

La Paz & Vicinity

Altitude: in town, 11,916 ft/3,632 m; at the airport, 13,392 ft/4,082 m.

Population: One million-plus

Introduction

La Paz is not a big city on the world scale, but it is certainly one of the more interesting ones. Built in a bowl created by the Choqueyapu River, the upper parts of the city stand 1,645 ft/500 m above the lower sections. Unlike any other city in the world, the richer neighborhoods are located at the lower levels. This is partly due to the fact that it is warmer and easier to breathe at the lower altitudes. Also, the pinnacles and spires of conglomerate rock and clay that have been sculptured by wind and water make a dramatic backdrop for those living below them. The higher up the bowl one goes, the more unstable the land becomes and the more likely a landslide will occur.

The plazas, squares and Prado are well kept in La Paz and even in the depth of winter plants are tended to help make the city attractive. Street cleaners are out every day and local merchants regularly wash the area in front of their shops. On a clear day, Mount Illimani, a snow-covered monolith, can be seen as a sentry towering over the city.

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❖ MURURALA MYTHOLOGY

Illimani has three main peaks. The northernmost peak is 21,500 ft/6,500 m high, the central and southernmost peaks are about 21,000 ft/6,200 m. Nearby is Mount Mururalla, a snow-covered mountain with a flat top that stands below Illimani. Mythology claims that Mururalla was at one time a tall and vain giant. But Illimani threw a stone and yelled, "Sarjami!," which means "be off with you" in Aymara. The giant's head rolled across the Altiplano and came to rest near two sisters. The head became the mountain now called Sajama, Bolivia's highest peak, and the sisters are the volcanoes, Parinacota and Pomerata.

The restaurants of La Paz offer both an exotic and ethnic smorgasbord for visitors. Hotels can be found tucked between artisan shops and street

tiendas that are selling everything from mounted tarantulas (not considered endangered) to silver soup tureens. The nightlife is peppered with everything from Andean pan flute music to jazz bars featuring world-famous players to wild discos and secluded piano bars.

More than half of the one million people living in La Paz are of pure Andean descent and many of them are in the streets promoting the arts of their culture or selling the produce of their relatives. The markets around Plaza San Francisco and Plaza Murillo bristle with fresh produce, handmade artifacts and factory-produced junk. Every tour in the country can be booked through an agency in La Paz or the city can be visited solely for shopping or cultural events.

Getting Here & Around

◆ By Air

Lloyd Air Bolivia and AeroSur fly to most places in Bolivia. Destinations not covered by these two companies are serviced by TAM, SAVE and Amazonas Air (see page 43 for contact details). Between them, these airlines provide numerous flights from La Paz. There are four flights a week to Cobija, 32 flights a week to Cochabamba, two flights a week to Guayaramerin, three flights a week to Puerto Suarez, two flights to Riberalta, 22 flights a week to Rurrenabaque, one daily to San Borja, 56 flights a week to Santa Cruz, 11 per week to Sucre, four a week to Tarija and three a week to Trinidad.

The airport is in El Alto, a place that is considered unsafe for tourists. A minibus (50¢) located just outside the airport doors goes on a freeway down a steep slope and along Avenida Santa Cruz, the city's main street. You must know where you want to get off, and then you must carry your baggage to the hotel. A taxi (\$7 for up to four people) will take you all the way to your hotel. This is a fixed rate, with no room for negotiation.

TAM (☎ 244-3487, www.tam.com.br) has an airport beyond the international one at El Alto and it offers the only service to Rurrenabaque. A taxi to this airport from town is \$5.50 for up to four people. The airport tax is 75¢ per person.

Often, TAM must cancel flights because their planes can't handle difficult weather conditions or wet landing fields so common in the jungle. Occasionally, they will land in Reyes, just a short bus ride from Rurrenabaque. If they offer you this alternative, it is a good one. If they cancel a flight and you can't make the next one, they will refund your money. The flights can be rocky. They do not pressurize the cabins and to protect your ears they supply cotton batten. Security is not intensive.

