



Travel offers some of the most liberating and rewarding experiences in life, but it can also be a force for positive change in the world, if you travel responsibly. In contrast, traveling without a thought to where you put your time or money can often do more harm than good.

Throughout this book we recommend ecotourism operations and community-sponsored tours whenever available. Community-managed tourism is especially important when visiting indigenous communities, which are often exploited by businesses that channel little money back into the community.

Some backpackers are infamous for excessive bartering and taking only the cheapest tours. Keep in mind that low prices may mean a less safe, less environmentally sensitive tour (especially true in the Amazon Basin and the Salar de Uyuni, among other places); in the marketplace unrealistically low prices can negatively impact the livelihood of struggling vendors.

See also p24 for general info on social etiquette while traveling, Responsible Travel sections in individual chapter directories for country-specific information, and the GreenDex (p1062) for a list of sustainable-tourism options across the region.

TIPS TO KEEP IN MIND

- **Bring a water filter or water purifier** Don't contribute to the enormous waste left by discarded plastic water bottles.
- **Don't litter** Sure, many locals do it, but many also frown upon it.
- **Hire responsible guides** Make sure they have a good reputation and respect the environment and communities you'll visit.
- **Learn the lingo** Take a Spanish or Portuguese class (and stay with a local family if possible). Locals appreciate the effort.
- **Pay your porter, tip your guide** Porters, guides and cooks are often ridiculously underpaid. Tip as much as you can.
- **Respect local traditions** Dress appropriately when visiting churches, shrines and more conservative communities.
- **Buyer beware** Don't buy souvenirs or products made from coral or any other animal material.
- **Spend at the source** Buy crafts directly from artisans themselves.
- **Support the community** Seek out community-based services that keep dollars local. Ask where your operator is based and where the money ends up.
- **Don't haggle over every penny** Excessive bargaining can leave locals with a bad impression of foreign travelers.

INTERNET RESOURCES

- www.ecotourism.org Links to businesses devoted to ecotourism.
- www.mongabay.com Wildlife- and conservation-focused website.
- www.nature.org Worthwhile articles on ecotourism and sustainable development.
- www.planeta.com Ron Mader's outstanding ecotourism website.
- www.tourismconcern.org.uk UK-based organization dedicated to promoting ethical tourism.
- www.transitionsabroad.com Focuses on immersion and responsible travel.

South America Highlights

You haven't really traveled until you've taken on South America. Thirteen countries strong, the continent is home to astounding natural and cultural wonders, including the snowcapped peaks of the Andes, thousands of kilometers of magnificent white-sand beaches, captivating colonial towns and indigenous villages, and the Amazon rainforest – home to more plant and animal species than anywhere else on earth.

The challenge is deciding where to begin. Here, a selection of Lonely Planet authors, staff and travelers like you share their most memorable South America experiences. You can add your highlights at www.lonelyplanet.com/south-america.



1

MACHU PICCHU, PERU

We had been hiking for days on the Inca Trail. The journey itself had been so incredible that I had almost forgotten where the trail led. On the final day, we began at the break of dawn to catch a glimpse as the sun rose. Finally, there it was: Machu Picchu (p825). I had seen hundreds of photographs but none could do it justice. It was pure magic to see it in person.

Karlee Palms, traveler, USA

**2**

OTAVALO MARKET, ECUADOR

JEFF GREENBERG

Although a visit to Otavalo's Saturday market (p618) is ostensibly about buying Andean handicrafts, the real treasures are the people. I love chatting with the folks, who have their portion of uplifting and sorrowful tales, and seem keen to share a bit of their lives with those curious enough to ask.

Regis St. Louis,
Lonely Planet author

3TERRY CARTER

BUENOS AIRES NIGHTLIFE, ARGENTINA

Dinner at 10pm, cocktails at midnight, clubbing by 2am...you will never be at a loss for somewhere to eat, drink or dance until the wee hours of the morning. From hot Palermo clubs to unexpected swanky lounges in the *microcentro* (city center) to bona fide steakhouses in San Telmo, I felt constantly invigorated by Buenos Aires' (p48) palpable energy.

Mary Polizzotti,
Lonely Planet staff, USA

MICHAEL TAYLOR**4**

COLONIA DEL SACRAMENTO, URUGUAY

Explore the Unesco-listed Barrio Histórico (p889), with its basilica, lighthouse and drawbridged Puerta de Campo. The cobblestoned streets lined with historic homes are fabulously photogenic when the ceiba trees bloom.

Debra Herrmann, Lonely Planet staff, Australia

**5**

THE 'W' TREK, TORRES DEL PAINE, CHILE

Everything they say about the weather in Patagonia is true! We fought horizontal snow, howling winds and sleet. In between we saw breathtaking mountains, glacial lakes and spectacular skies. The 'W' route (p485) was a truly spectacular hike and well worth the effort. Fortunately, my warm-blooded companion was able to put up our tent and cook dinner in crazy conditions while I worked on getting the feeling back in my fingers and toes. It was an absolutely fantastic adventure!

Emma Cashen, traveler, Australia

JOHN ELL

SALAR DE UYUNI, BOLIVIA

Not many places on this third rock from the sun are more otherworldly than the blindingly white Salar de Uyuni (p207), the world's largest salt flat high up in the almost surreal Bolivian *altiplano* (Andean high plain), best visited on a multiday trip around the country's stunning southwest. You won't believe your eyes – guaranteed!

Annelies Mertens, Lonely Planet staff, Australia

6WOODS WHEATCROFT

BEACHES, BRAZIL

I wasn't much of a 'beach person' until I experienced the splendors of coastal Brazil (see p276). With thousands of kilometers of perfect white-sand options ranging from bikini-laden scenes to empty, idyllic escapes, you're bound to find the paradise you've been seeking.

Lou LaGrange, Lonely Planet staff, USA

7MANFRED GOTTSCHALK

CENTRAL SURINAME NATURE RESERVE, SURINAME

After a rickety bus journey and a couple more hours in a dugout canoe, I arrived on rugged, lush Foengoe Island (p714). Days were spent hiking, bird-watching, monkey-spotting and admiring the views from atop the steep and sleek Voltzberg. At night, the mosquito net provided little muffling of the howler monkeys that sang me to sleep.

Emily K Wolman,
Lonely Planet staff, USA

8

FAMU-Y WU/ALAMY



SALTO ÁNGEL (ANGEL FALLS), VENEZUELA

After an 11-hour flight, a 10-hour bus journey, six hours on a motorized rowing boat and a four-hour hike, the clouds parted as we sat at the bottom of the falls (p966) and it literally took our breath away – the group collectively gasped, in total awe of the amazing sight in front of us. All that effort was worthwhile for just the briefest glimpse.

James Andrews, traveler, UK

10

KRZYSZTOF DYDYSKI



9

PIES SPECIFICS / ALAMY



CIUDAD PERDIDA TREK, COLOMBIA

It wasn't just the 2000 steps up to the jungle-covered lost city (p536), it was also swimming and wading through crystal clear water to get there, and passing indigenous tribal villagers going about their daily lives.

Jennifer Mullins,
Lonely Planet staff, Australia

11

PAUL SMITH



TRINIDAD, PARAGUAY

While in Paraguay, make it your mission to check out the Jesuit *reducciones* (settlements) at Trinidad and Jesús (p752). Resurrected from the rubble, these beautifully preserved religious ruins don't see many visitors and you'll likely have them to yourself.

