommodation in higher elevation cities may differ).

Rooms may sometimes contain tea and coffee-makers, minibar, room service, STD/ISD phone, radio and in-house movies. Wherever possible, we select establishments that offer additional facilities such as swimming pool, sauna, bars and restaurants.

Hotel Check-in & Check-out

Arrangements are made to ensure that check-in and checkout at hotels run smoothly, and your Travel Director will advise you of the procedure in advance. When departing the hotel, always remember to return your room key to reception before leaving!

Personal Hotel Expenses

Any additional costs incurred during your stay at the hotels (for example, laundry, telephone calls and bar bills) are your responsibility. Please ensure that your account is settled on the evening before you leave to ensure a smooth and speedy departure the following morning.

Laundry Facilities

When there is a two-night stopover, arrangements can be made for your laundry with hotel housekeeping (at your cost). Please note laundry services are not available at all hotels or on weekends or local holidays.

Your Motor coach

On applicable itineraries, you will travel on Trafalgar's modern air-conditioned/air-ventilated coaches. Because of the cool climate in Cusco, Puno and Lake Titicaca, coaches may not be air-conditioned.

Porterage

Your coach crew is always there to lend a hand and to liaise closely with hotels to ensure efficient handling of your luggage.

Seat Rotation

Where appropriate, our seat rotation system ensures you get to know your fellow travelling companions and enjoy the views from a different vantage point each day.

A Clean Coach

Your driver is responsible for the coach inside and out. Please assist by eating and drinking on board as little as possible.

Smoking

For the comfort of all travellers, smoking is not permitted on board our coaches, but smokers need not worry – frequent comfort and relaxation stops are made along the way.

Alcohol

Alcohol consumption is not permitted on the coach nor in some public places.

Meals

Your holiday price includes full breakfasts daily, but only a limited number of lunches are included on our itineraries. We believe you should be free to spend your time at lunch stops in your own way, maybe trying a local dish or taking a light snack and using the extra time for additional sightseeing or shopping. Occasionally, our daily itinerary may require us to make a lunch stop at a recommended roadside eatery. In certain cities, dinners are not included, giving you an opportunity to dine out on your own, sample regional dishes and eat in typical local restaurants. Your Travel Director will be able to offer advice to help you choose. When not specified on an included meal, drinks are always at your own expense.

Water

We recommend that you carry with you plenty of drinking water, particularly in the warmer climates. Drinking water varies from region to region and you should check with your Travel Director as to its suitability for consumption.

Tipping

We are confident that by the end of your trip you will have come to appreciate the important role your Travel Director and Coach Driver have played in giving you the best possible holiday experience. If you have been pleased with their services, you may wish to express this satisfaction with a gratuity, as is customary throughout the world. Since this is a matter of a private and individual nature, you should seal your tip in an envelope to present to each of them separately at the end of your holiday.

Suggested tipping rates (per person travelling) for your Trafalgar team in South America and Central America are US\$5 per day for your Travel Director and US\$3 per day for your Coach Driver. Please note that you may have more than one Travel Director and Coach Driver as your travel through different countries in South America.

Photography

Bring, extra batteries and memory cards. Depending on the destination, use re-sealable plastic bags to protect camera equipment from dampness. Never leave a camera in a hotel room or elsewhere unattended.

Staying In Touch

Phoning home from hotels can be very expensive since all hotels add a service charge to the cost of any phone calls you make from your room and this charge can be very high. It is always cheaper for you to use public telephones (pay phones). Alternatively, you could use an eKIT phonecard. Contact your cellular phone provider before your travel to ensure that your device will work in other countries and to ask about international plans. Data and cellular charges can be quite expensive while roaming internationally.

What is eKIT?

eKIT is your global phone card and web communication service designed to keep you in touch with family and friends while you're travelling.

eKIT provides:

- Low cost international calls
- Send and receive voice mails
- Free email service
- Send SMS text messages from the web
- An online travel vault for secure storage of important documents (e.g. passport number)
- 24-hour customer service

For more information check out the Trafalgar eKIT phone card in your travel wallet or go to **www.Trafalgar.eKit.com**

How do I join?

Use your credit card to set up an account at **www.Trafalgar.eKit.com** or call 24-hour customer service. Join before you go and receive a Trafalgar eKIT joining bonus!

How do I use it?

Your account number and PIN gives you access to all the phone and web based services. To make a call, simply use the toll-free access numbers for the country you are in, which you will find listed on your eKIT card, or at www.Trafalgar.eKit.com

How long does it last?

eKIT is a rechargeable service – simply recharge your account using your credit card at **www.Trafalgar.eKit.com** or call their 24-hour customer service. Ask about the monthly recharge bonus.

Is it competitive?

Yes – you may find cheaper phone cards in major cities – but you can only use them in the country of purchase and may not be in a language you understand.

The advantages of eKIT:

- It can be used from 70+ countries.
- You can call over 200 countries.
- You can recharge the card as you travel.
- You can use any balance remaining once you get home.

Emailing Home

Internet cafes are widely available. You can communicate with friends and family for a small charge. Wi-Fi is available in most hotels, though some charge a fee for usage.

Tip: Be careful with hotel computers. Do not access financial data on hotel or public computers or on public wi-fi networks.

Security

South America and Central America are generally safe and friendly places with people as warm and helpful as any on the globe. In today's world, security is an important consideration while travelling. By using common sense, most unpleasant situations can be avoided. We recommend that you:

- Carry copies of all your important documents in your hand luggage. Include a copy of your passport, credit card numbers and Traveller's Cheques, as well as airline tickets and other documents.
- Never accept packages or articles from anyone unknown to you to carry on board an aircraft.
- We recommend you use a hotel security box for valuables, passports, money, etc. as hotels will not accept responsibility for these items left in your room.
- If you plan to use taxis on your own in major cities, contact the front desk of your hotel in order to arrange a secure mode of transport.
- Before entering in a taxi, ask the driver to confirm the rate.
- Stick to areas with a lot of people; however be aware in crowded areas that may tend to attract pickpockets.
- Never leave your luggage and other personal items unattended when in public places such as airports, hotel lobbies and restaurants.
- Use a thin, non-bulky wallet that is securely held on your person. For women using a purse, it is best to use one that zips or buttons closed and ensure that it is securely held on your person.
- Upon arriving at each hotel, locate the nearest fire exit, directions to which must be posted in each guest room.
- Visit www.tsa.gov for the Transport Security
 Administration's (TSA) website. There are preparations
 you can make before you arrive at airports to help
 you move more quickly and efficiently through
 security processes.
- If you need to make cash withdrawals, ATMs in bank lobbies are less vulnerable to devices that capture your credit card information – as they generally have camera surveillance.

These recommendations will help you make your Trafalgar holiday as hassle free as possible. If you are unsure about security while on holiday, your Travel Director will provide you with the best advice.

Public Holidays and Changes

During local or national holidays, certain facilities such as museums, sightseeing tours, entertainment venues, restaurants and shopping may be limited, so we sometimes have to make slight itinerary adjustments. We advise you to check with your travel agent before selecting a departure date so that your enjoyment won't be diminished. Also, local holidays, closing days and other circumstances may change the day of the week that is planned for scheduled meals, sightseeing and other included activities.

Re-routing of Itineraries

Decisions on re-routing itineraries are made just prior to each departure and consideration is given to the conditions prevailing at the time. In transit, if weather or unforeseen circumstances interfere with the itinerary, it is at the discretion of Trafalgar's National Operations Office as to what alternative arrangements are made.

Your Feedback

Your feedback is always welcomed. Towards the end of your trip, your Travel Director will hand out a feedback questionnaire. We ask that you answer the questions, make any relevant comments and hand it back to your Travel Director. The questionnaires are sealed and returned to our Head Office. Every survey is read and a summary of each holiday is given to management, and where necessary, appropriate action is taken to rectify any problems.



Argentina

officially the Argentine Republic (derived from the Latin argentum, for "silver")

Trafalgar Visits: Buenos Aires, Bariloche, El Calafate, Iguassu Falls & Ushuaia (across several trips)

Capital City: Buenos Aires
Largest City: Buenos Aires
Leader: President Fernandez

de Kirchner

Population: 41 million

Language: Spanish (Castilian)

Religion: Predominantly
Roman Catholic

Currency: Argentinean Peso, divided into 100 *centavos*

Time Zone: GMT – 3
Calling Code: +54
Electricity: 220V, 50Hz

Passport:

Required and must be valid for at least 6 months from the time of arrival.

