

South America Directory

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This directory provides general information on South America, from activities and books to toilets and telephones. Specific information for each country is listed in the Directory sections at the end of each country chapter.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Throughout the book's Sleeping sections, we list accommodations in order of price, with the cheapest listed first. For those nights when you need a break from shared showers and thin mattresses, we've also included a few midrange options as well as a few splurges for a real break from the long-haul grind.

Accommodation costs vary from country to country, with Andean countries (especially Bolivia) being the cheapest (from around US\$5 per night) and Chile, Brazil and the Guianas the costliest (upwards of US\$30).

Some excellent online resources can help you find a cheap sleep, including **CouchSurfing** (www.couchsurfing.com) and **Hostel World** (www.hostelworld.com).

Camping

Camping is an obvious choice in parks and reserves and a useful budget option in pricier countries such as Chile. In the Andean countries (Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru), there are few organized campgrounds. In Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and parts of Brazil, however, camping holidays have long been popular.

Bring all your own gear. While camping gear is available in large cities and in trekking and activities hubs, it's expensive and choices are usually minimal. Camping gear can be rented in areas with substantial camping and trekking action (eg the Lake District, Mendoza and Huaraz), but quality is sometimes dubious.

An alternative to tent camping is staying in *refugios* (simple structures within parks and reserves), where a basic bunk and kitchen access are usually provided. For climbers, most summit attempts involve staying in a *refugio*.

Hostels

Albergues (hostels) have become increasingly popular throughout South America and, as throughout the world, are great places to socialize with other travelers. You'll rarely find an official *albergue juvenil* (youth hostel); most hostels accept all ages and are not affiliated with Hostelling International (HI).

Hotels

When it comes to hotels, both terminology and criteria vary. The costliest in the genre are *hoteles* (hotels) proper. A step down in price are *hostales* (small hotels or, in Peru, guest-houses). The cheapest places are *hospedajes*, *casas de huéspedes*, *residenciales*, *alojamientos* and *pensiones*. A room in these places includes

BOOK ACCOMMODATION ONLINE

For more accommodations reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at www.lonelyplanet.com. You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

a bed with (hopefully) clean sheets and a blanket, maybe a table and chair and sometimes a fan. Showers and toilets are generally shared, and there may not be hot water. Cleanliness varies widely, but many places are remarkably tidy. In some areas, especially southern Chile, the cheapest places may be *casas familiares*, family houses whose hospitality makes them excellent value.

In Brazil, Argentina and some other places, prices often include breakfast, the quality of which is usually directly related to the room price.

Hot-water supplies are often erratic, or may be available only at certain hours of the day. It's something to ask about (and consider paying extra for), especially in the highlands and far south, where it gets cold.

When showering, beware the electric shower head, an innocent looking unit that heats cold water with an electric element. Don't touch the shower head or anything metal when the water is on, or you may get shocked – never strong enough to throw you across the room, but hardly pleasant.

In Sleeping sections throughout this book, dormitory prices are for rooms with shared bathrooms, while room prices include private bathrooms, unless otherwise noted.

ACTIVITIES

Whether you take to the jungle, the mountain or the ocean blue, opportunities for serious adventure are virtually boundless in South America.

Cycling

Pedaling in South America can prove an arduous undertaking, but the rewards are beyond anything the bus-bound can imagine. You can cycle the 'World's Most Dangerous Road' (p182), scream down the flanks of an Ecuadorian volcano and dodge sheep herds in Patagonia. No matter where you end up

riding, bring everything from home as equipment is hard to find outside major cities, and even then it can be painfully expensive.

If you're not bringing your bike, you'll find opportunities to rent for a day or join a mountain-biking tour. Online, check out **South American Bicycle Touring Links** (www.transamazon.de/links) for a long list of touring links. The **Warm Showers List** (www.warmshowers.org) is a list of cyclists around the world who offer long-haulers a free place to crash.

Diving

Major destinations for divers are the Caribbean coast of Colombia (particularly Taganga) and Venezuela, islands such as Providencia (a Colombian island that is actually nearer to Nicaragua), the Galápagos and Brazil's Fernando de Noronha (p338).

Hiking & Trekking

South America is a brilliant hiking and trekking destination. Walking in the Andean countries is not limited to the national parks: because the network of dirt roads is so extensive, you can pretty much walk anywhere and, with the region's indigenous population often doing the same, you won't be alone.

The Andean countries are famous for their old Inca roads, which are ready-made for scenic excursions. The overtrodden, four-day tramp along the Inca Trail (p828) to Machu Picchu is, of course, the classic, but alternative routes are more highly recommended because they are cheaper, less touristed, more scenic and less destructive. See p832 for some alternatives. There are other treks along Inca trails as well, including Ecuador's lesser-known Inca trail to Ingapirca and numerous trails along ancient Inca routes through Bolivia's Cordilleras (p191) to the Yungas.

The national parks of southern South America, including Chile's Torres del Paine (p484), those within the Argentine Lake District, and even Argentina's storm-pounded but spectacular Fitz Roy range (p144), are superb and blessed with excellent trail infrastructure and accessibility. And for getting well off the beaten path, Northern Patagonia (p469) in Chile has some excellent treks.

Lesser-known mountain ranges, such as Colombia's Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (principally to Ciudad Perdida) and Venezuela's Sierra Nevada de Mérida, also have great potential. The two- to three-day hike to