Paul Smith, Lonely Planet author

The Authors



REGIS ST. LOUIS

Coordinating Author, Ecuador

After his first journey to the Andes in 1999, Regis returned home, sold all his belongings and set off on a classic journey across South America. Since then, he's returned numerous times to travel the continent, logging thousands of miles on dodgy jungle and mountain roads, and he's learned to speak Spanish and Portuguese. Regis is the coordinating author of Lonely Planet's *Ecuador*, *Brazil* and *Rio de Janeiro* guides, and he has contributed to more than two dozen Lonely Planet titles. His work has appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Los Angeles Times*, among other publications. He lives in New York City.



SANDRA BAO

Argentina

Being born in Buenos Aires has made Sandra a *porteña* (BA citizen) for life. She left Argentina for the United States at age nine, with thoughts that 'Midnight Special' and 'Yellow Submarine' were creations of Argentine musicians. Now she knows the harsh truth, but remains proud of her original country's famous steaks, *fútbol* and tango. Sandra has traveled extensively throughout the world, but especially loves Patagonia's Andean spine. She's the author of Lonely Planet's *Buenos Aires* guide and has contributed to *Argentina*, *Mexico*, *Venezuela* and several other titles.



GREGOR CLARK

Brazil

Gregor has been hooked on South American travel ever since making his first trip across the equator in 1990. Over the past two decades, he's visited everywhere from Caracas to Tierra del Fuego, from the Galápagos to Machu Picchu to Easter Island. But Brazil remains his favorite country of all, thanks to the warmth, exuberance and graciousness of its people, the lyrical beauty of the Portuguese language, the music and the food, and the country's remarkable array of wild and beautiful places. Gregor has contributed to Lonely Planet's *Brazil* and *Argentina* guides.

LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

Why is our travel information the best in the world? It's simple: our authors are passionate, dedicated travelers. They don't take freebies in exchange for positive coverage so you can be sure the advice you're given is impartial. They travel widely to all the popular spots, and off the beaten track. They don't research using just the internet or phone. They discover new places not included in any other guidebook. They personally visit thousands of hotels, restaurants, palaces, trails, galleries, temples and more. They speak with dozens of locals every day to make sure you get the kind of insider knowledge only a local could tell you. They take pride in getting all the details right, and in telling it how it is. Think you can do it? Find out how at lonelyplanet.com.



AIMÉE DOWL

The Guianas

Aimée didn't think much about the Guianas until rumors of strange wildlife compelled her to visit Suriname (and generally prompted friends to ask 'is that in Africa?'). Her Guianese adventure for Lonely Planet delivered even more cultural surprises and jungle critters – enough, she hopes, to lure a few Shoestringers that way. When Aimée is not in such out-of-the-way places, she lives at a cool 2850m in Quito, Ecuador, where she is a freelance writer. Her work has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Viajes*, *Ms. Magazine*, *BBC History* and four Lonely Planet guides.



BETH KOHN

Venezuela

An *aficionada* of Latin American rhythms and culture since her Miami childhood, Beth has claimed the window seat on buses throughout the Spanish-speaking world. A longtime resident of San Francisco, she navigates the hills of her adopted hometown by beater bicycle and spends way too much time scheming up summer backpacking trips. She is also a photographer, and an author of Lonely Planet's *Venezuela*, *Mexico* and *California* guides. You can see more of her work at www.bethkohn.com.



CAROLYN MCCARTHY

Chile

Carolyn first met Chile as a tourist, returned seasonally as a trekking guide and moved there in 2003 on a Fulbright grant to document pioneer Patagonia. On this trip she found out what happens with uninsured rental cars, befriended more street dogs and endured a heady case of *soroche* (altitude sickness). Her work has appeared in the *National Geographic*, *Boston Globe*, *Salt Lake Tribune*, on lonelyplanet.com and in other publications. For Lonely Planet she recently authored *Trekking in the Patagonian Andes* and *Central America, Chile, South America* and *Yellowstone & Grand Teton National Parks* guides. Visit her blog at www.carolynswildblueyonder.blogspot.com.



ANJA MUTIĆ**Bolivia**

While growing up in Croatia, New York-based Anja had a deep fascination with the ancient civilizations and mysterious rainforests of South America. In 2002 she spent six weeks traveling around Bolivia, immediately enchanted with its remote landscapes and indigenous cultures. She descended into the mines of Potosí, swam in Inca hot springs, found herself in the midst of a coca peasants' roadblock and got lost in the Amazon. For this book, she was repeatedly hit by water balloons leading up to Carnaval. Still, she'd go back in a snap.



MIKE POWER**Colombia**

Mike is an English freelance journalist specializing in Latin American current affairs. He became fascinated by Colombia during an extended freelance assignment there in 2007–08. During research for this book he was dazzled by the beauty of Salento, dazed by the toughness of La Guajira and awed by the infinite dimensions of the Amazon. He has reported extensively from Panama for Reuters, from Haiti for CBC, and from Colombia for Glasgow's *Sunday Herald*, www.thefirstpost.co.uk and London's *Guardian* newspaper. Next time he goes on assignment, he'll be packing more tea bags.



KEVIN RAUB**Brazil, Peru**

Kevin grew up in Atlanta and started his career as a music journalist in New York, working for *Men's Journal* and *Rolling Stone* magazines. The rock 'n' roll lifestyle took its toll, so he needed an extended vacation and took up travel writing. His first trip to Peru involved eating palm grubs and jungle rat while cruising the Amazon, and a little shimmy and shake from the aftershocks of the devastating quake of 2007. He lives in São Paulo, which he is determined to turn the world onto.



PAUL SMITH**Paraguay**

From an early age, and with a vague and naive ambition to be the next David Attenborough, Paul dreamed of exploring the remotest areas of South America in search of wildlife. After spending two months in Bolivia as a student, that dream started to come true, but with David Attenborough still going strong he changed his career plans, became a travel writer and moved to Paraguay permanently in 2003. While researching this edition Paul came face to face with a puma in Enciso, fell in a reedbed near Asunción and lamented the lack of space to include more places.



ANDY SYMINGTON**Brazil**

Andy first visited Brazil in the last millennium, and saw in the new one in style on Copacabana Beach in Rio. Though based in northern Spain, he gets back to Brazil often, for those untranslatable Amazonian juices, for the nightlife, for *moquecas* (seafood stew), and for the people, but especially for the crisp, cold crack of the machete-opened green coconut, the world's best breakfast.



LUCAS VIDGEN**Argentina, Uruguay**

Lucas has been dropping in and out of South America for the last 20-odd years – traveling, staying put, working, slacking off. He's contributed to several *Central America*, *South America* and *Argentina* Lonely Planet titles. Lucas loves the wide open spaces (best experienced from the back of a pickup truck) of Argentina and Uruguay, a perfect contrast to their cosmopolitan cities. When not on the road, he lives in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, where he publishes the nightlife and culture magazine *XelaWho*.