Travel Visa:

Not required for American, Canadian, Australian or UK passport-holders – check with your Travel Agent or consulate for the most up-to-date information.

Reciprocity Fee:

Payment required for America, Canadian and Australian passport-holders – check with your Travel Agent or consulate for the most up-to-date information.

Vaccinations:

Yellow Fever vaccine is recommended; please consult with your primary physician, government and/or travel professional for more information.

Climate & Clothing:

Argentina offers a diverse climate, from the northern subtropical jungle to the glaciers in the southern part of the country. Temperatures tend to be slightly milder than those in equivalent latitudes in the Northern Hemisphere. Layers are suggested to ensure maximum comfort as you travel through this beautiful country.

Famous For:

- The Tango
- Football (soccer), Diego Maradona, Lionel Messi
- High quality beef
- Excellent wines
- Jorge Luis Borges, Argentine author most famous for his collections of short stories (Ficciones, The Aleph) in the genre of magical realism
- Cinema, one of the most developed in Latin America; many Goya and Oscar awards
- Theatre, Buenos Aires is a global leader in theatre
- Fine shopping, leather goods (mainly in Buenos Aires)

Background/History:

Like much of South America, Argentina was home to indigenous peoples who European colonists conquered after discovering the New World. Over the years, the indigenous population has decreased as immigrants from Europe – primarily Spain and Italy – have arrived. Spain ruled Argentina from about 1516 until its independence in 1816. Since then, Argentina has gone through several periods of change, including leadership by populist and military parties, before finally establishing a true democracy. Argentineans are highly literate, fond of the arts (dance, literature, cinema), and enjoy an innate dualism between the Old and New worlds due to the influence of European and Native cultures.

Health:

The water in Argentina is generally safe to drink, however, the chemicals they use to distill/filter the water can cause travellers discomfort. Water is of varying quality in the more remote regions of the country. It is best to drink bottled water, which is readily available throughout the country. Trafalgar Tip: Agua con gas means mineral water and agua sin gas means flat water.

It is strongly recommended that travellers to Brazil, Argentina and/or Paraguay be inoculated for yellow fever. Additional immunisations may also be required. Certificate of vaccination (original, not a photocopy) may be required upon entry. Travellers should check with consulates, embassies and/or the local health authorities for the latest health requirements and should always consult their physician prior to travelling to any foreign country.

Local Courtesies & Customs:

Your Travel Director will share a local perspective on the cultures and customs of your destination. If you have any questions, feel free to ask him or her. Below, please find some information that may be helpful prior to your departure from home:

- The most common form of greeting between friends is kissing cheeks.
- Dress is not usually formal, though clothes should be conservative away from the beach. More formal clothing is worn for meals in restaurants (no shorts).
- Eating habits and mealtimes in Argentina are different than in the USA. It is the norm to have a light breakfast, followed by a big lunch and a late dinner (typically around 8 or 9).

Money & Tipping:

The local currency is the Argentinean Peso, which can be most easily obtained from ATMs (which are readily available in Buenos Aires and most urban regions). For credit cards, Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted but American Express is not. Traveller's Cheques are not recommended.

In Spanish, tips are called *propinas*. Add 10 to 15 percent in bars and restaurants; 10 percent may be enough if the total is high. Argentines usually round up a taxi fare.

Internet:

Internet access is widely available in urban areas but less so in rural ones. Many hotels offer internet for an added fee and sometimes brief access in the lobby is available as a courtesy.



Food & Drink:

North American, Continental and Middle Eastern cuisine is generally available, while local food is largely a mixture of Basque, Spanish and Italian. Beef is of a particularly high quality and meat-eaters should not miss out on a chance to dine at a parillada, or grill room, where a large variety of barbeque-style dishes can be sampled. Popular local dishes include empanadas (minced meat and other ingredients covered with puff pastry), and lorco (pork and maize stew). In general, restaurants are a good value.

Argentine wines are very good and inexpensive. Local distilleries produce their own brands of most well-known spirits. Whiskies and gins are excellent, as are classic and local wines. Caribbean and South American rum adds flavour to cocktails.

Public Facilities:

Public facilities are referred to as baños. Specifically:

Men – caballeros, hombres, varones or señores

Women – damas, mujeres or señoras

It's important to note that toilet paper (carry your own), hot water and soap are often missing. In bus stations, airports and large shops there is often an attendant who keeps the toilets clean and dispenses toilet paper, sometimes for a small fee, usually US\$0.50.

Embassies & Consulates:

British Embassy in Buenos Aires

Dr Luis Agote 2412 (1425) Buenos Aires

T: 54 11 4808 2200

http://ukinargentina.fco.gov.uk/en/

Canadian Embassy in Buenos Aires

Tagle 2828

C1425EEH Buenos Aires

T: 54 11 4808 1000

http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/argentina-argentine/index.aspx?view=d

U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires

Avenida Colombia 4300 C1425GMN Buenos Aires

T: 54 11 5777 4533

http://argentina.usembassy.gov/

Brazil

officially the Federative Republic of Brazil (derived from the indigenous tree, the brazilwood)

Trafalgar Visits: Brazilian Amazon, Iguassu Falls, Manaus, & Rio de Janeiro (across several trips)

Capital City: Brasilia Largest City: Sao Paulo Leader: President Dilma

Rousseff

Population: 194 million

Language: Portuguese
Religion: Predominantly
Roman Catholic

Currency: Real [pronounced ray-AHL], divided into 100

centavos

Time Zone: GMT-3
Calling Code: +54

Electricity: 220V, 60C and 110V (Rio de Janeiro)

Passport:

Required and must be valid for at least 6 months from the time of arrival.

Travel Visa:

Required for American, Canadian, Australian or UK passport-holders – check with your Travel Agent or consulate for the most up-to-date information.

Reciprocity Fee:

Not required for America, Canadian and Australian passport-holders – check with your Travel Agent or consulate for the most up-to-date information.

Vaccinations:

Yellow Fever vaccine is recommended; please consult with your primary physician, government and/or travel professional for more information.

Climate & Clothing:

As most of Brazil lies between the Equator and the Tropic of Capricorn, it enjoys a sub-tropical climate. However, temperatures range from the equatorial climate of the Amazon region with its pounding rain to the light snowfalls of the extreme south.



Famous For:

- Football (soccer)
- Regionally diverse cuisine, including churrasco (barbeque), caipirinha (national drink) and coffee
- Amazon Rainforest
- Rio de Janeiro: nightlife, Copacabana and Ipanema Beaches, Christ the Redeemer Statue
- Carnaval: an annual festival held forty days before the beginning of Easter, most prominent in Rio
- Gemstones, H. Stern

Background/History:

Brazil is a culturally and biologically diverse country, and the largest Latin American country by land area, population and economic impact. A relatively new democracy, Brazil gained independence from Portugal in 1822 and adopted its current constitution in 1988. In between those years, military regimes and dictatorships marred the country, however, democracy prevailed in the latter half of the 20th century, and today Brazil has had a peaceful succession of leadership for several years, culminating in the latest elections, which resulted in the country's first female president, Dilma Rousseff. In addition to its economic diversity, Brazil is rich in Native, European and African culture which is evident in its music (Samba), cuisine (churrasco, caipirinha, coffee) and metropolises (Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo). Over five million international travellers visit the country every year, and this number is expected to reach new levels in the coming years as Brazil prepares to host two of the world's biggest sporting events: the FIFA World Cup and the Summer Olympic Games.

Health:

It is strongly recommended that travellers to Brazil, Argentina and/or Paraguay be inoculated for yellow fever. Additional immunisations may also be required. Certificate of vaccination (original, not a photocopy) may be required upon entry. Travellers should check with consulates, embassies and/or the local health authorities for the latest health requirements and should always consult their physician prior to travelling to any foreign country.

The water in Brazil is generally safe to drink, however, the chemicals they use to distill/filter the water can cause travellers discomfort. Water is of varying quality in the more remote regions of the country. It is best to drink bottled water, which is readily available throughout the country. Trafalgar Tip: Agua com gas means mineral water and agua sem gas means flat water.