◆ By Bus

If arriving by bus you will arrive either at the main bus station on Avenida Guachalla #494 and the corner of Calle Sanchez Lima, ☎ 241-6545, or the Cementario, which runs along Heroes del Pacifico. It is a 45-minute walk from Cementario to San Francisco Plaza and less than half an hour from

the main terminal to the plaza. Taking public buses with luggage is difficult and dangerous. A taxi will cost about 50¢ per person.

The main bus station has 39 bus lines that service the country. There is one bus a day to Arica, Chile, 24 to Cochabamba, one to Iquiqu and one to Llallagua, 35 to Oruro, four to Potosi, 20 to Santa Cruz, four to Sucre, five to Tarija, one to Tupiza, three to Yacuiba and one to Uyuni.

For the most part, you can show up whenever you are ready and wait for the next run. However, for trips with just one or two buses per day, it's best to purchase a ticket at least a day in advance.

◆ By Car & Motorcycle

Private vehicles with drivers can be hired to go anywhere. The cost ranges from \$50 to \$80 per day. I found **Huayna Tours** to be excellent (Calle Sagarnaga #398 at Illampu, ☎ 245-6717, berrios@mail.magalink.com). Their driver was cautious and courteous and the vehicle was in good shape. Jeeps are safer than buses for some routes.

Rentals

I don't recommend driving a car, but if you must, there are some reputable rental companies. Insurance is a must. Third-party liability coverage, although not compulsory, is highly advisable, despite the cost.

Localiza, Hotel Radisson, ☎ 244-1011, reserves@localizabolivia.com, has everything from a small Suzuki Swift to a Vagoneta Toyota Prado. Prices vary but a middle-of-the-list vehicle, such as a Vagoneta Suzuki Gran Vitara, rents for \$68 a day with 92 miles/150 km at no charge and \$420 per week with 643 miles/1,050 km at no charge. Localiza also has offices in Santa Cruz, Cochabamba and Tarija.

American Rent-a-Car, Avenida Camacho #1547, ☎ 7720-0367 (cell), has eight options of 4x4 vehicles. A Toyota jeep costs \$70 a day with 122 miles/200 km at no extra charge. A Toyota Hilux truck is \$60 a day or \$400 a week, with up to 200 km/125 miles a day or 1,350 km/850 miles a week included in the price.

AdMo-Tours, Calle Illampu #815, ☎ 245-1660, www.adno-tours.com, rents motorcycles in Bolivia and Chile. You can get one with or without a guide. They have Honda XR 200R, Honda NT 400 Falcon, Honda XR 600R and 650R and Honda 750 Africa Twin. Without a guide they run \$60 and \$100 per day, \$380 to \$600 a week. With a guide the cost is \$90 to \$130 a day, \$550 to \$820 a week. For \$100, they will handle all the paperwork and insurance needed to go to Peru or Chile. You must be 23 years old, have a valid and unlimited national motorcycle license and payment must be made by check or credit card. If reserving a motorcycle, you must pay four weeks prior to rental date. Cancellation fees are minimum \$100 and no-shows are subject to full payment.

History

La Paz was originally a stop-off place for silver caravans going from Potosi to the coast. Mostly, the caravans stopped to dump passengers or llama

skimmers who got sick. Life in this outpost must have been pretty boring until some young officer decided to try his hand at gold panning and came up with a bundle. The city started to grow.

Peace was never a lasting thing in Bolivia, mostly because the Indians were treated so badly. The Spanish greed caused no end of hardship for locals and struggles for power continued among the Spanish. **Pedro de la Gasca**, the ruler of the area, beat the ruthless **Gonzalo Pizarro** at the battle of Saxahuana on April 9, 1548. In celebration, Gasco ordered **Alonso de Mendoza**, who presided over the area now called Bolivia, to build a new city to honor this event.

On October 20, 1548, Alonso deMendoza declared the city of Nuestra Señora de la Paz to be that place. Just over 100 years later there were over 500 Spaniards living in La Paz, on the river's west side, and twice as many indigenous people living on the opposite side of the river.

Within the first year, **Juan Gutierrez Paniagua** was hired as the city planner. His greatest achievement was the design of Plaza Murillo. The government buildings and the cathedral were placed on the square.