Itineraries

THE BIG LOOP

This is it – the time-is-not-an-issue journey of a lifetime. Ease into Latin American culture in **Buenos Aires** (p48). Go east to **Bariloche** (p130) and follow the Deep South route (p17) back to Buenos Aires. Continue north to **Córdoba** (p91) and **Salta** (p103) and cross over to Chile's desert oasis of **San Pedro de Atacama** (p421). Head into Bolivia to experience the surreal **Salar de Uyuni** (p207). Continue to **La Paz** (p174) and on to Peru via **Lake Titicaca** (p806). Linger at **Cuzco** (p811) and **Machu Picchu** (p825) before going to **Lima** (p775), **Huaraz** (p846) and on to Ecuador. Visit colonial **Cuenca** (p634) and enchanting **Quito** (p600). Pass into Colombia to see bustling **Medellín** (p550) and the spectacular **Zona Cafetera** (p557), then go to **Cartagena** (p538) to chill out on the Caribbean. See **Parque Nacional Tayrona** (p534) and **Ciudad Perdida** (p536) before bussing from **Santa Marta** (p530) to **Maracaibo** (p941) in Venezuela. Hang out in **Mérida** (p943) before moving to **Salto Ángel** (p966) and **Roraima** (p969). Cross into Brazil at **Santa Elena de Uairén** (p970), travel to **Manaus** (p360) and boat down the Amazon to **Belém** (p351). Then hit **Parque Nacional dos Lençóis Maranhenses** (p350), **Jericoacoara** (p345), **Olinda** (p336) and **Salvador** (p317). Take in the beaches and nightlife of **Rio de Janeiro** (p258) and go to **Campo Grande** (p314) for a wildlife tour of the **Pantanal** (p311). Cross into Paraguay for a look at the biodiversity of the **Chaco** (p758) and urban exploring in **Asunción** (p742). Visit the engineering marvel of **Itaipú Dam** (p755) and the thundering **Iguazú Falls** (p88). Route back through Brazil on to charming **Montevideo** (p883) before boating to Buenos Aires for a grand ending of the South American tour.

How long?

5-8 months

When to go?

Year-round; consider Carnival in Feb/Mar; in Patagonia, Dec-Mar is best

Budget?

Daily average if you scrimp: US\$35-45



From the Argentine pampas to the chilly Andean páramo (grassland), from the Caribbean to the Amazon and onto the cerulean beaches of Brazil, the 26,000km Big Loop winds through 10 South American countries, giving the unbound wanderer heaps to write home about.

ANDEAN HIGH

For rugged adventure, unparalleled alpine vistas, rich indigenous cultures, fabulous crafts and some of the best, most colorful markets on the continent, journey down the Andes from Colombia to Argentina.

Fly into **Bogotá** (p510), taking in the old historic center and lively nightlife. Take day trips to the striking underground salt cathedral at **Zipaquirá** (p519) and to the outdoor adventure spot of **Suesca** (p520). Continue on to the colonial town of **Popayán** (p566), near the **Parque Nacional Puracé** (p570), where you can take some fantastic treks into the Andes. Then go to **Pasto** (see boxed text, p575) and on to the beautifully set **Laguna de la Cocha** (see boxed text, p575). Cross the Ecuadorian border at Ipiales and visit **Quito** (p600), wandering the streets of colonial Old Town before heading south through the volcano-studded Andes. Do the **Quilotoa Loop** (p625), hit the hot baths in **Baños** (p627) and visit colonial **Cuenca** (p634). Cross into Peru and pause at **Huaraz** (p846) for Peru's best trekking and climbing. Leave plenty of time to linger in traveler-favorite **Cuzco** (p811), gateway to Peru's big must-see, **Machu Picchu** (p825). Skip the overrun Inca Trail, however, and try an alternative **trek** (see boxed text, p832). From there head south across shimmering **Lake Titicaca** (p806) into Bolivia for more hiking, trekking and mountaineering in the **Cordillera Real and the Yungas** (p189). Continue south to the hallucinogenic landscapes around **Salar de Uyuni** (p207), before crossing to Argentina by way of **La Quiaca** (see boxed text, p109) and the spectacular **Quebrada de Humahuaca** (p108). Travel through the majestic Argentine Andes until you hit **Mendoza** (p118), near massive **Cerro Aconcagua** (p122), the western hemisphere's highest peak.

The Andean High route winds through more than 5000km of rugged Andean highlands, passing snow-capped volcanoes, windswept *páramo*, indigenous villages, incredible vistas and some of the western hemisphere's highest peaks. Primary transport: the bus, a (white-knuckle) South American adventure in its own right.



THE DEEP SOUTH

Mysterious, windswept, glacier-riddled Patagonia is one of South America's most magical destinations. For tent-toters, outdoors nuts, climbers and hikers, it's a dream. Patagonia – and the archipelago of Tierra del Fuego – is best visited November through March, and you can see more for cheaper if you camp. Remember, the going can be *slo-o-o-w*.

Start in busy **Bariloche** (p130), in the Argentine Lake District. The Andes here are magnificently forested and studded with azure lakes. Don't miss **Parque Nacional Nahuel Huapi** (p133) or **Parque Nacional Lanín** (p128). From Bariloche head south to **Esquel** (p135). Travel west into Chile to the Andean hamlet of **Futaleufú** (p470) for some of the continent's best rafting. Take the scenic Carretera Austral to **Coyhaique** (p473) and on to the striking scenery of the green-blue **Lago General Carrera** (p476). Head to the windswept **Chile Chico** (p476), then cross into Argentina to **Los Antiguos** (p144). Bounce down the desolate RN 40 to **El Chaltén** (p144) in spectacular **Parque Nacional Los Glaciares** (p148). Hike and climb your brains out before having them warped by the **Glaciar Perito Moreno** (p148) near **El Calafate** (p146). Cross back into Chile to hike beneath the granite spires of **Torres del Paine** (p484); rest up in **Puerto Natales** (p481). Head to **Punta Arenas** (p477), before traveling south into Argentina's **Tierra del Fuego** (p149) and bottoming out at **Ushuaia** (p150). After severe southern exposure, work back north along the Atlantic, stopping for penguins in **Reserva Provincial Punta Tombo** (p143) and whales in **Reserva Faunística Península Valdés** (p141). After days in the wilderness, treat yourself to well-deserved recovery in civilization, so beeline to **Buenos Aires** (p48).

An alternate (pricey) route south is aboard Chile's world-famous **Navimag ferry** (p385), sailing through majestic fjords from Puerto Montt to Puerto Natales.



How long?

1-2 months

When to go?

Mid-Nov–mid-Apr

Budget?

Per day US\$40-50
(cheaper if you camp)

By the end of this epic adventure, you'll have traveled over 5000km and seen the very best of Patagonia. Bus and hitchhiking are the cheapest modes of travel, but lake crossings are possible and flights make things faster. Argentina's RN 40 is covered by private minivan.

SAILING THE MIGHTY AMAZON

Few rivers fire the imagination like the Amazon. Ever dreamt of going down it? You can. But there's a reason everything west of **Manaus** (p360) in Brazil is off the beaten track: boat travel on the Amazon can be bleak, boring, sightless, uncomfortable, hot and dirty. Truthfully, it's *hard-core*.

Just to make the journey as long as possible, set off from **Yurimaguas** (see boxed text, p867) in Peru. Start with a 10-hour warm-up float to **Lagunas** (p867) and check out the **Reserva Nacional Pacaya-Samiria** (see boxed text, p867), before heading on to **Iquitos** (p864) on the Río Marañón (which becomes the Amazon). From Iquitos (inaccessible by road), get a three-day boat (or a fast eight-hour speedboat) to the tri-border region of Peru, Colombia and Brazil, and take a break – and a jungle excursion – in Colombia's **Leticia** (p576). From Leticia, it's three more arduous days to Manaus, but breaking the trip at a jungle lodge in the amazing **Reserva de Desenvolvimento Sustentável Mamirauá** (see boxed text, p365), makes it all worthwhile. Once you do hit Manaus, you're getting into well-traveled territory. But, having come this far, the journey is only over when you hit majestic **Belém** (p351), 3½ days away on the Atlantic. Break the journey in **Santarém** (p357) to visit beautiful **Alter do Chão** (p359).

For those who really want a challenge, an interesting alternative would be starting this journey in the Ecuadorian oil town of **Coca** (p644) on the Río Napo. From here it's a 12- to 15-hour journey to **Nuevo Rocafuerte** (p646) on the Peruvian border. You can spend the night (or a few weeks, if you don't time the cargo-boat departure right) before undertaking the six-day boat ride to Iquitos in Peru. In Iquitos, pick up the first part of the itinerary.