Local Courtesies and Customs:

Your Travel Director will share a local perspective on the cultures and customs of your destination. If you have any questions, feel free to ask him or her. Below, please find some information that may be helpful prior to your departure from home:

- Handshaking is customary on meeting and taking one's leave, and normal courtesies are observed.
- Frequent offers of coffee and tea are customary.
- Casual wear is normal, particularly during hot weather. In nightclubs smart-casual is acceptable. More formal clothing is worn for meals in restaurants (no shorts).
- Eating habits and mealtimes in Brazil are different than in the USA. It is the norm to have a light breakfast, followed by a heavy lunch and a late dinner (typically around 8 or 9). Additionally, many portions serve two people. If unsure, ask your waiter "serve para dois?"

Money & Tipping:

The local currency is the Brazilian Real (Reais, plural), which can be most easily obtained from ATMs (which are readily available in Rio de Janeiro and most urban regions). For credit cards, Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted but American Express is not. Traveller's Cheques are not recommended.

In Brazil, restaurants usually add a service charge of about 10 percent to your bill. Paying this charge is actually not required, but considered extremely rude if not paid. Some people tip more if the service is excellent, but it is not the norm. If a service charge is not added, tipping around 10 percent is fine. For taxis, Brazilians typically round up the fare.

Internet:

Internet access is widely available in urban areas but less so in rural ones. Many hotels offer internet for an added fee and sometimes brief access in the lobby is available as a courtesy.

Food & Drink:

Feijoada is the closest Brazil comes to a national dish: a stew of pork, sausage and smoked meat cooked with black beans and garlic, garnished with slices or orange. Eating it is a national ritual at weekends, when restaurants serve feijoada all day. Brazil is also popular for its barbeque restaurants. They are usually either on a quilo (pay by weight) or rodízio (fixed price, all-you-caneat) system. A churrascaria is an example of the latter, although you usually pay extra for drinks and dessert.

The great variety of fruit in Brazil is put to excellent use in sucos – fruit is popped into a blender with sugar and crushed ice to make a deliciously refreshing drink. Made with milk rather than water it becomes a vitamina. The national cocktail is the caipirinha and is made with the Brazilian alcohol, cachaca [pronounced cah-shasha], a sugar-cane liquor.

Public Facilities:

Public restrooms are not very common. They are referred to as *banheiro* or *sanitário* where they are marked. Specifically:

Men – cavalheiros

Women – senhoras or damas.

It's a good idea to carry some toilet paper with you as most restrooms do not have it available.

Embassies & Consulates:

British Consulate General, Rio de Janeiro (RJ)

Praia do Flamengo 284/2nd floor Caixa Postal 669 CEP 22210-030 Rio de Janeiro-RJ

T: 55 21 2555 9600

http://ukinbrazil.fco.gov.uk/en/

Consulate General of Canada in Rio de Janeiro

Av. Atlântica, 1130 - 5° andar Atlântica Business Centre Copacabana 22021-000 Rio de Janeiro - RJ

T: 55 21 2543 3004

http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/brazil-bresil/index.aspx?view=d

U.S. Consulate General Rio de Janeiro

Av. Presidente Wilson, 147 - Castelo 20030-020 - Rio de Janeiro, RJ

T: 55 21 3823 2000

http://brazil.usembassy.gov/

Chile

officially the Republic of Chile (possibly from the native Mapuche word *chilli*, meaning "where the land ends")

Trafalgar Visits: Puerto Natales, Puerto Varas, Punta Arenas, Santiago, Tierra del Fuego National Park, & Torres del Paine National Park (across several trips).

Capital City: Santiago
Largest City: Santiago

Leader: Sebastian Piñera **Population:** 16 million

Language: Spanish

(Castilian)

Religion: Predominantly

Roman Catholic

Currency: Chilean Peso,

divided into 100 centavos

Electricity: 220V, 50Hz, AC

Time Zone: GMT-4 Calling Code: +56

Passport:

Required and must be valid for at least 6 months from the time of arrival.

Travel Visa:

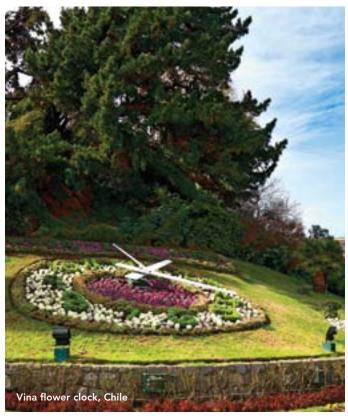
Not required for American, Canadian, Australian or UK passport-holders – check with your Travel Agent or consulate for the most up-to-date information.

Reciprocity Fee:

Payment required for America, Canadian, Albanian and Australian passport-holders – check with your Travel Agent or consulate for the most up-to-date information.

Vaccinations:

None are currently recommended; please consult with your primary physician, government and/or travel professional for more information.



Climate & Clothing:

Chile's climate is varied. Desert-type weather is usual in the north (hot, dry days and cold nights) except for along the coast where moderating ocean conditions bring a mild climate year-round. Santiago has hot summers, cool springs and falls, and gray, smoggy winters. The Lake District has hot days, cold nights and rainstorms. Farther south in Punta Arenas, summer temperatures seldom reach higher than 20C; winter means snow and icy winds.

Layers are suggested to ensure maximum comfort. Lightweight cottons and linens are recommended for northern and central areas. Wet weather wear is advised during rainy seasons. Medium-weight jackets and waterproofing are needed in the south.

Famous For:

- Isabelle Allende best-selling Chilean novelist, with
 51 million copies of her novels sold worldwide
- Gabriela Mistral and Pablo Neruda Chilean poets and Nobel Laureates for Literature
- Pisco Sour (slightly different than the Peruvian drink of the same name)
- Seafood Chile's long coastline offers a bounty of fresh and delicious fruits of the sea
- Cocina de autor in Santiago contemporary, fusion cuisine
- Mysterious Easter Island
- Wine Chile is home to the production of worldrenowned fine wines

Background/History:

Chile is a fascinating country blessed with an abundance of great seafood, natural resources, stunning landscapes and friendly people. Chile has been geographically separate from much of Latin America. In addition to being encapsulated by the Pacific Ocean and the Andes, when Spain ruled over much of South America from its Viceroyalty in Peru, it did not pay much attention to Chile, allowing the region and people there to develop more independently. Chile won political independence from Spain in 1818, and later in the century won the War of the Pacific against Peru and Bolivia, expanding its

northern territory as a result. In the late 19th century and with the aid of the United States, Chile's socialist government was overthrown by a military coup and the country consequently endured the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet for 17 years until returning to democracy in the early 1990s. Since then, the country's economy has grown steadily – it is among the strongest and most stable in Latin America – primarily supported by the mining, fishing, farming, wine and tourism industries. With the fjords and National Parks of Patagonia, its coastal cities and the cosmopolitan Santiago, Chile has a lot to offer any traveller.

Health:

The water in Chile is generally safe to drink, however, the chemicals they use to distill/filter the water can cause travellers discomfort. Water is of varying quality in the more remote regions of the country. It is best to drink bottled water, which is readily available throughout the country. Trafalgar Tip: Agua con gas means mineral water and agua sin gas means flat water.

Local Courtesies & Customs:

Your Travel Director will share a local perspective on the cultures and customs of your destination. If you have any questions, feel free to ask him or her. Below, please find some information that may be helpful prior to your departure from home:

- Handshaking is the customary form of greeting.
- Informal, conservative clothes are acceptable in most places, however, people tend to dress more formally at restaurants (no shorts).
- Eating habits and mealtimes in Chile are different than in the USA. It is the norm to have a light breakfast, followed by a big lunch and a late dinner (typically around 8 or 9).

Money & Tipping:

The local currency is the Chilean Peso, which can be most easily obtained from ATMs (which are readily available in Santiago and most urban regions). For credit cards, Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted but American Express is not. Traveller's Cheques are not recommended.

In Spanish, tips are called *propinas*. Add 10 percent in bars and restaurants for superior service. City taxi drivers don't usually expect a tip, but you can round up the fare if you like.