Services

◆ Useful Numbers

Ambulance, ☎ 118
Fire, ☎ 119
Police, ☎ 237-7385
Hospital, ☎ 222-9180

The **telephone office** is on Avenida Ayacucho #267, between Calle Camacho and Calle Mercado. It's open from 7:30 am until 10:30 pm daily. This is the main office; smaller offices are dotted around the city. Booths here are hooked up to a computer so you can see a digital display with your time and charge.

◆ Communications

The **post office** is on Avenida Mariscal Santa Cruz and Calle Oruro. It's open 8:30 am to 8 pm, Monday to Friday, and 9 am to 7 pm on Saturdays. Postage fees are about the same as in North America or Europe.

Photocopy shops are everywhere. A large business that has many machines will charge 25¢ for one 8x11 form, while a small company may charge as little as 15¢.

Internet Service. There are as many Internet cafés in Bolivia as there are shoe shine boys, so finding a machine is never difficult. If the service uses telephone lines, the average cost is \$2 per hour; if there's a cable system, the cost is 50¢ an hour.

◆ Laundry

Laundry service is usually offered at hotels. There are also laundromats in town. The following are good and located near the tourist hotels. **La**

Famelia Laundry, Calle Tarija #340, ☎ 239-2943, 8 am-6 pm, charges by the kilo and does a good job. Unlike many laundry companies in town, this one opens on time and has things ready before your agreed time. **Lavenderia Maya**, Calle Sagarnaga #339, ☎ 248-5639, charges by the kilo and will deliver your clothes to your hotel. They offer same-day service.

◆ Maps

Maps are available from the government office on Avenida Bautista Saavedra in Miraflores, open 8:30 to noon and 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm. **Guzman** (☎ 273-3124, rguzman@accelerate.com) are the best Bolivian-made maps. A topographical map of Sajama, for example, costs \$6. **Tu Musica**, Calle Sagarnaga #189, shop 17, ☎ 231-9162, has Berndston & Berndston maps, some trekking and climbing maps, road maps, Guzman maps and city maps.

◆ Medical Centers

UNIMED, Avenida Arce #2630, is a large association of general practitioners and specialists who charge \$7 per visit. They patronize a laboratory across the street, Lab-tek, Avenida Arce and Campos, Edificio Illimani, #4, ☎ 243-1988. I think the lab needs some quality control training. If you need testing, have your doctor insist that the work be done when it is brought in. Blood tests run about \$5 and stool examinations are \$8.

Dr. Luis Jesus Garcia, Calle Chichas #1222, in lower Miraflores, ☎ 224-2974, is a general practitioner who has been trained in Europe. He is often recommended by the hotel administration. He will insist on coming to your hotel room and will charge \$40 per visit, a steep fee for Bolivia. However, he speaks English well and gives fairly good service.

◆ Outdoor Adventure Clubs

If you are serious about climbing or skiing, you may contact either of the following clubs and go with locals. Contacting them gives you an "in" to places not mentioned in guidebooks and so not inundated with tour groups.

Club de Montañismo Halcones is actually based in Oruro at Casilla #179, cmh_oruro@yahoo.com (I could not obtain a phone number). Halcones translates into hawk or falcon, and this is a hang gliding club. A lot of their gliding is done around Lake Titikaka.

Andino Boliviano, Calle Mexico #1638, Casilla de Correos #1346, ☎ 232-4682. This organization registers solo hikers and climbers. During ski season, they will also go up to Chacaltaya to ski. They hire a van if the numbers warrant it. Foreigners are welcome.

Gravity Assisted, Avenida 16 de Julio #1490, ground floor of Edificio Avenida, ☎ 231-3849, www.gravitybolivia.com, gravity@unete.com, is for cyclists. If you would like information on places to cycle, to have your bike fixed, to purchase parts and to get information about weather, altitude or safety conditions or just to hang out with other cyclists, this is the place.

Hash House Harriers is for hashers (runners), www.lapazhash.com, ☎ 279-1524. A sister group in Santa Cruz offers a group run, followed by a dinner/party (see *Adventures on Foot*, page 248, for details).

