

# Quaker “Connections” Study Tour

QST Bolivia: January 7-20<sup>th</sup> 2026

(The 7th and 20th are travel days)

Updated: 10/25/25

The Bolivian Quaker Education Fund, BQEF provides scholarships for higher education, and access to non-formal education, through training in non-violence, and international exchanges while building connections of solidarity between Quakers in the Global North and Bolivian F/friends. As such, we are excited to offer this special “connections” tour where we will visit a wide variety of projects, supported by Quakers and Quaker-adjacent organizations from the North. Our goals are to foster relationships of solidarity, to learn, to share, and to celebrate work that reflects our collective Quaker values. Together, we will embrace new experiences and gain fresh perspectives. We hope this information packet will provide you with the information you need, to decide if this experience is right for you. If you have any questions please email [rebecca@bqef.org](mailto:rebecca@bqef.org) or text +1 607-592-4342. If you have not yet pre-registered, please fill out this [inquiry form](#).

Please attend our next Information Session on Wednesday, October 29th 7pm EST [Here is the Zoom Link](#). If that link doesn't work, [try this](#).

Information Packet Outline.

1. [Itinerary \(Subject to slight modifications\)](#)
2. [Trip Expenses, Money, Etc.](#)
3. [Preparing for the Journey: Precautions, Visa, Insurance, Health](#)
4. [Flight Suggestions](#)
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## Itinerary - Day visit details are subject to change

We suggest participants book flights from Miami airport on January 7th, aiming for a synchronized arrival by 8:40am on January 8th. Please note that participants will land at La Paz Airport in El Alto, which is situated at an elevation of over 13,615 feet. Transportation will be arranged to take you from the airport **departing at or around 9:30am** to Sorata, located at 9,150 feet, where you will spend three days and nights. This will give you an opportunity to acclimatize to the altitude.

Each morning, before breakfast we will find a quiet place to worship for 30 minutes. In the evenings, when possible, we will offer a post-dinner facilitated group reflection.

\*When you see the word “possible” on the itinerary, this means that the activity may happen on a different day.

**Thursday the 8th** - Participants take overnight flights arriving at the El Alto, La Paz Airport on the 8th at or before 8:40 am for transportation to Sorata. Once we arrive in Sorata we will take our meals at the hotel and rest.

**Friday the 9th** - Group orientation, acclimation, light sightseeing in Sorata

### **Saturday the 10th**

Morning: We will travel to rural communities at the foot of the beautiful Illampu Mountain to visit with a few families of the students who reside at a boarding house in Sorata which is run by AVP/PAV Bolivia (Magaly Quispe).

Afternoon: Gathering with BQEFS scholars for reflections on their Alternatives to Violence, AVP training with dinner at the boarding house.

### **Sunday the 11th**

Morning: breakfast with BQEFS scholars at the boarding house, departure for Ruben Hilari's hometown of Walata Chico to visit his project to preserve native potato varieties, lunch with local leaders, visit to Aymara sacred sites.

Afternoon: travel to La Paz to check into Airbnb at 4 pm.



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## **Monday the 12th**

Morning: Visit with local guide Lucia Blanco to the market to purchase breakfast foods to prepare in our Airbnb, and walking tour to sights in and around the neighborhood of our Airbnb.

Afternoon: Cable car tour of La Paz with Lucia Blanco and BQEF scholarship students.

## **Tuesday the 13th**

Morning - Possible visit to Jaqi Aru, Ruben Hilari Quispe's organization in El Alto to see his library of translated books and educational materials, learn about Aymara language conservation, the Bolivian “Rights of Nature” and the Andean philosophy of *Sumak Kawsay*, in Spanish, *Vivir Bien*, *the concept of what it means to, “live well.”*

Afternoon - Possible visit to the Las Gregorias Weaving Cooperative, El Alto.

**Wednesday the 14th** - Visit with Magaly Quispe of PAV Bolivia to the Chonchocoro Prison in La Paz to see the green houses and to learn about her Alternatives to Violence work in prisons.

**Thursday the 15th** - Excursion with Quaker Bolivia Link to visit Potable Water Projects in the Highlands.

**Friday the 16th** - Visit with Emma Condori at the Friends International Bilingual Center, La Paz. Emma's work supports Quaker Christian Education with young adult friends. We will also learn about their food security relief work.

**Saturday the 17th** - Possible meeting with Friends World Committee for Consultation of the Americas representative from Bolivia, Milena Villca Mamani. - CMCA (Bolivia) with a shared lunch and presentation on their service projects.

## **Sunday the 18th**

Morning - Quaker Church, Max Paredes, accompanied by BQEF scholars, graduates and the Fundación Quákera de Educación en Bolivia, FQEB Board Members.