Internet:

Internet access is widely available in urban areas but less so in rural ones. Many hotels offer internet for an added fee and sometimes brief access in the lobby is available as a courtesy.

Food & Drink:

Santiago has many international restaurants. The evening will often include floor shows and dancing. Examples of typical national dishes are *empanadas* (a combination of meat, chicken or fish, with onions, eggs, raisins and olives inside a flour pastry), *humitas*

(seasoned corn paste, wrapped in corn husks and boiled), cazuela de ave (soup with rice, vegetables, chicken and herbs), bife a lo pobre (steak with French fries, onions and eggs) and parrillada (a selection of meat grilled over hot coals). Most important to Chilean cuisine, however, is probably seafood, which is plentiful and of excellent quality.

Chile is famous for its wine. Pisco is a powerful liqueur distilled from grapes after wine pressing. Grapes are also used to make the sweet brown *chicha* as well as aquardiente, a drink similar to brandy.

Public Facilities:

Public facilities are referred to as baños. Specifically:

Men – caballeros, hombres, varones or señores

Women – damas, mujeres or señoras

It's important to note that toilet paper (carry your own), hot water and soap are often missing. In bus stations, airports and large shops there is often an attendant who keeps the toilets clean and dispenses toilet paper, sometimes for a small fee, usually US\$0.50.

Embassies & Consulates:

British Embassy in Santiago

British Embassy Avda. El Bosque Norte 0125 Las Condes Santiago

T: 56 2 2370 4100 http://ukinchile.fco.gov.uk/en/

Canadian Embassy in Santiago

Nueva Tajamar 481 – Piso 12 Torre Norte (Edificio World Trade Centre) Santiago, Chile

T: 56 2 2652 3800

http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/chile-chili/index.aspx?view=d

U.S. Embassy in Santiago

Av. Andrés Bello 2800 Las Condes Santiago, Chile 7550006

T: 56 2 2330 3000

http://chile.usembassy.gov/



Electricity: 120V, 60Hz

Time Zone: GMT-6

Calling Code: +506

Costa Rica

officially the Republic of Costa Rica (meaning "rich coast" in Spanish)

Trafalgar Visits: Arenal, Guanacaste, Manuel Antonio, Monteverde, Sarapiqui, San José & Tortuguero (across several trips).

Capital City: San José Largest City: San José Leader: Laura Chinchilla Population: 4.3 million

Passport:

Travel Visa:

the time of arrival.

up-to-date information.

up-to-date information.

Reciprocity Fee:

Language: Spanish (Castilian)
Religion: Predominantly
Roman Catholic

Currency: Costa Rican colón

nearly every day, even in the "green" (rainy) season. San José may well have the best climate in the world.

With this much variance, you must truly plan your clothing as you plan your trip. When travelling to Costa Rica, it is important to consider that the weather conditions vary according to the geographic area and time of the year. Pack light, comfortable clothing, good walking shoes and sunblock. For the "green" or rainy season, it is recommended you bring a light jacket or raincoat.

Laundry facilities are reasonable in San José but are not always available elsewhere in Costa Rica. Please ask at your hotel's reception, and if you are only staying for a short period, please check that your clothes will be ready in time for your departure. Please note that on Sundays and public holidays, some hotels do not offer a laundry service.

Climate & Clothing:

Costa Rica has many climates, depending on which areas you are visiting. The beaches are tropical – hot during the day and generally humid. The rainforests are hot and humid, but the cloud forests are cool and moist. In the mountains, temperatures rarely rise above 18C during the day and can drop as low as 4.5 - 10C at night with dense fog.

Required and must be valid for at least 6 months from

Not required for most passport-holders – check

with your Travel Agent or consulate for the most

Not required for most passport-holders – check

with your Travel Agent or consulate for the most

In the capital city San Jose and the surrounding Central Valley area, daily temperatures are between 25.5-26.5C with low to moderate humidity. This valley is several thousand feet above sea level, which accounts for the wonderfully moderate temperatures. The sun shines



Famous For:

- Eco-tourism, biodiversity, nature, wildlife, bird-watching
- Adventure-tourism, surfing, rafting, horse-back riding
- Coffee (among the best in the world), rum, bananas

Background/History:

The region now known as Costa Rica was home to few inhabitants prior to the arrival of the Spanish explorers and conquistadors. Even when the Spanish arrived, they found the indigenous people far too unruly and failed at setting up the hacienda system of using the natives for forced labour. Instead, the Spanish moved on to neighbouring regions and left Costa Rican largely to itself.

Along with the other Central American countries, Costa Rica was granted independence from Spain after their loss in the Mexican War of Independence, which ended in 1821. After being part of short-lived attempts at Central American unity (the Mexican Empire and the Federal Republic of Central America), Costa Rica formally declared its sovereignty in 1838.

In the years that followed, Costa Rica continued to export its primary cash crop – coffee. Understanding the

necessity of connecting plantations with port towns, the government hired American industrialist Minor Keith to build a railroad. After defaulting on their payments to him, they granted him a 99-year lease on the lands along the length of the railroad tracks, which ended up very lucrative for Keith. He began producing and exporting bananas to the U.S. and his business eventually became the very controversial United Fruit Company.

In the mid-20th century, a violent civil war broke out over a disputed election. After democracy was reestablished, President José Figueres Ferrer abolished the military and Costa Rica has been without one ever since. Today, Costa Rica is among the most highly developed Latin American nations, enjoying high standards of living and welcoming 2 million tourists annually.

Health:

The water in Costa Rica is generally safe to drink, however, the chemicals they use to distill/filter the water can cause travellers discomfort. Water is of varying quality in the more remote regions of the country. It is best to drink bottled water, which is readily available throughout the country. Trafalgar Tip: Agua con gas means mineral water and agua sin gas means flat water.

Local Courtesies & Customs:

Your Travel Director will share a local perspective on the cultures and customs of your destination. If you have any questions, feel free to ask him or her. Below, please find some information that may be helpful prior to your departure from home:

- Handshaking is the most common form of greeting.
- Costa Ricans, casually known as Ticos, are fairly conservative, especially in the way they address themselves. Christian names are preceded by Don for a man and Doña for a woman.
- For most occasions, casual wear is acceptable, but beachwear should be confined to the beach. Slightly more formal attire is reserved for restaurants (no shorts).
- Mealtimes tend to follow North American customs.

Money & Tipping:

The local currency is the Costa Rican colón, which can be most easily obtained from ATMs (which are readily available in San José and most urban regions). For credit cards, Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted but American Express is not. Traveller's Cheques are not recommended.

In Spanish, tips are called *propinas*. Add 10 percent in bars and restaurants for superior service. Taxi drivers usually do not expect a tip.

Internet:

Internet access is widely available in urban areas but less so in rural ones. Many hotels offer internet for an added fee and sometimes brief access in the lobby is available as a courtesy.

Food & Drink:

Costa Ricans eat rice and beans in a seasoned mix called *gallo pinto* with almost every meal. Due to the two coastlines, Costa Rica has an abundance of great seafood including *corvina* (sea bass), *pargo* (red snapper) and *dorado* (mahi mahi); Costa Rica also has great ceviche. Other specialities include *palmito* (heart of palm salad), tamales, guacamole, and a vast variety of fresh tropical fruits.

The most popular liquor in Costa Rica is rum. Guaro, a clear cane liquor, is the national alcoholic drink. Tropical fruit drinks (frescos, jugos naturales) are delicious and of good quality. Costa Rican coffee is widely considered among the best globally, and makes a great souvenir. Café con leche is coffee with milk and café negro is black.

Public Facilities:

There is no such thing as a public toilet in Costa Rica. You will find restrooms in restaurants, gas stations and some roadside cafes. Make sure to carry your own toilet paper, just in case, as most facilities are poorly stocked.

Embassies & Consulates:

British Embassy in San José

Apartado 815-1007 Edificio Centro Colón (Piso/floor 11) San José

T: 506 2258 2025

http://ukincostarica.fco.gov.uk/en/

Canadian Embassy in San José

Oficentro Ejecutivo La Sabana Building 5, Third floor San José, Costa Rica

T: 506 2242 4400

http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/costa_rica/offices-bureaux/embassy-ambassade. aspx?lang=eng&view=d

U.S. Embassy

Calle 120 Avenida 0 Pavas, San José, Costa Rica

T: 506 2519 2000

http://costarica.usembassy.gov/



Mexico

officially the United Mexican States (from the native Nahuatl word for the heartland of the Aztec Empire)

Trafalgar Visits: Alamos, Campeche, Cancun, Casas Grandes, Chichen Itza, Copper Canyon, El Fuerte, Merida, Riviera

Maya & San Carlos (across several trips).