By the time you finish this maniacal journey, you'll have motored over 4000km, slapped hundreds of mosquitoes, eaten loads of lousy food, met some true characters and seen a lot of water. Most importantly, you'll have floated the Amazon from its Peruvian headwaters to the Atlantic.



EXPLORING THE GUIANAS

They're expensive, they're hard to reach, they're largely unpopulated, and they can be very, very captivating. And they're *definitely* off the beaten path. Where you start depends on where you're coming from: Guyana via New York, Cayenne via Paris or Paramaribo via Amsterdam. For the sake of argument, let's say you're traveling overland from Brazil.

From **Oiapoque** (see boxed text, p357) in Brazil hire a dugout canoe (unless the bridge is complete) across the Rio Oiapoque into French Guiana. You're now officially off the beaten track. Make your way by bus across the verdant, forgotten landscape (complete with burned-out cars along the roadside) to **Cacao** (p694). From here, embark upon the two-day hike along **Sentier Molokoï de Cacao** (p695) for some wildlife-spotting fun. Then make your way up to **Kourou** (p696), where you can witness rockets blast off from South America's only satellite launcher. Take a ferry (or a more comfy catamaran) across shark-infested waters to the **Îles du Salut** (p697), a former island prison where you can sling up a hammock in the old prison dormitories! Back on the mainland, head up the coast and watch the turtles nesting (April to July only) at **Awala-Yalimopo** (p701) before crossing into Suriname. Hang out for a few days in weirdly wonderful **Paramaribo** (p708), and set up a tour into the majestic **Central Suriname Nature Reserve** (p714). From Paramaribo, continue west to **Nieuw Nickerie** (p715), where you cross into Guyana. Head up to **Georgetown** (p723), and make a detour by boat up to isolated **Shell Beach** (p728) or to see the spectacular **Kaieteur Falls** (see boxed text, p729). Back in Georgetown, get a bus south across the majestic Rupununi Savannas, stopping in **Annai** (p730) and **Lethem** (p731) to savor the vast isolation.

How long?

3-5 weeks

When to go?

Year-round; ideally Jul-Dec

Budget?

French Guiana per day
US\$60; Suriname and
Guyana per day US\$30-40



Exploring the Guianas means leaving the beaten path behind and journeying some 2500km. You'll see fascinating capital cities, tropical jungle, unadulterated cowboy country and a couple of the continent's most pristine beaches.

LET THE PARTY BEGIN

South America offers some pretty incredible options when it comes to rocking a few sleepless nights. Some towns have infamous nightlife scenes, while in other places the action peaks only at big festivals or in summer. For an overview of the big fêtes, see Festivals & Events in each country chapter's Directory.

Start things off with a bang in **Rio de Janeiro** (p258), not missing the frenetic samba scene in Lapa. Continue the Brazilian *fiesta* by hitting the non-stop party scene of **Porto Seguro** (p328), **Salvador** (p317) and fun but laid-back **Jericoacoara** (p345). From there travel north to the Guianas. The Guyanese will tell you that **Georgetown's** (p727) Sheriff St is the hottest party in the Caribbean. Next, it's on to **Caracas** (p919) for steamy salsa-filled nightclubs, tropical **Porlamar** (p959) for island allure, and **Mérida** (p943) for a university vibe and all-night music scene. Colombia keeps the party going in comely **Cartagena** (p538) and even livelier **Cali** (p563). In Ecuador, the small-town beach scene of **Montañita** (p660) is a nice contrast to the bar-and-club-land of **Quito's** (p613) Mariscal district. In Peru, spend a night crawling **Lima's** (p787) Barranco neighborhood, before moving the party to festive **Arequipa** (p798). The good-time scene of Bolivia's **La Paz** (p174) is next, followed by the journey to Chile's bohemian seaside city of **Valparaíso** (p400) – New Year's Eve here is particularly spectacular. Afterwards hit the student party scene of **Córdoba** (p91) in Argentina, then move on to the great nightlife of **Buenos Aires** (p48), with mandatory bar-hopping in Palermo Viejo. Hop the ferry to reach the bars and discos in **Montevideo's** (p887) Old Town. Time things right to catch the summer-long party at swanky **Punta del Este** (p898) in Uruguay. Next it's on to Brazil, to hit the island revelry on **Ilha de Santa Catarina** (p298). End the journey with a few nights in São Paulo (p282) for a final send-off of drinking and dancing in the city's unrivaled club scene.

This big nightlife journey around the continent takes in 10 countries and some 17,000km. The tour offers plenty of big-city intrigue, as well as some welcome respites at festive beach spots and colonial towns.



Getting Started

Planning for the big trip is half the fun. This section is intended to help you decide when to go and predict what kind of cash you'll drop, plus offer some tips on good films and books to check out before heading to South America. Also browse the South America Directory (p984), which covers subjects ranging from activities to volunteering. The Transportation chapter (p1000) will give you a good overview of bussing, boating and jetting around the continent.

WHEN TO GO

South America stretches from the tropics – where sweltering lowlands can lie only hours from chilly Andean highlands – nearly to Antarctica, so when to go depends on where you go.

Climbing and trekking in the Andes of Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia is best in the drier months from May to September but possible year-round. Travel in the Amazon is also possible year-round, though regional rainy seasons throughout the Amazon make river travel easier (it's generally driest from July to November). Ski season in Argentina and Chile is June to September. Patagonia is best visited during the region's summer months of December to April, but hotels and campgrounds book solid and prices are highest during the peak months of January and February.

The continent's wild array of colorful festivals (see p991) is also a consideration; Carnaval, the most famous celebration of all, is in late February and early March. It's well worth seeing, but prices are high (expect to pay about triple normal rates during Carnaval).

You should also take into account high- and low-season rates for the places you plan to visit. In Brazil, for instance, prices are high from December through Carnaval, and immediately drop the week after Carnaval. South Americans love to travel during the two- to three-week period around *Semana Santa* (Holy Week or Easter) and during the Christmas–New Year holidays. Both foreign and national tourists are out in droves in July and

See Climate Charts, p987, and Climate in the Directory section of each country chapter for country-specific information.

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT

Remember this: you can buy just about anything you'll need in South America. Certain items, however, can be hard to find. For more on what to bring, flip through the South America Directory (p984). And don't forget the following:

- alarm clock – for those early-morning bus rides
- insect repellent (containing 30% DEET) – useful no matter where you're going
- photocopies of important documents – plus scanned copies in your email as a backup
- duct tape – make your own miniroll around a pencil stub or lighter
- pocket USB-type flash drive for digital storage
- earplugs – accessory of choice for snoring bunkmates, relentless traffic and psychopathic roosters
- Swiss Army knife or multitool (with corkscrew)
- first-aid kit – be prepared
- universal sink plug – for washing clothes on the road
- flashlight or head lamp – essential for unreliable power sources

August. During these tourist high seasons prices peak, hotels fill up and public transportation gets slammed. The flip side is a celebratory, holiday atmosphere that can be quite contagious.

COSTS & MONEY

Brazil is by far the most expensive country in South America, though prices vary depending where you go – Rio, the South and the Southeast being more expensive than the Northeast. Chile is also expensive relative to the rest of South America, as is Argentina, which has been hit by runaway inflation in recent years. Travel costs in Uruguay run slightly lower than Argentina, while the Guianas are a mixed bag, but generally tend toward the pricey end of the scale (French Guiana still uses the euro after all). The cheapest countries on the continent are Bolivia, Paraguay, Ecuador and Colombia. Traveling in Venezuela can be pricey (the wildly fluctuating black-market exchange rate is much better value than the official rate, but of course it's illegal and there is a greater risk of being ripped off). See p980 for more details.