Festivals

Make an effort to be in La Paz for one of their special festivals and you will be well rewarded. The people are friendly and you will be invited to join in the fun. Besides the big events listed here, most Saints' days are celebrated with traditional food and drink. Dates for these events can be obtained from the tourist office on the Plaza Estudiantes, at the south end of Avenida Santa Cruz.

◆ Alasita

Alasita ("buy from me" in Aymara) is held in honor of the god of fertility, happiness and prosperity. Known as Ekeko ("dwarf" in Aymara), he is a miniature doll, a stout smiling guy loaded with everything from money to musical instruments to food, from coca leaves to vehicles – anything that a living person may want. According to tradition, Ekeko, carrying the objects desired, should be purchased at noon on the 24th and blessed in a ceremony that uses alcohol, confetti, paper streamers and candy. He should then be blessed again with holy water. The hope is that the items your Ekeko carries are what you will be blessed with the following year.

❖ WHAT MORE COULD A MAN WANT?

Originally, Alasita was a celebration by the Aymara of the spring equinox and was in honor of the coming crops. The Spaniards changed the date of the celebration to the end of January for whatever reason. In retaliation, the Aymara made the festival into a mockery of the Spaniard's greed by creating Ekeko and loading him up with every conceivable item that could be purchased.

The event starts during the final week in January and lasts for two weeks. During this festivity, the city holds the largest handicraft fair in the country. It takes place in the grounds of the old zoo, across from the open-air theater. Ten thousand merchants play host to almost 100,000 visitors during this fair.

◆ Carnival

Carnival, held 40 days before Easter, is good here, although the best celebration is in Oruro. In La Paz, the event goes for four days with parades, drinking, eating, blessings and dancing.

The big thing during Carnival is to douse friend, foe and tourist with water. The most popular strategy is to fill a balloon with water and launch it at someone. Market ladies fill and sell buckets of *globos* all day long. Standing on a balcony with a bucket of water ready to dump is also common. During Carnival, rain gear is essential.

❖ DEADLY GLOBOS

Some protestors are trying to have *globos* abolished because people have been injured and killed by them. During the 2003 Carnival, 11 people were killed in La Paz from the over exuberance of the festivities, although not all deaths were caused by the throwing of *globos*.

◆ Gran Poder

Gran Poder (Great Power), held in June, is almost as extravagant an event in La Paz as Carnival is in Oruro. First held in 1939 as a candlelight procession in the El Alto area and featuring a statue of Christ at the head of the line, it has grown to include all La Paz residents. Although it is no longer a candlelight event, Gran Poder is celebrated with a parade, costumes, dances and fiesta-type activities.

The parades go through the downtown area of La Paz, ending on Calle Camacho.

The date of this fiesta changes yearly (though it always takes place on a weekend) so you must check with the tourist office or your hotel owner.

◆ Smaller Events

September 28 is **World Tourism Day**, where promotional booths are set up along the Prado. There are also events like cooking competitions. Tickets to tourist events are raffled off.

October 20 is the day La Paz was **founded**. It's more fun to join the parties and parades.

The **Festival of Todos Santos** takes place on November 1 and 2. Locals bring special cakes, breads and candies to the cemetery and offer them to their ancestors. This event often features a band.

Sightseeing

◆ City Sights

City Tours are offered by a number of companies and I recommend them for first-time visitors. They usually run for a couple of hours in the morning and again in the afternoon, with a break in the middle of the day. The cost is around \$10 for the day. English is usually spoken or piped through an audio system that you hear with earphones.

Vesty Pakos Zoo, just past Valle de la Luna, is the world's highest zoo. It houses 63 species that include snakes, birds, llamas, lions and even a jaguar. The zoo sits at 10,740 ft/3,265 m in an attractive landscape. The zoo is open from 10 am to 6 pm daily, and costs 50 cents to enter. To get there, take a bus from Plaza Estudiantes to Zoologia.

◆ Historical Churches

Most churches are open all day and visitors are welcome as long as they don't disturb services. There is no charge for this, unlike Peru where one must pay to visit historical churches.