Capital City: Mexico City, DF Largest City: Mexico City, DF Leader: Enrique Peña Nieto

Paralation 114 Million

Population: 114 Million

Language: Spanish (Castilian) and 60+ indigenous languages

Religion: Predominantly Roman

Catholic

Currency: Mexican Peso

Electricity: 127V, 60Hz

Time Zone: Varies from UTC-8 to UTC-6; DST in Summer from UTC-7

to UTC-5

Calling Code: +52

Passport:

Required and must be valid for at least 6 months from the time of arrival.

Travel Visa:

Not required for American, Canadian, Australian or UK passport-holders – check with your Travel Agent or consulate for the most up-to-date information.

Reciprocity Fee:

Payment not required for many passport-holders – check with your Travel Agent or consulate for the most up-to-date information.

Vaccinations:

None are currently recommended; please consult with your primary physician, government and/or travel professional for more information.



Alamos

Population 13,000 Elevation 1,346 ft (410 m)

Surrounded by the Sierra Madre Foothills in northwestern Mexico, Alamos is one of the country's most beloved colonial cities. Alamos was claimed as a Spanish colony by Francisco Vasquez de Coronado in 1540 but it wasn't until the 17th century that developers realized they were literally sitting on a silver mine. The city quickly boomed to its colonial height and mansions began to line the streets to reflect the steady influx of silver fortunes. Eventually the mines were depleted of their wealth and many of the early settlers chose to move on. But shortly after World War II, the city was revitalised with a new population concerned with restoring the beautiful colonial structures to their silver-era magnificence and returning Alamos to its status as a colonial treasure.

Alamos is picturesque and cherished by the people in Mexico. Graced with 188 National Historic Monuments, it is currently in position to become Mexico's next UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Campeche

Population 211,671 Elevation 33 ft (10 m)

Located on the southwest region of the Yucatan Peninsula, Campeche is a harbour town which gives visitors a glimpse into Mexico's colonial past. Campeche was discovered in 1517 during an exploratory expedition led by the Spanish. Due to its strategic location to the Caribbean Sea, Campeche had become one of the main ports of New Spain for importing and exporting goods, making the city a prime target for pirates.

The city spent much effort and resources and constructed hexagonal city walls to defend its residents from these attacks. Today, visitors can view the forts and military architecture of downtown Campeche, which was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999.

Cancun

Population 705,000 Elevation 33 ft (10 m)

Located in the Mexican state of Quintana Roo, Cancun is situated in the northern region of the Yucatan Peninsula and borders the Caribbean Sea. It is surrounded by vast ecological reserves and is home to the second largest reef system in the world.

Cancun was once a small fishing village until the Mexican Government deemed the area an ideal location for a new tourist destination. During the 1980s and '90s, the city steadily grew with the development of new hotels and resort facilities.

Visitors can enjoy a variety of nautical activities such as boating, scuba diving, snorkeling and fishing, in addition to relaxing on the white-sand beaches. Cancun is also considered the gateway to the Maya world, a short drive to such archaeological sites as the pyramids of Tulum and Coba.

Chichen Itza

Located in the northern-centre of the Mexican state of Yucatan, Chichen Itza is one of the most famous and extensively-studied archaeological Maya centres in Mexico. Over 1,500 years old, the Pre-Hispanic City of Chichen Itza was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1988. Throughout the site, there are great examples of Maya-Toltec civilisation through stone monuments and artistic works filled with cosmological symbolism. The structures at Chichen Itza are divided into three distinct sections due to the differences in architectural style. The north area of structures is considered to be Toltec in style. The central group of structures appear to be from the early period. The southern area of the site is known as Chichen Viejo (Old Chichen). The most impressive and famous structure of the site is the step pyramid known as Temple of Kukulkan or sometimes referred to as El Castillo (The Castle). The pyramid is constructed with 365 steps representing the solar year.

During the spring and autumn equinox, the structure's corner tiers cast a shadow in the shape of a feathered serpent along the west side of the north staircase during sunrise and sunset. In the evening, visitors can enjoy a different perspective of the temple when the site is illuminated with an amazing light and sound show.



Copper Canyon/Posada Barrancas

Elevation 5,770 ft (1,760 m)

The Copper Canyon (Sierra Tarahumara) is truly one of the Western Hemisphere's great scenic and cultural wonders. The Copper Canyon is actually a series of six distinct canyons running through the northern region of Mexico. The overall canyon system is nearly four times larger than the Grand Canyon in the United States. With their copper green colour for which they were named, the canyons are breathtaking. The railroad line operating through the canyons and mountains is impressive - the Chihuahua al Pacifico Railroad, or ChePe, runs along Canyon Urique between Chihuahua and Los Mochis on the Gulf of California. It runs along some 405 miles of rails with 39 bridges and 86 tunnels. As the trains stop through several small villages along the railway, visitors will have the chance to meet the local Tarahumara Indians laying out their food, crafts and other wares for sale.

El Fuerte

Population 30,000 Elevation 590 ft (180 m)

El Fuerte is located in the Mexican state of Sinaloa and is often referred as the gateway to Mexico's Copper Canyon and the Sea of Cortez. The region was founded by the Spaniards in 1564, but the city suffered attacks from Indians. In 1610, a fort was constructed to defend the area; it now remains an important city landmark.

El Fuerte was the first capital of Sinaloa and is considered one of the most beautiful cities in the state because of its enchanting colonial atmosphere. Constructed during the 18th and 19th centuries, visitors can view historical structures such as the Municipal Plaza, Posada Hidalgo, and The Plaza de Armas.

Merida

Population 734,153 Elevation 33 ft (10 m)

Merida is the capital city of the Mexican state of Yucatan and is one of the largest cities located on the Yucatan Peninsula.

Discovered by the Spanish in 1542, the city was built on the Maya city of Tho, once the thriving centre of Maya culture thanks to its strategic geographic location near both land and sea. Merida became independent from Spain's rule in 1821 and the city was able to prosper and develop due to the production of henequen (sisal fibre).

During the 17th and 18th centuries, many grand estates were constructed and are magnificent examples of Spanish colonial architecture. Constructed with white limestone walls and white paint, these structures earned Merida the nickname, 'White City.' Carefully preserved today, some of these buildings still line the city streets and have been transformed into banks and office buildings. Visitors can also experience Merida's colonial past at the Central Plaza's Cathedral and the historic Paseo de Montejo, modeled after the Champs Elysees in Paris.

Playa del Carmen

Population 100,383 Elevation 49 ft (15 m)

Situated on the coast of the Mexican state of Quintana Roo and south of the Maya site of Tulum and Sian Ka'an biosphere reserve, Playa del Carmen is characterised as a relaxing beach escape, an alternative from the more bustling Cancun. Once a sleepy seaside village, 'Playa' as the locals call it, has been discovered by travellers drawn to its beautiful Caribbean beaches and turquoise waters, ideal for scuba-diving, snorkeling and a variety of other aquatic activities. Visitors also enjoy shopping on Playa del Carmen's Fifth Avenue lined with shops and vendors selling jewellery and local handicrafts. There are many quaint restaurants and cafes in Playa del Carmen which are perfect for sampling Yucatan cuisine.

Paquime/Casas Grandes

Paquime (sometimes referred to as Casas Grandes) is one of the most important archaeological sites in Northern Mexico.

Located in the northwest region of the Mexican state of Chihuahua, this area was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1998. It was once an important trade and cultural contact centre between the Pueblo culture of the southwestern United States and northern Mexico and the more advanced civilisations of Mesoamerica. The civilisation peaked during the 14th and 15th centuries as the earth-toned ruins show evidence of an intricate water system and architecture adapted to the physical climate of the region.

Today, significant restoration has been done to the site, but there are some areas that remained unexcavated. Visitors can learn more about this ancient civilisation at the adjacent museum and visitors' centre featuring intricate exhibits and displays. The centre also offers an opportunity to purchase local native arts and crafts of the region.