Lunch Apthapi (Aymara tradition, like a Pot Latch meal) with scholarship students, and graduates from the scholarship program.



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**Monday the 19th** - Participants can book flights departing at any time on the 19th and we will help you arrange taxis to the airport. Otherwise, participants are welcome to use the 19th as a day for sightseeing and shopping, departing on the 20th.

**Tuesday the 20th** - The QST officially ends on the 20th. If you are departing we ask that you book your return flight on the 19th or the 20th.

**\*If you plan to travel in Bolivia before the QST, or after, please let us know your plans.**

## Trip Cost, Expenses, Money, Etc.

**The trip cost is \$1,500 per person.** All participants under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

### Payment Schedule and Cancellation Deadline

**First Payment: October 31st - \$500**

**Second Payment: November 30th - \$500**

**Deadline for Cancellation and Full Refund - December 10th**

**Third Payment: December 31st - \$500**

### Included

- Ground transportation in Bolivia.
- 13 meals - these are meals we will share with our hosts and in communities.
- Lodging - this price is for shared double rooms - if you are unable to share a room, there will be an additional charge of \$150 to book a single room. You can request a roommate or we will carefully consider who to place you with based on your requested preferences.
- Guides and Spanish/English Interpreters.
- Honorariums of \$100 for each organization we visit.



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Not Included - Estimate around \$2,000

- Your roundtrip flight, expect to pay around **\$1,000 - \$1,500** depending on your departure city.
- 25 meals are not included. You should budget approximately \$15/meal x 25 = **\$375** for meals.
- Museum entrance fees and your cable car pass. Expect this to cost about **\$30**.
- Travel Insurance for health and flight. This could cost anywhere between **\$50 - \$200** depending on the plan you purchase.
- Spending money for snacks and gifts. We suggest you bring at least **\$100**.

We'll visit **Las Gregorias**, a weaving cooperative that got started with help from Quaker Bolivia Link. They're a delightful and inspiring group of women with fine quality weavings and fair trade pricing. Their lovely alpaca sweaters run from \$50 to \$70, scarves \$20 to \$25, as examples.

**Money** - The Bolivian bolivar is about 7 to a dollar in banks and ATM machines. However, due to the lack of foreign currency in the Bolivian reserves, the street value of the USD is much higher. For this reason, we recommend you consider bringing several hundred dollars in cash. Make sure your bills are crisp and pristine or they will be rejected. Please use a money belt. You do not need to obtain bolivianos in advance. Dollars are happily accepted in the airport and you can get bolivianos at ATM's on arrival, and exchange currency in central locations. We will help you with this.

**Visa and ATM cards** can be used in the cities to withdraw bolivianos, and are generally preferable to travelers' checks as cards get a better exchange rate, and avoid the fee (up to 15%) typically charged for cashing checks. American Express cards can be problematic as they charge a higher fee and are often not accepted internationally. **Let your visa and credit card companies know when and where you will be traveling** to prevent them from blocking your card for suspicious use. You will want some cash -preferably dollars in small denominations- 1's, 5's, 10's, and 20's. Larger bills can be changed in La Paz.

**Electricity** - Computer power cords work fine with Bolivian power (220v) but an inexpensive adapter is useful to fit Bolivian power outlets which are mostly European style. See <https://whatplug.info/from/usa/to/bolivia> for more details and a photo of the plug. You may wish to consider bringing a voltage converter.



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**Internet (wifi and cell) access** - Wifi is available at hotels, coffee shops, and restaurants. Cell service is stronger in larger cities. You can set your phone up with an international plan during the dates of travel through your carrier. Verizon, for example, charges \$10/day for a “TravelPass” or \$100/month for a monthly plan. If your phone is unlocked and still uses a SIM card, you can buy a local SIM card for much cheaper data rates. For mapping and directions, apps that download the map beforehand, like <https://organicmaps.app/>, are invaluable where the cell service is limited or expensive. **Please download WhatsApp to your phone so that you can use wifi calling.**

**Laundry** - We will NOT have access to a washer or dryer but you can wash by hand in the airbnb and set your clothes out to dry.

**Gifts** - Many people like to take gifts. We don’t want to promote an image of the wealthy elite distributing largesse, and it will probably not be appropriate to give to individuals, except our Bolivian tour guides, Alicia, and Lucia or the directors of the organizations we will be visiting. This is not a recommendation, though if you feel inspired, a small personal item would be appropriate.

We will make a \$100 cash donation to each organization we visit during our trip. This expense is included in the trip fee. **Please bring a special or meaningful card we can use to deliver these gifts to the organizations we visit.**

**Worship** - We will begin each day with a morning meditation/meeting. On Sunday the 18th we will visit a Quaker Church in La Paz. There are six Quaker Yearly Meetings in Bolivia, and all are pastoral meetings. Quakers in Bolivia are evangelical, conservative, and very devout and they refer to one another as “brothers and sisters.”