San Francisco, on the plaza of the same name, was the inspiration of Francisco de Los Angeles. Construction was completed in 1549. The original building was of mud brick, but it crumbled under a heavy snow fall. The replacement was built between 1743 and 1753 of stone from the quarry in Viacha.

At the top end of the plaza is a stone carving known as **Pucara**, where meetings (usually political) are held and hundreds of people gather. The carving represents the melding of all Bolivian cultures.

Santo Domingo on Calle Ingavi Yanacocha was completed in 1760 and, like San Francisco, is a mestizo-baroque design. **San Pedro Church** on Plaza Sucre, built in 1790, has a façade that shows the end of the baroque period and the beginning of the neoclassic style.

For examples of neo-gothic architecture, visit the **San Calixton** church on Calle Pichincha near Avenida Jaen. It was built in 1882. **La Recoleta**, on Avenida America between Calle Pando and Plaza Alonzo de Mendoza, was finished in 1894 and is also an example of neo-gothic architecture.

The **Nuestra Señora de La Paz Cathedral** on Plaza Murillo was started in 1831 and completed in 1925. The cathedral is an imposing structure known mostly for its stained glass windows. Set on a hill, its entrance on Calle Potosi is 39 ft/12 m lower than the main entrance on the square.

◆ Architecture

Templete Semisubterraneo is across from the stadium at the end of Avenida Bolívar. This is a reproduction of the temple at Tihuanaco. At one time the main statue was the original, but that was moved to the Archeological Museum and replaced with a reproduction.

The **Presidential Palace** on Plaza Murillo is also called Palacio Quemado (Burnt Palace) because of the many fires the building has endured in the past. Most were set in rebellion against the presiding government. The Spanish, in 1810, hanged Don Pedro Murillo for treason in the square now bearing his name. Then, in 1946, a mob of angry women, mostly widows, grabbed President Gualberto Villarroel and hanged him from a lamppost in the same square. He was held responsible for the deaths of their husbands. There is a statue of Villarroel in the square commemorating his life, rather than his death.

Adventures

◆ Adventures in Culture

If you want a panoramic, colorful, and unique view of Bolivian history, culture, and artifacts, a visit to this group of four museums is a necessary and well-spent morning or afternoon. To reach the **Calle Jaen Museums**, walk

up Calle Jaen to Avenue Sucre to the Museo Costumbrista. Purchase your \$2 ticket here; it's good for all four museums – Museo Costumbrista, Museo del Litoral, Casa de Don Pedro Domingo Murillo, and Museo Metales Preciosos Pre-Columbinos. The museums are open Tuesday to Friday, 9:30 am to noon and 12:30 to 2:30 pm, and on weekends, 10 am to 12:30 pm. On Saturday there is no admission fee.

Museo Costumbrista, Calle Jaen and Calle Sucre, ☎ 237-8478, shows La Paz and Bolivia in an array of pictorial representations of historic events, landscape paintings, photos, sculpture and ceramic doll displays.

Museo de Litoral, Calle Jaen #798 (no phone), showcases Spanish army uniforms, military scenes in watercolor, displays of swords, pistols, rifles, antique historical maps and life-size mannequins chronicling the war with Chile in 1884 when Bolivia lost its sea connection to the rest of the world. If you go to Copacabana on Lake Titikaka, you will see the remnants of the Bolivian navy: a few sailors, a few boats and, as one sailor humorously boasts, a large fleet of Bolivian submarines.

Museo de Metales Preciosos Pre-Columbinos (Gold Museum) at Calle Jaén #777, ☎ 237-1470, is a comprehensive precious metal museum showing pre-Columbian gold, silver and copper work.

Casa de Don Pedro Domingo Murillo, Calle Jaen #790, ☎ 237-5273, is a museum that holds a collection of colonial furniture, textiles, glass ware and household bric a brac – typical possessions of the colonial classes.

Museo de Instrumentos Musicales, Calle Jaen #711, ☎ 233-1077, holds a vast array of unimaginable instruments. The pan flute and its distinct sound symbolize the music of Bolivia, and here you will see the instrument's multiple types and sizes; one set of flutes (aerophonos) is taller than a man. The hundreds of guitars on display range from standard shapes, to one odd invention with five necks that circle the sound box. The drums are wonderful, wonky and out of round, with llama hide heads complete with hair. This incredible range of unique instruments, from the ancient to the conventional and contemporary, is of interest for its surprise, range and novelty. Admission is 75¢, a bargain.