San Carlos

Population 7,000 Elevation 33 ft (10 m)

San Carlos, a subdivision of the port city of Guaymas, is located on the coast of the Sea of Cortez in the northern Mexican state of Sonora. This coastal desert region is known for its rugged surrounding mountains and cactus, beautiful beach scenery and warm waters, ideal for nautical activities such as canoeing, sailing, and snorkeling. Visitors can also enjoy relaxing on Algodones Beach (Cotton Beach) characterised by white sand dunes, coves and beach resorts. The area is also known for the first modern cultured pearl farms in the Americas.

Uxmal

Situated in the Mexican state of Yucatan and southwest of Merida, Uxmal is an impressive archaeological site in the Puuc hills and was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996. Uxmal means 'built three times,' and is considered one of the best restored and maintained Maya sites due to the quality of its original construction. Once a great religious centre, the site's original carvings indicate that its priests had a significant interest in astrology. The House of the Magician is considered one of Uxmals' most impressive structures. According to ancient legend, this 100-foottall pyramid was built in just one night. Also impressive is The Governor's Palace and its spectacular examples of stone carvings depicting astrological symbols. Visitors can also experience the magic of Uxmal at night when a light and sound show illuminates the ruins.



Ecuador & the Galápagos

officially the Republic of Ecuador (literally from the Spanish for "Equator")

Trafalgar Visits: The Galápagos Islands, Guayaquil & Quito

Capital City: Quito
Largest City: Guayaquil
Leader: Rafael Correa
Population: 15.2 million

Language: Spanish (Castilian) **Religion:** Predominantly Roman Catholic

Currency: U.S. Dollar

Electricity: 120V, 60Hz Time Zone: UTC-5/-6 Calling Code: +593

Passport:

Required and must be valid for at least 6 months from the time of arrival.

Travel Visa:

Not required for many passport-holders – check with your Travel Agent or consulate for the most up-to-date information.

Reciprocity Fee:

Payment not required for many passport-holders – check with your Travel Agent or consulate for the most up-to-date information.

Vaccinations:

None are currently recommended; please consult with your primary physician, government and/or travel professional for more information.

Climate & Clothing:

Although Ecuador is small in size, changes in altitude and the effect of cold ocean currents combine to make virtually any possible climate. Temperatures along the coast tend to be mild. From June to October, highs are in the mid 20s with cool evenings. The rainy season from November to May finds highs upwards of 27C. Due to its high elevation, Quito has cool temperatures year-round.

The Galápagos Islands have mild, warm weather with a dry windy season from July to September and a rainy season from January to April.



Life onboard the ship is very casual. Both long and short sleeve shirts are recommended. Bring along a light jacket or sweater for cool nights and a rain jacket or poncho can be useful. Landings may be "wet" and two pairs of comfortable walking shoes are recommended (perhaps even a pair of water shoes for disembarkation may be useful). A wide-brimmed sun hat is strongly suggested and don't forget your bathing suit!

Famous For:

- The diverse home of several fascinating regions: Andes, Amazon, Colonial cities, Galapagos and Pacific Coast
- Tropical fruit, beautiful roses and the Ecuador Hat (often called by the misnomer, Panama Hat)
- Simon Bolivar, known as the Libertador (liberator) of many South American countries from Spain
- Galapagos: abundant and exotic wildlife

Background/History:

Ecuador was home to several different indigenous cultures before the Incas arrived and absorbed these different peoples under their singular confederation. Internal political instability weakened the once-powerful Incas and allowed the Spanish conquistadors to invade and takeover the region. Spanish colonial rule in Ecuador, as with most of South America, was cruel. The natives who were not decimated by European diseases became enslaved under a brutal class system – the encomienda - with the powerful Spaniards promising protection in return for their labour. After 300 years of such harsh conditions, the people fought back and won their independence from Spain in 1821. Peace and stability, however, were not immediately secured. Territorial disputes with neighbouring countries, internal arguments regarding the separation of church and state, as well as a feeble economy plagued Ecuador for many decades.

In 1832, Ecuador annexed the Galapagos Islands, which were subsequently visited by the now-famous naturalist, Charles Darwin, in 1835. His observations of the interesting developments of the island's wildlife lead to a dramatic new theory of human existence, which he included in his book, *On the Origin of Species*.

The 20th century was not easy for the struggling young country. The Great Depression, both World Wars and natural disasters seriously affected the economy, allowing for dictators and militarists to take control of the country. However, none stayed in power for long. To this day, a trend of Ecuadorian politics is the frequency of change. Today, Ecuador has witnessed a democratic succession of several leaders, leading to much awaited political stability. Also, an economy strengthened by its adoption of the U.S. Dollar, oil & banana exports, and tourism has improved the quality of life for many citizens.

Ecuador is known as a colourful destination catering to many travellers. Although it's among the smallest of South American nations, it is also definitely among the most diverse. Andean landscapes, coastal cities, Amazonian rainforests, colonial gems and the intriguing Galapagos Islands offer a paradise for just about any traveller.

Health:

Altitude sickness may be experienced when visiting Andean destinations. Upon arrival in a high altitude destination, it is usually helpful to walk slowly, eat lightly and drink plenty of liquids (non-alcoholic).

Visitors should only drink bottled water, which is widely available. Do not drink tap water, even in major hotels. Try to avoid drinks with ice. Agua con gas is carbonated, while agua sin gas is flat.

Local Courtesies and Customs:

Your Travel Director will share a local perspective on the cultures and customs of your destination. If you have any questions, feel free to ask him or her. Below, please find some information that may be helpful prior to your departure from home:

- Shaking hands is the customary form of greeting.
- The atmosphere is generally laid-back and informal.
 Onboard the ship, guests and crew alike are friendly and personable. Life is conducted at a leisurely pace.
- Dress onboard the ship is informal. Comfortable yet practical clothing is recommended for the island excursions (walking shoes, hats, layers). On the mainland casual wear is fine but more formal attire can be expected at nicer restaurants (no shorts).

Money & Tipping:

The local currency is the U.S. Dollar, which can be most easily obtained from ATMs (which are readily available in Quito and most urban regions). For credit cards, Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted but American Express is not. Traveller's Cheques are not recommended.

In Spanish, tips are called *propinas*. A 10 percent service charge is usually included in the bill, but adding a little extra (5 to 10 percent) for good service is appreciated. Taxi drivers don't usually expect a tip, but you can round up the fare if you like.

Internet:

Internet access is widely available in urban areas but less so in rural ones. Many hotels offer internet for an added fee and sometimes brief access in the lobby is available as a courtesy. Internet onboard the ship is available, although it is expensive and tends to be quite slow. It's wise to take care of any important business before leaving the mainland.

Food & Drink:

Ecuador is known for its fabulous exotic fruits, high quality fish & seafood, and the countless varieties of bananas. Across the country you'll find a broad spectrum of national and regional dishes. Popular dishes and snacks found in restaurants include: *choclo* (barbequed Andean corn), *empanadas* (hot, crispy meat- or cheese-filled pastries) and *llapingachos* (potato and cheese pancakes).

With plenty of exotic fruits comes delicious jugos (fruit juices), including naranjilla (a cross between an orange and a tomato), tree tomato, mora (blackberry), guanabana (a luscious thick aromatic sweet white juice), maracuya (passion fruit) and papaya.

Public Facilities:

Public restrooms are generally of good quality, although they never have toilet paper so it's a good idea to carry some with you in a purse or bag. The Ecuadorian plumbing has a very low pressure, therefore always throw away toilet paper in the basket by the toilet. Restrooms are called *servicios higénicos* in Spanish and mostly labeled with "SS.HH" or *baño*. The lady's room will be marked with an "M" (for *mujeres*) or "D" (for *damas*);

the men's room will have "H" (for hombres) or "C" (for caballeros).