At the beginning of each country chapter, we give a thumbnail sketch of costs. Generally, it will cost less per person if you travel in twos or threes, spend little time in big cities, travel slowly and cook your own meals or eat at markets. Costs rack up as you tag on comforts like air-conditioning and a private bathroom, expensive tours to places such as the Galápagos Islands, or activities like skiing or clubbing.

ATM cards provide the most convenient way of getting cash on the road. ATMs are available in most cities and large towns – though in remote destinations, you'll want to get ample funds before heading out. Many ATMs accept personal identification numbers (PINs) of only four digits; find out whether this applies to your destinations before heading off. Traveler's checks (best if in US dollars) are less convenient. They usually entail waiting in lines during standard bank hours, and many banks even refuse to accept them.

WHAT YOU'LL PAY

To give a very rough idea of relative costs, let's assume you're traveling with another person, mostly by bus, staying in cheap but clean hotels, eating in local restaurants and food stalls, with the occasional splurge on sightseeing or a night out dancing. Not including juicy side trips or tours into interior regions, you could expect the following as a minimum per person/per day budget:

- Argentina – US\$35 to US\$45
- Bolivia – US\$15 to US\$25
- Brazil – US\$45 to US\$50
- Chile – US\$40 to US\$50
- Colombia – US\$20 to US\$30
- Ecuador – US\$20 to US\$25
- French Guiana – US\$50 to US\$60
- Guyana – US\$40 to US\$50
- Paraguay – US\$25 to US\$35
- Peru – US\$20 to US\$30
- Suriname – US\$30 to US\$40
- Uruguay – US\$35 to US\$45
- Venezuela – US\$60 to US\$120 (at official exchange rates)

TIPS TO STAY ON A BUDGET

There's no need to bargain locals out of every last coin when other tried-and-true techniques will save you more. Try the following:

- Consider traveling out of season (weather permitting) to get low-season rates for lodging and airfare.
- Plan your days around free activities, like exploring city neighborhoods and parks, catching free concerts and shows, and hanging out on the beach.
- When asking about accommodation rates, always ask about low-season discounts or for staying multiple nights.
- Always ask about the *almuerzo*, *menú* or *prato do dia* (set meal).
- Form a group for tours; your bargaining power increases the more people you have.
- Instead of eating at restaurants, buy food at open-air markets or cook your own food at your hostel/guesthouse.
- Take overnight buses in countries such as Argentina, Brazil and Chile to save a night's hotel costs.
- Camp whenever you can (only when it's safe), especially in Patagonia and in hostel backyards.
- Wash your clothes in hotel sinks (where permissible).
- Travel slowly.

Note that we use local currencies for costs in this book. Owing to often volatile exchange rates, it's wise to research the latest financial situation, both before and during your trip. This is particularly important in inflationary countries like Venezuela and Argentina, less so in more economically stable Chile.

For more detailed info, see the country chapter directories at the end of each country directory, and the South America Directory (p993).

LIFE ON THE ROAD

Whether you're thumbing a ride in Chilean Patagonia, waiting curbside for a milk truck in the Ecuadorian Andes or listening to the air brakes hiss on a hair-raising ride through the Bolivian *altiplano* (Andean high plain), South America kicks out unforgettable experiences on the road. In fact, some argue the road *is* the experience.

And then there's *life* on the road. In South America, it's never short on challenge. But that's what makes it South America. Travel here is about struggling awake for a dawn departure after being kept up all night by a blaring soccer game. It's about sucking dust on a long bus ride while manically trying to guess which of the towns you keep passing through is the one you intended to visit. It means peaceful relief when you finally arrive and find your pack still on the roof. It's the sight of begging children, the arduous haul to the hotel, a screaming bladder and the excitement of a new town all catapulting your mind from one emotional extreme to another.

The hotel manager says the showers are hot, but the water hitting the skin is as cold as a Patagonian glacier. There's no seat on the toilet. (At least the bowels are behaving.) You call that a fan? It sounds like a helicopter! OK – food. Leave the pack in the corner, get out the map, locate the market, grab the passport (or leave it behind?) and go. The sun feels great. Then you get lost, your mood turns sour as your blood sugar crashes, you find the market, you smell the mangoes, and you try to haggle but have no clue what the fruit seller is saying. You finally hand over the cash – did you just get ripped off? – and walk out to find a good place to eat. And when you do, it's sheer and incomparable bliss.

CONDUCT

Introductions

In general, South Americans are gregarious, not easily offended, and will want to exchange pleasantries before starting a conversation; skipping this part of any social interaction is considered unrefined and tactless. Public behavior can be very formal, especially among government officials, who expect respect and deference. Casual introductions, on the other hand, are relaxed and friendly. In countries like Argentina, Chile and French Guiana men and women kiss other women on the cheek, rather than shaking hands – in Brazil it's two kisses, one on each cheek (go to the left first). Men usually shake hands with other men, unless they're real pals, in which case they give a hug. If in doubt, wait to see what the other person does and then respond.

Indigenous People

The word *indígenas* refers to indigenous people, who are especially present in the Andes and in the Amazon Basin. You may hear the term *indio/a* batted around among *mestizos* (people of mixed indigenous and European descent) but it is considered very derogatory.

Access to many remote Amazon Basin areas where people retain the most traditional ways of living is heavily restricted, and it is essential to respect these restrictions. Such regulations help to deflect unwanted interference and protect the communities from diseases to which they have little immunity.

Other indigenous groups or subgroups have opened their doors to travelers who want to learn about their culture. Community tourism is one of the highlights of South America, but remember to take ceremonies and rituals seriously, despite the fact that they may be organized for your sake. *Ayahuasca* and other psychoactive drugs play an important part of religious life for some rainforest communities; it is illegal for foreigners to take these drugs, although you may be offered a trip down shaman lane by certain opportunists. Do your research.

Dress

Casual dress is widely accepted, but most South Americans still take considerable pride in their personal appearance, especially in the evening. Foreign visitors should, at the very least, be clean and neatly dressed if they wish to conform to local standards and be treated with respect by officials, businesspeople and professionals. When going out at night, you'll stand out in typical travelers' attire in all but the most gringo-haunted hangouts. Try to keep one 'going-out outfit' on hand for nights out. It's also advisable to look respectable when crossing borders, as police and military officials are less likely to detain you.

DOS & DON'TS

- Do tip 10% if *servicio* (service) isn't included in the bill.
- Do be respectful when haggling for anything.
- Do approach eating with an adventurous attitude.
- Don't take pictures of people without permission.
- Don't feel uncomfortable in the Andean countries (Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru) when people stare.
- Don't hesitate to refuse food or drink from strangers.



