

Code BCP **Desert Horizons**

Tour Dossier Introduction

Dossier Last Updated: 26-03-2014

Tour Code: BCP

Duration: 13 nights / 14 days

Joining City: La Paz

Departure City: Santiago

Nearest Joining International Airport: La Paz El Alto International Airport (LPB)

Nearest Departing International Airport: Santiago A Merino Benitez Intl Airport (SCL)

Please check this document just before departing in case of last minute changes to your tour.

Tour Documents

 PDF Document  Web Page

 [Adventure Tour Pre Departure Information for South America](#)

 [Packing List for Adventure Tours](#)

 [Joining Letter for Adventure Tours beginning in La Paz](#)

 [Optional Excursions in South America](#)

 [Bolivia Dossier](#)

 [Chile Dossier](#)

 [Spanish Language Guide](#)

What's Included

- Drive on the Salar de Uyuni salt flats
- Entry to Laguna Colorada National Park
- Guided tour of the Valley of the Moon

- 12 nights in hotels, hostels & guesthouses, 1 nights on overnight buses
- 7 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 2 dinners
- Travel by local public bus, taxi, on foot, 4WD
- Tucan Travel Tour Leader, English-speaking local guide(s) on excursions

What's not Included

- International flights and departure taxes
- Domestic flight taxes if applicable
- Tips on included excursions, visas, travel insurance, personal items and single rooms.
- Airport transfers and pre and post tour accommodation

- Spending money – budget for meals, snacks, drinks, limited souvenirs, laundry, tips and any extras
- Optional excursions - Please see our optional excursions guide on the dossier page for a comprehensive list of optional activities and excursions available on this tour.

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1 to 1 - Arrive La Paz

The first day of your tour is simply an arrival day with no pre-organised activities. In order to allow time to relax and see some of the sights you may wish to add pre tour accommodation. On arrival please ask at the reception for information on when the pre departure meeting will be held.

We travel around Lake Titicaca as we make our way towards Bolivia. After crossing the border, we continue to travel across the scenic Altiplano (high plateau) following the shores of Lake Titicaca. As we continue our journey we have breathtaking views of the surrounding mountains as the road winds its way into La Paz, the highest capital city in the world at 3,636 metres.

Built on a series of hills and considered one of the world's most beautiful cities, La Paz was established in the basin of a canyon with the snow-capped Mount Illimani in the background. Our hotel is very centrally located and is just around the corner from the city's colourful indigenous street markets including the fascinating and suitably named "witches market" where bowler hat wearing women in their flared skirts sell such items as dead cats and llamas foetuses said to ward off evil spirits. The main square, Plaza Murillo, is also within walking distance. The square still retains its colonial buildings including the Presidential Palace. La Paz is possibly the best place to experience a traditional peña show of Andean music and dance where local bands play time-honoured instruments such as zampoñas (pipes) and charangos (ukulele).

There are also many optional excursions available. You might like to visit the Moon Valley with its strange rock formations shaped by the weather. Another fantastic excursion is to the emerald green area of Coroico, the gateway to the Bolivian jungle region and a great place to see sub-tropical vegetation and plants. En route you will cross a 5,000 metre high pass before descending to 1,300 metres on narrow mountain roads bordered by sheer drops. The excursion to Coroico can also be done by mountain bike, as it is downhill nearly all the way and very exhilarating, but not for the fainthearted!

Optional Excursions: City tour • Moon Valley • Death Road mountain biking • Urban Rush

Day 2 to 3 - Potosí

Travelling along scenic passes by public bus we come to the mining town of Potosí. The city was established by the Spanish in 1545 soon after the discovery of a rich vein of silver in a nearby hill, the Cerro Rico (or "rich hill"). It soon became the world's largest silver producer and silver from Potosí underwrote the Spanish economy, particularly the monarchy's extravagance, for over two centuries. In Spanish there is still a saying 'valer un potosi' (to be worth a fortune).

Millions of the indigenous population, and later, African slaves, worked in the mines in appalling conditions. You have the option to visit the mines, stopping first at the miners market to buy gifts such as coca leaves, dynamite and cigarettes. In the mines we will experience the difficult conditions in which the miners work - including 50°C heat. We'll pass several of the shrines they have made to the "Tios" which they hope will protect them while they're working in what they believe is the devil's territory. If you'd like to learn more of the historic silver industry you can take a tour of the Moneda, a museum exhibiting coins, artwork, mummies and many other interesting artefacts from Potosí's history

Optional Excursions: Silver Mines • City tour • Hot Springs • The Museo de la Moneda • The Mint

Day 4 to 6 - Uyuni

Moving on we reach the desolate town of Uyuni in the south of Bolivia. After a night in the town, we visit what is claimed to be the largest salt flat in the world, the brilliant white vast Salar de Uyuni. Travelling by 4WD vehicles we will spend two days exploring the salt lake and surrounds. First on the agenda is a visit to the Train Cemetery, where you can see the remains of 19th and early 20th century steam locomotives - a good place for artistic photographs. We will then come to Colchani, the main plant for the iodisation of salt and the best place to observe the methods of salt extraction from the salar. Here ovens are used to dry the salt, which is then formed into cakes. The highlight of the day is Fish Island (seasonal). Located in the centre of the salar, 100 kilometres from Uyuni, this hilly outpost is covered in giant cacti amid a flat, white sea of hexagonal salt tiles. The island is so named because it has the shape of a fish. Visiting Fish Island is quite otherworldly and the fantastic contrast of the brilliant blue sky (weather permitting of course) and the pure white of the salt flats will take your breath away. We spent the first night in a hotel made of salt.