Embassies & Consulates:

British Embassy in Quito

Citiplaza Building,

Naciones Unidas Avenue and República de El Salvador, 14th Floor. (Consular Section 12th floor) Quito, Ecuador

T: 593 2 2970 800 / 801

http://ukinecuador.fco.gov.uk/en/

Canadian Embassy in Quito

Av. Amazonas 4153 and Unión Nacional de Periodistas Eurocentre Building, 3rd Floor (one block north of the Supreme Court Building, near Amazonas and United Nations)

Quito, Ecuador

T: 011 593 2 2455-499

http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/ecuador-equateur/index.aspx?view=d

U.S. Embassy in Quito

Ave. Avigiras E12-170 y Ave. Eloy Alfaro (next to SOLCA)

Quito, Ecuador

T: 593 2 398 5000

http://ecuador.usembassy.gov/

Panama

officially the Republic of Panama (from the native panama, meaning "plenty of fish")

Trafalgar Visits: Boquete, Cerro Punta, David, Gamboa, Nata, Panama City, Playa Bonita & Santiago (across several trips)

Capital City: Panama City Largest City: Panama City Leader: Ricardo Martinelli Population: 3.6 million Language: Spanish (Castilian)
Religion: Predominantly
Roman Catholic
Currency: U.S. Dollar (also

called the balboa)

Electricity: 110V, 60Hz (Panama City is 120V)

Time Zone: UTC-5

Calling Code: +507

Passport:

Required and must be valid for at least 6 months from the time of arrival.

Travel Visa:

Not required for many passport-holders – check with your Travel Agent or consulate for the most up-to-date information.

Reciprocity Fee:

Payment not required for many passport-holders – check with your Travel Agent or consulate for the most up-to-date information.

Vaccinations:

Yellow fever and malaria are not as widespread as they were some decades ago, however, if you're travelling to more remote parts of the country you may want to be inoculated. Consult your physician, government or travel professional for more advice.

Climate & Clothing:

Panama has a tropical climate with high temperatures and high humidity. The rainy season is usually between April and December but can vary. The Pacific side of the country is generally milder in temperature than the Caribbean side. Additionally, light breezes tend to cool the temperatures during nightfall.

Travellers should pack layers of clothing and perhaps a light-weight, waterproof jacket. Light, breathable materials such as cotton and linen are recommended to help cope



with the heat and humidity. Hats, sunglasses and sunblock are strongly recommended as well. Consider bringing a more formal outfit for nights on the town.

Famous For:

- The Panama Canal, an engineering marvel
- Panama City, the cosmopolitan capital often compared to Miami and Hong Kong, and the historic colonial centre of Casco Viejo (Spanish for "Old Town")
- Expansive rainforests and diverse flora & fauna

Background/History:

Before the arrival of the Spanish, Panama was home to between 200,000 and 2,000,000 native peoples, highly skilled in ceramics and metallurgy. In 1513, Vasco de Balboa traversed the Isthmus of Panama and reached the Pacific Ocean, claiming it and all its shores in the name of the Spanish Crown. The significance of this narrow strip of land became increasingly important as precious metals mined in South America (particularly Peru and Argentina) were shipped from Lima and Buenos Aires to the Pacific Coast of Panama. There they were transported along the Camino Real (The Royal Road) to the Caribbean coast for their export to European markets. In 1671, the infamous Henry Morgan burnt the city of Panama to the ground, however, the city was rebuilt.

After the independence of Spain's Central American colonies in 1821, Panama became part of Gran Colombia, a union of former colonies including Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador. After several attempts at independence, Panama gained its sovereignty in 1903 thanks to assistance from the United States. However, their independence came at a coast – Panama entered a treaty with the United States granting them the rights to many acres of land and the unfinished Panama Canal. After decades of political instability and corruption, the dictatorship of Omar Torrijos Herrera negotiated the return of the Canal from the US to Panama by the end of the 20th century. By the 1980s, however, Panama experienced the oppression of Colonel Noriega, who controlled the military and terrorised anybody who opposed him. After economic sanctions failed to help the country, the U.S. sent 25,000 troops to

Panama to re-establish order. Noriega was extradited to the U.S., tried and jailed for his crimes and democracy returned to Panama.

After years of struggles, the Canal finally returned to the hands of Panamanians as stipulated in the treaty with the U.S. Since then the country has rebuilt its economy, strengthened its democracy and improved the lives of its people. Today, Panama is a major tourist destination, alluring visitors all over the world with its lush rainforests, extensive beaches, famous Canal and cosmopolitan capital, Panama City.

Health:

The water in Panama is generally safe to drink, however, the chemicals they use to distill/filter the water can cause travellers discomfort. Water is of varying quality in the more remote regions of the country. It is best to drink bottled water, which is readily available throughout the country. Trafalgar Tip: Agua con gas means mineral water and agua sin gas means flat water.

It is strongly recommended that travellers to Panama be inoculated for yellow fever. Additional immunisations may also be required. Certificate of vaccination (original, not a photocopy) may be required upon entry. Travellers should check with consulates, embassies and/or the local health authorities for the latest health requirements and should always consult their physician prior to travelling to any foreign country.

Local Courtesies and Customs:

Reflecting its unique position as a natural crossroads of the world, there is a saying that "Panama was born globalised." Your Travel Director will share a local perspective on the cultures and customs of your destination. If you have any questions, feel free to ask him or her. Below, please find some information that may be helpful prior to your departure from home:

- Handshaking is the most common form of greeting.
- Panamanians take great care in their appearance (wearing pants and even suits in spite of the heat), and it's not unusual for casually dressed tourists to stick out like sore thumbs. Be yourself and dress the way you feel comfortable, but understand that many restaurants (and even some shops) may require slightly more formal attire (no shorts).
 Casual wear (shorts, t-shirts) is acceptable in beach and resort areas.
- Mealtimes tend to follow North American customs.

Money & Tipping:

The local currency is the U.S. Dollar (also called the balboa) which can be most easily obtained from ATMs (which are readily available in Panama City and most urban regions). For credit cards, Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted but American Express is not. Traveller's Cheques are not recommended.

In Spanish, tips are called *propinas*. Add 10 percent in bars and restaurants for good service. Taxi drivers usually do not expect a tip.

Internet:

Internet access is widely available in urban areas but less so in rural ones. Many hotels offer internet for an added fee and sometimes brief access in the lobby is available as a courtesy.

Food & Drink:

Panama is true to its name – which means "plenty of fish" – as it offers an abundance of fresh and delicious seafood, including pargo (red snapper), corvina (sea bass) and langostino (jumbo shrimp), among others. Panamanians are fond of meat as well, with many notable dishes incorporating chicken, beef and pork. Sancocho, a chicken stew, is a popular dish, as is ropa vieja (literally, "old clothes"), a spicy dish of shredded beef and rice. While vegetables are not very abundant, Panama is blessed with a bounty of delicious tropical fruits. Other staples include coconut rice and patacones (fried green plantains).

To cope with the heat, Panamanians enjoy various *chichas* (fruit juices), which come in typical and not-so-typical flavours (chica con arroz y piña – rice and pineapple). Ice-cold beers are refreshing and a popular drink on a hot day. Domestic brands include Atlas, Balboa and Cristal. In more rural areas and local watering holes you may encounter Panama's most famous drink – seco – a sugar-cane alcohol commonly enjoyed over ice with a splash of milk.

Public Facilities:

Public restrooms are practically nonexistent. They are most prevalent in hotels and restaurants. Men's rooms are usually labeled *hombres* or *caballeros*; lady's rooms are *damas* or *mujeres*.