TOP 10

RECOMMENDED FILMS

- 1** *Central do Brasil* (Central Station, 1998); set in Brazil; directed by Walter Salles
- 2** *Cidade de Deus* (City of God, 2002); set in Brazil; directed by Fernando Meirelles
- 3** *Diarios de Motocicleta* (The Motorcycle Diaries, 2004); set in various parts of South America; directed by Walter Salles
- 4** *La Historia Oficial* (The Official Story, 1985); set in Argentina; directed by Luis Puenzo
- 5** *Maria Full of Grace* (2003); set in Colombia; directed by Joshua Marston
- 6** *The Mission* (1986); set in Paraguay; directed by Roland Joffé
- 7** *Nueve Reinas* (Nine Queens, 2000); set in Argentina; directed by Fabián Bielinsky
- 8** *Orfeu Negro* (1959); set in Brazil; directed by Marcel Camus
- 9** *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised* (2002); set in Venezuela; directed by Kim Bartley and Donnacha O'Briain
- 10** *Stranded* (2007); set in Uruguay and Chile; directed by Gonzalo Arijón

MUST-READ BOOKS

- 1** *Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands* by Jorge Amado (Brazil, 1978)
- 2** *Ficciones* by Jorge Luis Borges (Argentina, 1944)
- 3** *Hopscotch* by Julio Cortázar (Argentina, 1963)
- 4** *House of Spirits* by Isabel Allende (Chile, 1982)
- 5** *In Patagonia* by Bruce Chatwin (England, 1977)
- 6** *The Lost City of Z: A Tale of Deadly Obsession in the Amazon* by David Grann (USA, 2009)
- 7** *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez (Colombia, 1967)
- 8** *Open Veins of Latin America* by Eduardo Galeano (Uruguay, 1971)
- 9** *The Story Teller* by Mario Vargas Llosa (Peru, 1987)
- 10** *The Villagers* by Jorge Icaza (Ecuador, 1964)

To people of modest means, even shoestring travelers possess considerable wealth. Flaunting items such as iPods, expensive-looking watches and jewelry is likely to attract thieves. In addition to leaving the name-brand goods at home, one way of blending in is to buy clothes at the local market after you arrive.

Sex

Sexual contact between locals and visitors, male and female, straight and gay, is quite common, and some areas could be described as sex-tourism destinations. Prostitution exists everywhere, but is more visible in some places than in others (as in certain parts of Copacabana in Rio, Brazil). Child prostitution is not common but, sadly, exists. There are harsh penalties for those convicted of soliciting children as well as real risks of entrapment. AIDS is widespread among gay and straight people alike, so always protect yourself. Around 1.3 million South Americans are currently living with HIV or AIDS. Brazil, with over 700,000 sufferers, has the highest incidence rate.

Taking Photographs

Don't photograph individuals without obtaining their permission first, especially indigenous people. If someone is giving a public performance, such as a street musician or a dancer at Carnival, or is incidental to a photograph, in a broad cityscape for example, it's usually not necessary to request permission – but if in doubt, ask or refrain. Also, if you do take photos of street performers or musicians, it's common courtesy to give a little change. See p995 for more information.

Snapshots

CURRENT EVENTS

Great changes are sweeping through the continent, bringing peace and prosperity to some regions, tension and uncertainty to others. South America's biggest success story is Colombia, a country that has made significant strides toward ending its 40-year internal war. Although the conflict isn't over, Colombians are enjoying a previously unimagined period of stability, along with newfound financial confidence. Not surprisingly, President Álvaro Uribe remains popular – a recent poll rated him as one of Colombia's most popular presidents in history.

Brazil also has cause for optimism. After paying off its debts to the IMF ahead of schedule, a vast offshore oil field was discovered in 2007, promising even greater riches to an already energy-independent nation. For most Brazilians, however, the biggest successes are landing both the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics, which Rio de Janeiro will host. Both are major milestones, not only for Brazil, but for South America, as the Olympics will be the first ever held on the continent. Despite a few scandals, Brazilian President Lula enjoys record-high approval ratings for his economic and social successes – notably raising the standard of living for Brazil's poorest citizens. There's even talk of revising the constitution to allow him to run for a third term.

Speaking of rewriting constitutions, a lot of ink has spilled in South America in the past few years. Citizens of both Ecuador (in 2008) and Bolivia (in 2009) voted to draft new constitutions. Both set ambitious goals toward addressing social injustices (providing free health care, education and basic services to all citizens) and even protecting the environment. To the benefit of those in charge, term limits were also abolished, allowing elected presidents to serve indefinitely. Not everyone had warm feelings. Violent protests erupted in Bolivia led by those who saw the document as yet another step toward the anticapitalist Bolivarism of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez.

Chávez, South America's most controversial leader, has also benefited from constitutional tinkering. Although he failed in initial efforts to be made 'president for life,' in 2009 citizens approved an amendment ending presidential term limits, ensuring his days in power are far from over. Since US President Obama took office, Chávez' fiery anti-American rhetoric has cooled, with internal problems (the nationwide rise in crime and economic woes brought on by falling oil prices) eclipsing other concerns.

Political shake-ups have occurred all across the continent. In Paraguay, after over 60 years of Colorado party rule, former bishop Fernando Lugo was elected president in 2008, bringing a new era of hope (marred slightly by allegations that he sired three illegitimate children by different women). Argentina, meanwhile, faced a leadership crisis as President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner lost power in congress during midterm elections. Her popularity took a nosedive as the economy faltered while she focused on raising farm export taxes. Even more serious troubles plagued Peru. President Alan García, who launched a campaign to open traditional indigenous lands to gas and mineral exploration, encountered fierce resistance from Amazon-based peoples. The conflict reached a boiling point in 2009, during a bloody encounter between protestors and police that left dozens dead. García's administration has presided over sustained economic growth in its push for development and free trade, but it has also been rocked by corruption scandals.

According to the treaty of the newly created Union of South American Nations (Unasur), the headquarters of the Union will be in Quito, Ecuador. The South American Parliament will convene in Cochabamba, Bolivia; its bank, the Bank of the South, will be in Caracas, Venezuela.

Exploiting the land in the name of economic development is a familiar topic in South America. The fate of Chilean Patagonia remains uncertain. Plans are underway for nearly a dozen hydroelectric projects that could transform one of the world's most pristine wildernesses into another industrial engine. The Guaianás, on the other hand, are moving in the opposite direction. Ecotourism is the hot topic, with Suriname and Guyana promoting their rainforests as the setting for an African-style safari at a fraction of the price.

Despite a legacy of border disputes and skirmishes among some South American nations, the continent may be on its way to forging an ambitious new union. In 2008 the leaders of 12 South American nations (all but French Guiana) met in Brazil to sign the treaty of the Union of South American Nations (Unasur). Modeled on the EU, this regional body aims to boost economic and political integration in the region, improve trade and possibly even establish a single currency. The treaty envisions a revolving presidency and biannual meetings of national representatives. In 2009 representatives were still hammering out the details for the creation of the new regional development bank, the Bank of the South. By 2014, Unasur aims to remove tariffs for most products, which will be a significant step toward the creation of a single market.

HISTORY

The First South Americans

Back in the salad days (sometime between 12,500 and 70,000 years ago), humans migrated from Asia to Alaska over a land bridge across the Bering Strait and slowly hunted and gathered their way south. Settled agriculture developed in South America between 5000 BC and 2500 BC in and around present-day Peru, and the emerging societies ultimately developed into major civilizations, of which the Inca empire was the most sophisticated.

Enter the Spanish

At the time of the Spanish invasion in the early 16th century, the Inca empire had reached the zenith of its power, ruling over millions of people from northern Ecuador to central Chile and northern Argentina, where native peoples of the Araucanian language groups fiercely resisted incursions from the north.

The Spanish first arrived in Latin America in 1492, when Christopher Columbus, who was bankrolled by Queen Isabella of Spain to find a new route to Asia's spice islands, accidentally bumped into the Caribbean islands. Meanwhile, the Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama founded the new sea route to Asia. These spectacular discoveries raised the stakes in the brewing rivalry between Spain and Portugal and, to sort out claims of their newly discovered lands, they came to the negotiating table.

Dividing & Conquering

Spanish and Portuguese representatives met in 1494 to draw a line about 48° west of Greenwich, giving Africa and Asia to Portugal and all of the New World to Spain. Significantly, however, the treaty placed the coast of Brazil (not discovered until six years later) on the Portuguese side of the line, giving Portugal access to the new continent.

