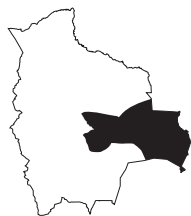


# Santa Cruz & Gran Chiquitania



The Bolivian Oriente is not what you generally see in Bolivian tourist brochures. This tropical region, the country's most prosperous, has a palpable desire to differentiate itself from Bolivia's renowned highland image. It has an odd mixture of conservatism, cosmopolitanism and provincialism, with a business head and a multicultural population. The region's agriculture boom in recent years brought about a rise in income and a standard of life that isn't matched by any other Bolivian province.

Following Evo Morales' proposed changes to the Bolivian constitution, the Oriente appealed strongly for local autonomy, but a national referendum backed the president and the region has been forced to search for more diplomatic avenues to get its way.

Despite the fact that Santa Cruz is Bolivia's most populous city, it still has a small-town atmosphere, peppered with international restaurants, trendy youth, and Japanese, German, Italian, Eastern European, Arabic, Indian Sikh and German-Canadian Mennonite communities. From here you can visit the charming Jesuit mission towns, which contain the country's loveliest and most fascinating examples of Jesuit architecture. Pre-Inca ruins hide near the small town of Samaipata, and there are miles of trekking and tons of wildlife at the little-disturbed Parque Nacional Amboró. Revolutionaries can check out where Ché Guevara met his maker at the northern end of the work-in-progress Ché Trail in La Higuera and Vallegrande. If you want a look into a part of Bolivia that defies the stereotype, this is the place to be.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Check out the international cuisine of **Santa Cruz** (p269) and wander around the city's streets
- Trek the still-untouched wilderness and spot rare wildlife at **Parque Nacional & Área de Uso Múltiple Amboró** (p276)
- Explore the pre-Inca ruins in **Samaipata** (p278) and relax in this lovely village
- Get revolutionary on the **Ché Trail** in Vallegrande (p283) and La Higuera (p285)
- Admire the restored architecture around the wonderful **Jesuit missions circuit** (p287)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 3

■ POPULATION: 2.03 MILLION

■ ELEVATION: 0M TO 1300M