Embassies & Consulates:

British Embassy in Panama City

MMG Tower, 4th Floor Calle 53, Marbella (PO Box 0816-07946) Panama City

T: 507 297 6550

http://ukinpanama.fco.gov.uk/en/

Canadian Embassy in Panama City

Torres de las Americas Tower A, Piso 11 Punta Pacifica, Panama, Republic of Panama

T: 011 507 294 2500

http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/panama/index.aspx?view=d

U.S. Embassy in Panama City

Building 783, Demetrio Basilio Lukas Avenue Clayton, Panama

T: 507 317 5000

http://panama.usembassy.gov/

Electricity: 220V, 60Hz

Time Zone: GMT-5

Calling Code: +51

Peru

officially the Republic of Peru (possibly from the local tribal leader Biru, visited by the Conquistadors)

Trafalgar Visits: Ballestas Islands, Cusco, Ica, Juliaca, Lima, Machu Picchu, Nazca, Paracas, Puerto Maldonado,

Puno, & Sacred Valley (across several trips)

Capital City: Lima
Largest City: Lima
Leader: Ollanta Humala
Population: 30 million

Language: Spanish (Castilian)
Religion: Predominantly
Roman Catholic

Currency: El Nuevo Sol, divided into 100 *céntimos*

Famous For:

- Pisco Sour
- Viceroyalty of Peru: the second of four capitals established by Spain to govern her overseas colonies
- Advanced pre-Colombian civilizations (most prominently the Inca), Machu Picchu
- Artisan weaving
- A gastronomic capital of South America: ceviche, guinea pig, chef Gaston Acurio

Background/History:

Peru is home to several pre-Colombian civilisations – the earliest people arrived around 20,000 years ago – and although the Inca are the most well-known, they were the last of a series of people who were centered in this area. The arrival of the Spanish Conquistadors in 1524 interrupted the reign of the Inca, whose empire was recently weakened by civil war and therefore more susceptible to invasion. After destroying and pillaging much of the native culture and infrastructure, the Spanish established the coastal city of Lima in 1535, which eventually became the capital of the viceroyalty of Peru – a dominion of the Kingdom of Spain.

The Spanish often times built directly upon existing Inca infrastructure, which preserved their ancient architecture at least partly. The Spanish never discovered the hidden Inca city of Machu Picchu. After several centuries of Spanish rule, the Peruvians achieved independence in 1824. A series of border disputes and wars ensued shortly after, and animosities regarding the outcomes of these conflicts still linger today. Several rebuilding programs followed and Peru reached some political stability in the early 1900s. However, the government exchanged hands between military dictators and democratically-elected leaders for the majority of the century.

In 1911, Yale archaeologist Hiram Bingham discovered Machu Picchu, with interest to this well-preserved site growing over the decades. In the 1990s, President Alberto Fujimori led a series of controversial measures to stabilise the country's economy and rewrote its constitution. He later fled to Japan in self-imposed

Passport:

Required and must be valid for at least 6 months from the time of arrival.

Travel Visa:

Not required for American, Canadian, Australian or UK passport-holders – check with your Travel Agent or consulate for the most up-to-date information.

Reciprocity Fee:

Not required for America, Canadian or Australian passport-holders – check with your Travel Agent or consulate for the most up-to-date information.

Vaccinations:

None are currently recommended; please consult with your primary physician, government and/or travel professional for more information.

Climate & Clothing:

June to August is the dry season in the highlands. The wettest months are December through April, though travellers visit year-round since it rarely rains for more than a few hours and there's still plenty of sunshine to enjoy.

Lightweight clothing is recommended during summer with warmer clothes worn in upland areas. Mediumweight clothing is advised during cooler months.



exile due to accusations of corruption and human rights violations in his ongoing fight against The Shining Path, an insurgent organisation. Since the downfall of the Fujimori regime, Peru has elected its first indigenous President and has fought corruption while sustaining economic development. Tourism in Peru mostly revolves around the fusion of ancient civilisations and Spanish colonialism, which is evident in the culture – especially architecture – of Peru. Ancient ruins, mysterious structures and colonial vestiges are abundant in Peru, especially in Lima and Cusco. The history and archaeology, combined with a fascinating indigenous culture and adventurous spirit, make Peru a popular destination for many travellers.

Health:

Altitude sickness may be experienced when visiting Andean destinations such as Cusco, Machu Picchu and Lake Titicaca. Upon arrival in a high altitude destination, it is usually helpful to walk slowly, eat lightly and drink plenty of liquids (non-alcoholic). Indigenous remedies to combat altitude sickness include chewing coca leaves and drinking mate de coca, or coca leaf tea. Trafalgar has selected hotels that have oxygen tanks in case of emergencies and also stores an oxygen tank on each motor coach. However, this is rarely needed as guests feeling overwhelmed with altitude sickness will usually feel better after resting and following the aforementioned guidelines.

Visitors should only drink bottled water, which is widely available. Do not drink tap water, even in major hotels. Try to avoid drinks with ice. Agua con gas is carbonated, while agua sin gas is flat.

Local Courtesies and Customs:

Your Travel Director will share a local perspective on the cultures and customs of your destination. If you have any questions, feel free to ask him or her. Below, please find some information that may be helpful prior to your departure from home:

- Handshaking is the customary greeting for men.
 For women, it's more common to give one kiss on the cheek.
- Life in Peru is fairly easygoing and conducted at a leisurely pace. Dress is typically informal yet conservative, except perhaps for dinners in restaurants. When exploring more exotic/rural areas, long sleeves and pants may be best in order to avoid insect bites or irritation from plants.
- Bargaining is commonplace throughout Peru, but particularly in craft markets and touristy eateries (after a day or so you'll be able to spot them).
 However, make sure not to overdo it. Take care not to offer an insultingly low price, and understand that bargaining only works with cash no credit cards. In fact, crisp US dollar bills will be received most eagerly. Excessive bargaining or bargaining without any intention of making a purchase is considered rude.

Money & Tipping:

The local currency is the Nuevo Sol, which can be most easily obtained from ATMs (which are readily available in Lima and most urban regions). The town at the base of Machu Picchu only has a few ATMs and they often run out of cash, so make sure to bring some extra cash before heading for Machu Picchu. For credit cards, Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted but American Express is not. Traveller's Cheques are not recommended. If you plan on bargaining, bringing crisp, new US dollar bills will be your best bet.

In Spanish, tips are called *propinas*. Add 10 to 15 percent in bars and restaurants. Taxi drivers don't usually expect a tip, but you can round up the fare if you like. When taking pictures of indigenous peoples, it is customary to offer a small tip (a few soles will suffice).

Internet:

Internet access is widely available in urban areas but less so in rural ones. Many hotels offer internet for an added fee and sometimes brief access in the lobby is available as a courtesy.

Food & Drink:

Peru is a gastronomic focal point of South America. The hot and spicy nature of Peruvian food, created by ají and ajo (hot pepper and garlic), has become celebrated internationally. Peruvians enjoy a wide variety of vegetables – there are over 2000 kinds of indigenous and cultivated potatoes alone! Tropical fruits are abundant and delicious. Ceviche, raw fish marinated in lime sauce, originated in Peru and is a local speciality of Lima. Corvina is sea bass, which can be prepared in a variety of ways, and is always an excellent choice. Typical dishes made with conchitas (scallops), choros (mussels), pulpo (octopus) and camarones (shrimp) are plentiful and delicious. Specialities include sopa criolla (spicy soup with beef and noodles) and ají de gallina (shredded chicken in a piquant cream sauce). Rice and potatoes accompany virtually every dish and if you're adventurous, make sure to try the cuy (quinea pig!). Traditional deserts are alfajores (wafer-thin spirals of shortbread dusted with icing sugar), which are served with manjar blanco (a caramel sauce).

The most famous drink in Peru is the pisco sour, made from a potent grape brandy (pisco), egg whites, and ice. *Chica* de jora (fermented red or yellow corn juice) and *chica morada* (non-alcoholic purple corn juice) are also popular and date back from Inca times. Peruvian beers are good, and national wines are too, but not to the degree of Argentine or Chilean ones. Inca Kola is an interesting Peruvian soft drink that is incredibly sweet and tastes like bubblegum.

Public Facilities:

Public toilets are rarely available except in railway stations, restaurants and theatres. They are usually labeled "WC" (for water closet), and specifically:

Men – caballeros or hombres

Women – damas

Toilet paper is not always provided so it's a good idea to keep some with you in a purse or bag. Due to low water pressure, toilet paper should be discarded in the wastebaskets next to the toilet, and never flushed.

Embassies & Consulates:

British Embassy in Lima

Torre Parque Mar (22nd Floor) Avenida Jose Larco, 1301 Miraflores, Lima, Peru

T: 51 1 617 3000

http://ukinperu.fco.gov.uk/en/

Canadian Embassy in Lima

Bolognesi 228, Miraflores Lima 18, Peru

T: 51 1 319 3200

http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/peru-perou/index.aspx?view=d

U.S. Embassy in Lima

Avenida La Encalada cdra. 17 s/n Surco, Lima 33, Peru

T: 51 1 618 2397

http://lima.usembassy.gov/





NB At the time of creation the information in this document was correct. However, it is subject to change without notice.