## Preparing for the Journey

It’s important to adopt new habits to keep ourselves healthy and safe while traveling in Bolivia:

1. Use bottled water for drinking and brushing your teeth. Hotels and restaurants typically provide purified water.
2. Don’t flush toilet paper. Use the small bin next to the toilet instead. This helps prevent plumbing issues in homes and hotels.



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3. Be mindful of your food and drink sources. It's safest to eat at a private home or a trusted restaurant. We'll have some meals in our hotel, other meals with people we visit, and in carefully chosen restaurants. Avoid street vendors and stick to hot, cooked foods. You can eat fresh fruits if you wash, dry, and peel them yourself. Avoid raw salads, lettuce, and tomatoes.
4. Check the packing list as you pack.
5. Bring photocopies of your passport, medical ID, credit cards (both sides), and airline ticket, and pack them separately. If you rely on prescription meds or glasses, bring copies of the prescriptions. Leaving extra copies with family can be helpful.
6. U.S. citizens entering Bolivia are required to purchase a 10-year visitor visa upon arrival (\$160). Your passport should be valid for 6 months beyond your travel date. You will be required to present hard copies of your passport, hotel reservations, return flight information, and itinerary. Check the Bolivian Embassy website and consult your airline for other countries' visa requirements.
7. You may decide to pay a little extra for travel insurance in the case of a cancellation or other problems with your flight. Check with your health insurance provider about trip coverage. AAA Plus members may have coverage for medical evacuation; verify with them. For travel medical insurance, resources like [www.globalunderwriters.com](http://www.globalunderwriters.com) are available.
8. The CDC suggests staying updated on all vaccinations. We won't visit yellow fever zones, and the vaccine isn't needed unless traveling from affected countries. Double-check requirements with your airline before departure. The Bolivian embassy website has current info, but airline requirements are more relevant.
9. Most people adjust to the altitude within a few days, though effects are unpredictable. *Diamox*, a prescription med, may help. Doctors usually suggest starting it a few days before traveling. It's available in Bolivia without a prescription. Consult your medical advisor about staying at altitudes up to 12,000 feet, and briefly above 14,000 feet in transit. The oxygen level in La Paz at 11,800 feet is 13.2% compared to around 20% at sea level, so we must breathe deeply. Any exercise can cause shortness of breath. Sometimes people have nausea, headaches, or a general malaise. Some people have trouble at night with shortness of breath while sleeping, causing them to feel panicky. The La Paz airport has oxygen available for travelers and our trip guides will carry a portable oxygen tank for anyone who needs it throughout the trip.



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**Health risks-** According to the CDC, traveler's diarrhea is the most common risk, and the above precautions are the best way to prevent it. It is rarely serious and lasts no more than 3 or 4 days. You may want to check the CDC website [www.cdc.gov/travel/](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/) for more information. In the past, other travelers have found the use of charcoal capsules helpful. If diarrhea does not respond to charcoal treatment in 4 days or is severe, Cipro is the antibiotic commonly prescribed, and is readily available in Bolivia without a prescription. You may want to take an antibiotic with you; if you don't need it, someone else might! **Please check with your medical advisor** to determine what precautions you wish to take.

**Although we don't dispense medical advice, here is a summary of some suggestions found helpful by experienced travelers:**

- Good hand-washing is a major preventative for many illnesses. We recommend that you take pocket-size containers of waterless hand sanitizer to use before eating.
- **Drink plenty of liquids and eat lightly** for 2 or 3 days before you go and after arriving.
- **Avoid alcohol in travel** and until you are fully adjusted and rested –several days.
- **Get plenty of rest.** When you arrive at high altitude, move slowly and breathe deeply, consciously creating pressure in your lungs. (More details later.)
- **Take grapefruit seed extract** to reduce the risk of infection from food and drink.
- **Use waterless hand sanitizer** often, especially before eating.
- **Don't eat street food.**
- Some people have found the use of activated **charcoal tablets, Pepto Bismol and probiotics** helpful for both prevention and treatment of common stomach upset while traveling in Bolivia.

Each person needs to decide on the “ounces of prevention” they feel comfortable with. We recommend plenty of caution for peace of mind and increased probability of a healthy trip. Also, please keep in mind that your health will also impact others on the trip.



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## Flight Recommendations

You can find flights to La Paz using sites like Kayak or Expedia, however, in order to coordinate our arrival, we recommend you book your flight on [Air Boliviana](#) from Miami.