Between 1496 and 1526, Spanish exploration from Panama intensified. Rumors surfaced of a golden kingdom south of Panama, prompting Francisco Pizarro to convince Spanish authorities to finance an expedition of some 200 men.

At its peak, the Inca empire governed at least 12 million people from 100 separate cultures and 20 language groups. Its highways traversed more than 8000km of the Andes.

Published in 1552, Bartolomé de las Casas' impassioned *Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* is one of the only accounts written during the Spanish Conquest that is sympathetic to indigenous Americans.

When Pizarro encountered the Inca, the empire was embroiled in a civil war and proved vulnerable to this invasion by a very small force of Spaniards. Pizarro's well-armed, mounted soldiers wreaked havoc on the population, but his deadliest weapon was infectious disease, to which indigenous people lacked immunity. The Inca ruler Huayna Capac died, probably of smallpox, in about 1525.

Lima, founded in 1535 as the capital of the new viceroyalty of Peru, was the base for most of the ensuing exploration and conquest, and became the seat of all power in Spanish South America. By 1572 the Spanish had defeated and killed two successive Inca rulers – Manco Inca and Túpac Amaru – and solidified Spain's dominance over much of the continent.

Silver, Slavery & Separation

Following the conquest, the Spaniards, who above all else sought gold and silver, worked the indigenous populations mercilessly in the mines and the fields. Native American populations declined rapidly, however, due to introduced diseases. In several parts of the continent, African slaves were introduced in huge numbers to replace the dwindling indigenous labor, notably in the plantations of Brazil and the mines of Bolivia.

The movement for independence by the Spanish colonies began around the end of the 18th century, when domestic problems at home siphoned Spain's interest from its colonies. The Peninsular War which erupted in 1807 was an even greater drain on resources as Spain and Portugal fought off the invading French army under Napoleon. By the end of the war in 1814, Venezuela and Argentina had effectively declared independence from Spain and, over the next seven years, the other Spanish colonies followed suit. Brazil became autonomous in 1807 and declared independence in 1822.

Independence & Dependence

After independence, conservative rural landowners, known as *caudillos*, filled the power vacuum left by the departed colonial regime. Strong dictatorships, periods of instability and the gross inequality between powerful elites and the disenfranchised masses have since characterized most South American countries.

After WWII, which marked the beginning of industrialization throughout South America, most countries turned to foreign loans and investment to make up for their lack of capital. This set the stage for the massive debt crises of the 1970s and 1980s, as South American governments accelerated their borrowing, and profits from industry and agriculture made their way into Western banks and the pockets of a tiny South American elite. Dictatorships provided a semblance of stability, but oppression, poverty and corruption bred violent guerrilla movements in many countries, most notably (and most recently) in Peru and Colombia. Many of the problems facing South America today are a direct result of foreign debt and the systems of corruption and inequality that date back to colonial and postindependence years. The upsurge of populist and nationalist leaders in the early 2000s, with left-leaning presidents elected in several South American countries, was largely a democratic response to years of corruption and incompetence under fiscally conservative and often military-linked ruling parties.

THE CULTURE

Indigenous Culture

When foreigners think of indigenous South Americans, odds are they imagine either the colorfully dressed *indigenas* (indigenous people) of the Andean highlands or the people of the Amazon rainforests. The Quechua and other

During the long bleak epoch of slavery, over six million Africans were captured and brought to South America. The majority (around 3.6 million) ended up in Brazil. Others were brought to present-day Venezuela, Colombia, coastal Peru and Ecuador and northwestern Argentina.

One of the great heroes of South America is Simón Bolívar ('the Liberator'), who helped secure independence for present-day Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. Gabriel García Márquez wrote a fictionalized account of his last days (*The General in His Labyrinth*) and Hugo Chávez even had Venezuela renamed in his honor (the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela).

linguistic groups of the Bolivian, Ecuadorian and Peruvian highlands have coexisted with the *mestizo* (people of mixed indigenous and European descent) majority – although not without conflict – for centuries. Their cultures are strong, autonomous and reticent to change and have influenced their country's culture (through music, food, language and so on) to its core. For travelers, experiencing these highland cultures firsthand can be as simple as getting on a bus, shopping in a market or hanging around a village. Many indigenous people are friendly with foreigners, but many are wary of them, as outsiders have brutally oppressed their people for centuries.

The lives of rainforest peoples are usually vastly different from what the tourist brochures floating the world suggest. Except under unique circumstances, travelers generally will not encounter indigenous people of the rainforest traditionally dressed, unless they're doing so specifically for the sake of tourism – not an inherently negative situation, but one to approach with awareness. Most rainforest communities have only recently been hit with the Western world. Many are facing the complete upheaval – if not annihilation – of their cultures and lives, and the culture one encounters as a visitor is one in the throes of dramatic change.

Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador have the highest percentages of indigenous people, most of whom live in the highlands. Other important groups include the Tikuna, Yanomami and Guaraní of Brazil, the Mapuche of northern Patagonia, the Aymara of the *altiplano* (Andean high plain of Peru, Bolivia, Chile and Argentina) and the Atacameños of Chile.

For the best collection of online music links, visit the Humanities section of the Latin American Network Information Center (Lanic; www.lanic.utexas.edu). The Music page has dozens of links on nearly every country in South America (except for the Guianas).

Music

Music in South America is a big part of life. Turn it off, and the continent would simply grind to a halt. South America's musical landscape is incredibly varied, which is not surprising given how disparate its roots are. Influences that helped shape the continent's music scene stretch across the globe, taking in African rhythms, North American jazz, indigenous sounds, Spanish flamenco, Cuban and Italian singing styles and even Eastern European polkas and mazurkas – all play a part in forging the great soundtrack of South America. For a complete rundown on the music scene, country by country, see p32. For a list of recommended albums, see opposite.

Population

Over three-quarters of all South Americans live in cities, while large areas such as the Amazon Basin and Atacama Desert are relatively uninhabited. Population growth and internal migration have led to the emergence of supercities, such as São Paulo, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Lima and Bogotá.

Infant mortality rates are shockingly high in some countries, most notably Bolivia, Peru and Paraguay. South America has a high proportion of people younger than 15 years old (hovering around 27%), but some of the countries (in particular Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela) have even more youthful populations.

Although the majority of South Americans are *mestizos*, self-identified indigenous peoples make up a large percentage of the population in Bolivia (55%), Peru (45%) and Ecuador (25%). Owing to a legacy of immigration, Brazil has one of Latin America's most ethnically diverse populations, with a sizable portion of the population (around 39%) claiming African heritage. The Guianas are a mosaic of East Indians, Indonesians, Africans, Creoles, Chinese and their descendants. Even the most racially homogeneous countries (eg Argentina, Chile and Paraguay) have Syrians, Chinese, Japanese and other immigrants and their descendants represented in the population.

Brazil's diversity is astounding: it has a larger black population than any other country except for Nigeria; São Paulo has the largest Japanese community outside of Japan.

THE SOUTH AMERICAN SOUNDTRACK

Painful as it was, we winnowed this list down to a lean 25 selections. Here's our highly subjective pick of top albums, country by country.