The above museum profiles were written by Barry McKinnon from Canada.

National Art Museum, Calle Comercio, on the corner of Socabaya near Murillo Square, ☎ 237-1177, is open Tuesday to Friday, 9 am-12:30 pm and 3-7 pm, Saturday and Sunday, 10 am-1 pm. Admission is 50¢. The museum is located in a colonial structure built in 1775 by an official, Don Tadeo Diez de Medina. The arched walls surrounding the patio form hallways that are decorated with wood benches and large old vases.

It was inaugurated as a museum in 1964, and the religious art is dominated by paintings of Potosi's Mellchor Perez Holguin (1660-1735). Born in Cochabamba, Holguin moved to Potosi early in life and spent all his time in

his adopted city. His paintings are of the Hispanic-American baroque style and his first works are in the Banco Central in La Paz.

The second school of art represented is in the Rollao style from the Lake Titikaka area. The greatest artist from that school was Leonardo Florez, a mestizo who worked around 1680. His painting, the *Adoration of Shepherds*, was reproduced on one of Bolivia's postage stamps.

Cecilio Guzman de Rojas and Arturo Borda, whose works are also featured in the museum, are credited with changing art in Bolivia. Guzman, born in Potosi, is known for his indigenous style, while Borda's subjects were always about the city of his birth, La Paz. Another artist represented here is Marina Nuñez del Prado, who has international acclaim and a museum of her own in the city.

The museum sells books in English or Spanish about Bolivian art.

Museum of Ethnic Art and Folklore, Calle Ingavi #916, on the corner of Jenaro Sanjines, ☎ 235-8859. Displays change monthly. The rest of the museum, located in a house built in the late 1700s, contains weavings and dolls. The weavings are from different regions and are laid out in drawers below an antique weaving from the same area. You'll see many variations of each style. I couldn't see enough. There's no entrance fee. If you go to just one museum, make it this one.

Museum of Natural History, Calle 26, Cota Cota, ☎ 279-5364, is open Monday to Friday, 8:30 am-12:30 pm and 2:30-6 pm. It contains specimens of plants, animals, rocks and fossils from all around the country.

Casa of Marina Nuñez del Prado, Avenida Ecuador #2034, ☎ 232-4906, displays sculptures by this famous Bolivian artist, teacher and sculptor. Born in La Paz in 1910, Nuñez studied art at the National school of Fine Arts and taught sculpture at the university. In 1930 she won the Best Execution of the Year award and her reputation was established. In 1936, she won a gold in Buenos Aires as the best foreign artist; in 1938 she won another gold at an international exhibition in Berlin; in 1946 she won an award in New York. All in all, Nuñez has won 20 international awards and had a public square named after her. Nuñez was married to Jorge Falon, a well-known Peruvian writer. She died on September 9, 1995. Her house in La Paz became the museum. It's open Monday to Friday, 9 am-1 pm.

The Children's Museum, also called Kusillo Museum, is on Mirador Laykakota on Avenida del Ejercito, ☎ 244-4311. It's open daily, 10:30 am-6:30 pm, and costs 75¢ for kids and \$1 for adults. This interactive museum allows children to experience hands-on activities related to the culture of Bolivia. Peter McFarren and his wife Wendy are involved in this project. They had consultants from numerous Western countries help with the museum's building. Some of the financial assistance came from the Dutch government.

Next to the Children's Museum will be the **Museum of Bolivian Arts and Culture**, also an inspiration of Peter and Wendy McFarren. This museum will be built with the help of the Smithsonian Institution. It will feature pre- and post-Colonial art, including feather art, textiles, masks and instruments. Also on display will be the excellent photos of indigenous people taken by Peter McFarren. (This museum is scheduled to open in the near future.)