**Miami departure on the 7th at 9:00pm arrival in La Paz on the 8th at 8:40am.**

Other flights will have you arriving earlier, around 2 am or 4 am and you will have to wait in the airport for the rest of the group to arrive. **Once you have made your first deposit, we suggest you secure your flight.** If you have trouble finding a good flight please reach out to [rebecca@bqef.org](mailto:rebecca@bqef.org) +1 607-592-4342

If you are not staying on for independent travel, we ask that you **book your return flight for the 19th or the 20th.**

## Lodging

- We will spend our first three nights, 8-10th in Sorata at this [Airbnb](#) located within walking distance to the center of town.
- Then, from January 11-20th we will be staying at this [Airbnb in La Paz](#).

## Meals

With a few exceptions, we will be eating all of our breakfasts in our Airbnbs. This will help us save money and time. Most of our lunches we will eat in communities or out and about as we are traveling to visit various groups. Dinners, with two exceptions, will be covered by participants. Our guides will provide us with a list of recommended restaurants near our lodging.

While there are usually vegetarian, gluten free and vegan options, it's important for us to know ahead of time, if you have food allergies or restrictions.

Participants 21 and older can order alcoholic beverages at their own expense; however, we kindly ask that you refrain from inviting our Bolivian friends to drink, as we are uncertain about their relationship with alcohol. Moderation is always appreciated!



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## Packing List

It will be summer in the Andes, so expect occasional rain. The temperatures in Sorata will be between 68 - 59 F and in La Paz, expect 66 degrees during the day and nighttime lows around 44 F. Bolivians tend to dress conservatively.

### Recommended

Here's a packing list for your trip:

- Sturdy walking shoes or hiking boots, and sandals (waterproof recommended)
- Layered clothing for UV protection and warmth
- Raincoat (doubles as a windbreaker)
- Flip-flops for showers
- Casual pants and shirts (long and short sleeves)
- Sweatshirt/sweater for layering
- Sleepwear and underwear
- Bandanna
- Hat/visor for sun protection
- Sunscreen and Sunglasses or transition glasses
- Water bottle
- Waterless hand sanitizer
- Skin lotion and lip protection (due to dry air)
- Washcloth, soap/toiletries, small towel
- Prescription medications (at least a 3-day supply in carry-on)
- Flashlight/headlamp and batteries
- Spending money (small denominations; pristine, undamaged bills only)
- Passport case/waist pack for passport and medical info
- Cell phone chargers and external battery (laptops not recommended, tablets okay)



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## Suggested

- water purification device that filters for bacteria and viruses.
- Any readings you might like to share with the group during reflections or worship
- money belt: do not plan to carry money or credit cards in your pockets
- smartphone with a functioning camera or an actual old-school camera
- binoculars
- extra glasses/sunglasses
- over-the-counter pain relievers
- grapefruit seed extract tablets or capsules, charcoal tablets
- journal, pen/pencil
- quick drying clothes are useful if you want to pack light and wash a few items yourself.

## General Info on Bolivia

### Language

Spanish, Aymara, Quechua, and Guaraní are all official languages of Bolivia. Government employees are expected to be fluent in one of the 3 indigenous languages in addition to Spanish. Most people we interact with will speak Aymara at home but will be comfortable speaking Spanish. If you are working on Spanish, you might try using the DuoLingo App. It will be very useful to be able to introduce yourself. They are always interested in knowing about your family, perhaps something about your work or activities, other Spanish-speaking countries you've visited, etc...

## Resource Materials

***Utama*** is a 2022 award-winning Bolivian film about the effects of climate change on culture and survival. You can watch it for \$2.99 on YouTube, or free with Amazon Prime. Another good film to watch is called ***Even the Rain*** which tells the story of Bolivia's water wars and how Bolivians eventually defeated Bechtel to reclaim water rights.



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You'll find a wealth of info online. [www.democracyctr.org](http://www.democracyctr.org), AndeanInformationNetwork, and BoliviaRising are good starting resources. If you google Vivir Bien, buen vivir, you'll get several versions of the traditional Andean philosophy and values.

## **Current political situation as of October, 2025**

For nearly 20 years, the socialist party Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) controlled the presidency, making higher education a constitutional right and implementing policies to enhance access and reduce costs, particularly for Indigenous students. In August, 2025, amid Bolivia's economic crisis and political strife, voters rejected the MAS party in the general election, and according to the National Electoral Tribunal, 19.8% of votes were null or blank. These are considered protest votes. The two candidates in the October 19 presidential runoff are centrist Rodrigo Paz and right-wing former president Jorge "Tuto" Quiroga.

We will be assessing the political, economic and environmental climate of Bolivia over the next three months leading up to the trip.

Bolivia's current [human rights](#), World Report 2024, Human Rights Watch

Bolivia's [Mother Earth Law](#), Climate Change Laws of the World website

[History of Quakers in Bolivia](#), Friends Journal article about Emma Condori Mamani's book, 'Quakers in Bolivia: The Early History of Bolivian Friends'



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