Following breakfast we head for the Red Lagoon (Laguna Colorada). We pass through the Siloli Desert where we encounter spectacular landscapes with multicoloured volcanic rock formations and stop at other lagoons en route. Covering an area of 60 square kilometres, the lagoon has a rich red colouration derived from algae and plankton which thrive in its minerals. The shoreline is fringed with brilliant white deposits of sodium, magnesium, borax and gypsum and the lagoon is inhabited by numerous flamingos, three unique species of which breed there.

The following day we drive through the desert to see some spectacular mountains and lagoons filled with pink flamingos, ducks and other birds. We'll

have plenty of stops for photos and our driver and guide will provide a wealth of knowledge about the wildlife, geology and history of the flats. The night is spent in basic accommodation. It can get very cold at night so wrap up warm.

Please Note: Occasionally in the rainy season the salt flats become overly flooded and we may have to alter the itinerary if the salt flats are not safe to traverse.

Day 7 to 10 - San Pedro de Atacama

Travelling by 4WD vehicles we head up into the high Andes and come to Laguna Verde (Green Lagoon) rich in lead, sulphur and calcium carbonate and shadowed by the cone of the Licancabur Volcano. After crossing a 5,000 metre pass there lays a geyser basin with bubbling mud pots, hellish fumaroles and a thick aroma of sulphur fumes. Inside a small crater we observe boiling lava and we also stop at hot springs where you can bathe. We visit the volcanic zone 'Sol de Mañana' (Morning Sun) at 4,850 metres above sea level, followed by the Red Lagoon (Laguna Colorada), covering an area of 60 square kilometres, the lagoon has a rich red colouration derived from algae and plankton which thrive in its mineral waters. The shoreline is fringed with brilliant white deposits of sodium, magnesium, borax and gypsum and the lagoon is inhabited by numerous flamingos, three unique species of which breed there.

Leaving Laguna Colorada we visit the volcanic zone 'Sol de Mañana' (Morning Sun) at 4,850 metres above sea level. Here you'll discover a geyser basin with bubbling mud pots, hellish fumaroles and a thick aroma of sulphur fumes. Inside a small crater we will observe boiling lava and we will also stop at hot springs where you can bathe. Crossing a 5,000 metre pass we come to Laguna Verde (Green Lagoon) rich in lead, sulphur and calcium carbonate and shadowed by the cone of the Licancabur Volcano. Continuing on we will cross into Chile and come to San Pedro de Atacama in the world's driest desert. The area is famous for its lunar landscapes, geysers, salt flats and hot springs. There is an excellent archaeological museum at San Pedro de Atacama, housing a good selection of mummies and other ancient artefacts. Here we have the included visit to the eerie eroded salt mountains of the Valley of the Moon.

Day 11 to 12 - La Serena

We catch an overnight bus to La Serena, a pleasant little coastal town and important astronomical centre. Here you can laze around on the long beach, visit the interesting town or stroll to neighbouring Coquimbo along the bay. There are also optional excursions to the Elqui Valley the home of Chilean Pisco and also an optional excursion to one of the many Observatories to get a bird's eye view of the night sky.

Day 13 to 13 - Santiago

Entering the fertile region of the Chilean heartlands we pass farmlands and vineyards on the way to our final stop, the European-style capital Santiago.

Pedro de Valdivia established the city in 1541 but not much remains of its original glory. At Santa Lucia Hill where the original fortress was constructed, there are excellent views of the city below. However, for even better photo opportunities, take a funicular railway to the top of San Cristobal where the Statue of the Virgin overlooks the capital and the distant Andes. At this very pleasant viewing area you'll find wine -tasting facilities and a couple of beautifully situated swimming pools. Santiago is a very clean modern city with fountains, parks and imposing buildings. In the Plaza Constitución at the Palacio de la Moneda you can see the changing of the guard on most days or you can take an optional excursion to the port of Valparaiso and the resort of Viña del Mar.

Day 14 to 14 - Depart Santiago

Your adventure of a lifetime comes to an end today. If you have a late flight or have lengthened your stay by adding post tour accommodation you will have more time to explore the sights.

This itinerary is a guide. Changes may be made before or during your tour to improve the running or due to unforeseen circumstances.

Travel Style

This is an **Adventure Tour**. We see a destination from the locals' perspective using a variety of transport and staying in small locally owned accommodation. There is a maximum of 16 travellers with an average group size of 8-12.

Add-ons & Extras

On many of our Group Tours, we spend one night in our arrival and departure cities. If you want to explore these cities more we can book pre and post tour accommodation, city tours and airport transfers for you. Price information can be found on the price page of each tour. We also have **Add-ons** - short packages that can be booked alongside a tour or on their own and have been carefully designed to ensure you don't miss out on popular highlights.

Day by Day Itinerary

Day	Activity	Country	Meals	Single Room
Day 1	La Paz	Bolivia		
Day 2	Potosí			
Day 3	Potosí			
Day 4	Uyuni			
Day 5	Salar de Uyuni		LD	
Day 6	Entry to Laguna Colorada National Park		BLD	
Day 7	San Pedro de Atacama	Chile	B	
Day 8	San Pedro de Atacama		B	
Day 9	San Pedro de Atacama		B	
Day 10	Overnight Bus to La Serena		B	
Day 11	La Serena			
Day 12	La Serena		B	
Day 13	Santiago		B	
Day 14	Santiago			

(B - Breakfast, L - Lunch, D - Dinner included)

Please note the day to day itinerary above is given as a GUIDELINE ONLY.

For tours that include the option of a single supplement, a ? will indicate in which destinations single rooms are available.