A **cable car**, El Fenicular, is located at the Kusillo Plaza below the Kusillo Cultural Complex that includes the plaza, artists shops (not yet open) and the museums. You can take the cable car either up or down for 15¢ or you may buy a ticket to the entire complex for \$1. This cable car, which opened its tracks in October, 2003, sits at 3,600 m/11,800 ft, making it the highest in the world, superseding the one in Switzerland by 144 m/472 ft. The cars are powered by electricity and will hold up to 20 people or 1,500 kg/680 lbs. They travel at a rate 1.2 m/4 ft per second.

The Coca Museum, Calle Linares #906, open Monday to Friday, 10 am-noon and 2-7 pm, charges foreigners \$1 and locals 25¢ to enter. As you go in, you'll be handed a pamphlet (English language) describing the history of coca. The displays inside cover the uses and abuses of the coca plant and how these came into being.

The **Textile Museum**, Calle Linares #906, open daily, 10 am-7 pm (closed noon-2 pm), charges a \$1 entry fee. The museum is not strictly a textile museum as it has Inca artifacts and hats, as well as Spanish military decorations. There is also a collection of artifacts from Tihuanaco.

Museo Nacional de Arqueología (Archeological Museum), Calle Tiwanacu #93 on the corner of Federico Zuarzo, Monday to Saturday, 9 am-noon and 3-7 pm, Sundays, 10 am-1 pm. Entrance fee, \$1. This museum is set in a building that has been designed to look like the pre-Columbian temple found at Tihuanacu. The carving of Pacha Mama (Mother Earth) stands 24 ft/7.5 m high and weighs 17 tons.

Museo Tambo Quirquincha, Calle Evaristo Valle, ☎ 239-0969, is open 9:30 am to 12:30 pm and from 3 pm to 7 pm during the week and then from 10 am to 12:30 pm on weekends. This is a permanent exhibition that has early photos of La Paz. There are art works from the colonial and republican periods plus masks, sculptures and oil paintings. There is also a permanent collection of contemporary plastic art.

Museo de la Revolution National, Plaza Villarroel, is open 9:30 am-12:30 pm and 3 pm-7 pm during the week, and 10 am-12:30 pm on weekends. It costs 15¢ to enter and view the murals painted by famous artists who lived during the revolution of 1952.

Museo de Arte Sacro, Calle Socabaya #432, is open 9:30 am-12:30 pm and 3 pm-7 pm during the week, and 10 am-12:30 pm on weekends. Admission is 45¢. The museum contains religious art from the 16th and 17th centuries. There is a permanent exhibition of paintings, plus sacred ornaments, silver and furniture used by bishops of La Paz.

◆ Adventures on Foot

Around Town

El Prado is the main street in town. Walking El Prado with its throngs of people is a must. There are the large colonial houses and five-star hotels to admire. Starting at the more affluent end in the south, near the higher-priced hotels, it is called Avenida 16 de Julio. The street changes to Avenida Mariscal Santa Cruz that has, near the north end, the famous San Francisco Church and plaza built in 1549. Continuing north, the name of the street changes to Avenida Montes. Branching off El Prado at the San

Francisco Church is Avenida Sagarnaga, also known as “tourist street,” lined with shops and vendors selling everything from llama fetuses to weavings and popcorn.

The **Witches Market**, on Calle Linares between Sagarnaga and Graneros, has objects, like llama fetuses, needed by locals who practice traditional ceremonies. There are herbs and spices, wines and amulets.

Above the Witches Market is **Mercado Negro** that covers hundreds of blocks going toward El Cementario. Each section covers a specific thing – electrical parts are in one area, while women’s shoes and skirts are in another. The flower section is beautiful.

Hiking

MIRADORS: There are numerous miradors, or lookout points, in La Paz from which to see the city. **Mirador Monticulo** is on Calle Salazar, five blocks up from Plaza Isabel la Católica that sits on Avenida Arce. Monticulo is also half a block from Plaza España, up a road that takes vehicles. At the bottom of the hill is the Contemporary Art Museum.

Mirador Templo Andino Jach’a Apacheta is on a hill above El Alto. Take a bus to Villa Victoria and have the driver point out the direction of the hill. This is the highest point in the city and was a lookout point for people living in the area for centuries. Due to robberies, it is advised to visit here in a group.

Mirador Killi Killi is in Agua de la Vida at the end of Avenida La Bandera. To get there, take a minibus from Avenida La Bandera and Calle Colon (Colon runs one block downhill from the palace on Plaza Murillo) to the top. This is an easy place to reach and, if walking, you can be on the hill in about 45 minutes.

Mirador Andino Jacha’Qullu is a tiny hill and park in the suburb of Nuevo Potosi in the west end of town, off Calle 3 de Mayo. To walk here is tricky, as the route has many curves and turns. Take a taxi instead. The advantage of coming here is that it offers a different view. The hill is an important ceremonial center of the Andean culture.

Mirador Parque Laykakota on Cerro Laykakota is in the Santa Barbara zone and is known as Witch Hill. The park offers a good view of the city.

CHIARKOTA LAKE: Lago Chiarkota can be visited as a day trip from La Paz. The bus going past Refugio Huayna Potosi will let you off at the hamlet just before. From there, walk the road past Lake Tuni to the dam. A track goes toward Condoriri (up) and climbs from 13,000 ft/4,000 m at the dam to 18,000 ft/5,400 m at the lake. A few signs show the way. It takes three to four hours to walk to Lake Chiarkota and another two or three to get back down. You can hire a local guide for \$25 per person, per day.

VALLEY OF THE MOON: Valle de la Luna is six miles/10 km from the center of La Paz and can be reached by joining a tour or by taking micro bus #11 or minibus #231 or 273 to Mallasilla. These buses can be caught at Plaza Belzu on Avenida Mexico in San Pedro. Tell the driver where you want to go and he will point the way as you disembark. Because of the ter-

rain, wear good shoes/boots and carry water. City tours that stop here are offered by many companies in La Paz.

The hillside features a maze of clay canyons and pinnacles that have been sculpted by wind and rain. Narrow trails through the landscape take about an hour to walk.

As you continue up the road you will come to **Parque National Mallasa** with its bird observatory and, across the road, the zoo area. The road passes under natural stone bridges and past Chulpani's Red Hill. There is no mistaking which hill this is. From Mallasa one can see across the river to the highest golf course in the world (see below).

DEVIL'S TOOTH: Muela del Diablo is a huge volcanic plug sticking out of the landscape to a height of 13,000 ft/3,950 m. The area is a popular picnic destination and can be reached by taking minibus #288 or #207 to El Pedregal from Plaza Belzu on Avenida Mexico in San Pedro. Several trails go to the right; follow the one that obviously leads to the village. From there, go to the left for .3 miles (about half a kilometer), to the foot of the rock.

VALLEY OF THE SPIRITS: Canyon de Palca, or Valle de Animas, is a deep canyon that was carved by the Rio Palca centuries ago. To get there, take a bus going to Huni from Plaza Belzu on Avenida Mexico in San Pedro. Or take a bus to Ovejuyo and then a second *trufi* toward Huni. Your hike will end in Palca and getting back to Huni and finally La Paz will require either good timing for buses, a taxi or a hired jeep with driver who will wait for you. Check with your bus driver as to when the last bus leaves Palca. Once in Huni, follow the main road through the village and into the valley. Mt. Illimani is constantly in view. Continue for 1½-two hours until you see the river (without much water) on your right. Follow it toward the canyon, filled with huge pinnacles and wind-carved conglomerates. The trail continues along the bottom of the canyon to a natural obelisk. Just past the obelisk is a rock that has the appearance of a human hiding in a cave. The rock is called the hermit of the canyon. Continue along the canyon to its end and climb to your left up to the village of Palca. This is a long day-hike. Be certain to carry water, wear good shoes and have a snack.

CHACALTAYA: Skiing on the world's highest ski hill, Chacaltaya, just 23 miles/37 km from the city, is a must for ski buffs who are in the area from February through to April. Hikers, of course, should go up any time. Chacaltaya, which means cold in Aymara, is 17,800 ft/5,400 m high and the ski run starts just below the summit and goes 2,300 ft/700 m down the steep tongue of a glacier.