Argentina

- *Sur o no sur* – Kevin Johansen
- *Tres cosas* – Juana Molina
- *Chaco* – Illya Kuryaki and the Valderramas
- *Gracias a la vida* – Mercedes Sosa

Bolivia

- *Charangos famosos* – Celestino Campos et al

Brazil

- *África Brasil* – Jorge Benjor
- *Tropicália ou Panis et Circensis* – Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil et al
- *Chega de Saudade* – João Gilberto
- *Elis & Tom* – Antonio Carlos Jobim and Elis Regina
- *Cartola* – Cartola

Colombia

- *La vida es un ratico* – Juanes
- *La candela viva* – Totó La Momposina
- *¿Dónde están los ladrones?* – Shakira

Chile

- *Miedo escénico* – Beto Cuevas
- *Leyenda* – Inti Illimani
- *Gran Santiago* – Teleradio Donoso

Ecuador

- *Ecuafornia* – Esto es Eso
- *Mis mejores pasillos* – Julio Jaramillo

The Guianas

- *Is We Ting* – Roy Geddes et al

Paraguay

- *Kchiporros* – Kchiporros

Peru

- *Eco de sombras* – Susana Baca

Uruguay

- *Eco* – Jorge Drexler
- *Aunque cueste ver el sol* – No Te Va Gustar

Venezuela

- *The Venezuelan Zinga Son* – Los Amigos Invisibles
- *El rey de los soneros* – Oscar D'León

LA VIDA MUSICAL

Welcome to one of the world's great music destinations. This vast continent, with snowcapped peaks, lush jungles and sparkling coastline, boasts a soundtrack as diverse as its geography. South America's best-known music styles – Brazilian samba and bossa nova, Colombian salsa, Argentine tango and Andean *música folklórica* (traditional music) – receive airtime across the globe. But there are countless other forms of music, some little known outside a particular region, that are well worth seeking out.

Argentina

The famous sound of tango emerged from the rough-edged immigrant neighborhoods of Buenos Aires in the late 19th century. Born from a clash of musical styles, tango peaked under international legends such as Carlos Gardel and Astor Piazzolla. Today's greats include Susana Rinaldi and Adriana Varela, along with cutting-edge groups fusing acoustic and electronic sounds (dubbed *electrotango*) such as the Gotan Project and BajoFondo.

Argentina, together with Chile and Uruguay, nurtured *nueva canción*, folk music with political undertones that emerged in the 1950s and '60s. Still-going-strong Mercedes Sosa is one of *nueva canción*'s great figureheads, along with Atahualpa Yupanqui and León Gieco.

Charly García is Argentina's best-known rocker. Other contemporary Argentine bands making waves are Bersuit Vergarabat, Catupecu Machu, Gazpacho and the multitalented Argentine-American Kevin Johansen.

Brazil

This great musical powerhouse is home to a dizzying array of talent. Samba, born in early 20th-century Rio, has strong African influences and is intimately linked to Carnival. Great sambistas include Dorival Caymmi, Ary Barroso and Noel Rosa, followed by Cartola, Nelson Cavaquinho and Clementina de Jesus in later years. Contemporary singers carrying the samba torch include Teresa Cristina, Diogo Nogueira and Maria Rita.

Bossa nova arose in 1950s Rio and gained the world's attention in classics like 'Garota de Ipanema' by Jobim and Vinícius de Moraes. Bossa nova's founding father, guitarist João Gilberto, still performs, as does his daughter Bebel Gilberto, who combines smooth bossa sounds with electronic grooves.

Tropicalismo (aka Tropicália) appeared in the late 1960s, fusing Brazilian samba and bossa with North American rock and British psychedelic sounds. Major Tropicália figures include Gilberto Gil, Gal Costa, Os Mutantes and Caetano Veloso.

Música Popular Brasileira (MPB) covers everything from bossa nova-influenced works to more mainstream pop. MPB first emerged in the 1970s under talented musicians such as Milton Nascimento, Elis Regina, Djavan and others. Two great MPB stars still around are Jorge Benjor (who melds funk, samba and African beats) and master songwriter Chico Buarque.

Brazilian hip-hop continues to evolve, under stylists such as Marcelo D2 and actor-musician Seu Jorge. Regional musical styles include *forró*, a lively, syncopated northeastern sound, and *axé*, the samba-pop-rock-reggae-funk-Caribbean fusion music that comes from Salvador. Daniela Mercury and Ivete Sangalo are the big *axé* names.

Chile

The contemporary Chilean scene spans '60s revolutionary folk to modern and alternative rock. La Nueva Canción Chilena revitalized Chilean folk with social and political issues. Important figures include Violeta Parra, Victor Jara (murdered by the military) and the still-touring Inti-Illimani.

Groups in exile found success abroad, such as Los Jaivas, Los Prisioneros and La Ley. Joe Vasconcellos created energetic Latin fusion. Contemporary bands hogging the spotlight are Lucybell, Tiro de Gracia, Los Bunkers, Javiera y Los Imposibles, Mamma Soul and former La Ley front man Beto Cuevas. Look for the Strokes-like Teleradio Donoso and Chico Trujillo, whose *cumbia chilombiana* has Manu Chao-like elements.

Colombia

Along the Caribbean coast you'll find African-inspired rhythms such as cumbia, *mapalé* and *porro*. The coast is also the birthplace of the accordion-based *vallenato*, Colombia's most popular

musical genre. Colombia's most famous mainstream musicians are Shakira, Carlos Vives (Latin-pop vocalist), Totó La Momposina (singer of traditional Afro-Caribbean music), and Juanes (Latin-rock vocalist).

Notable contemporary groups include the eclectic cumbia-powered sound of Pernet and the Caribbean Ravers, the space-rock-meets-cumbia of Bomba Estéreo and Choc Quib Town, a Pacific Coast hip-hop and funk band. For salsa, Bogotá's LA 33 are tops.

Ecuador, Peru & Bolivia

Música folklórica (traditional Andean music) has a distinctive, haunting sound that is inescapable in the highlands. Essential highland instruments are the ukulele-like 10-string *charango*, the *quena* (reed flute) and the *zampoña* (pan flute). Catch live performances at a *peña* (folk-music club). When it comes to youth culture, Caribbean-born reggaeton is the anthem on the streets.

Ecuador has a rich *folklórica* tradition, but the country's true national music is the soulful *pasillo*, made famous by Julio Jaramillo. Northwest Ecuador is home to Afro-Ecuadorian marimba music. Cumbia, originally from Colombia, also appears in Ecuador. Rock, metal and alternative groups are also emerging from Ecuador. *Esto es Eso*, a US-Ecuadorian duo, blend hip-hop, pop, rock, *pasillo* and traditional sounds. Sudakaya is known for reggae, while RoCola Bacalao plays a mix of ska, punk and merengue.

In addition to emotive pre-Columbian *música folklórica*, Peru is known for its coastal *música criolla*, which has African and Spanish roots. Also sharing African-Spanish roots, the bluesy *landó* often tackles complex social issues. Caribbean salsa is omnipresent, as are cumbia and *chicha*, both originally from Colombia. *Chicha* is a cheerful Andean fusion of traditional panpipes with electronic percussion and guitars. Top artists include Euforia and Rosy War, along with newer bands such as Agua Marina and Armonía 10, who play a kind of Peruvian techno-cumbia.

Bolivia is home to both the haunting Andean sound and more up-tempo music from lowland areas such as Tarija. Major artists include *charango* masters Celestino Campos, Ernesto Cavour and Mauro Núñez. Also keep a look out for Altiplano, Savia Andina and Yanapakuna.

The Guianas

Reggae plays in heavy rotation in the Guianas, though in Guyana you might catch the rapid-fire rhythms of steel-pan drumming, which has Caribbean roots. For a primer on the steel-pan sound, see the Roy Geddes Steel Pan Museum (p725) in Georgetown.

Paraguay & Uruguay

Paraguay is known for its harp music, including a song called 'Pajaro Campana' (also played on guitar), which uses the bizarre call of the bellbird (Paraguay's national bird) as the main rhythm. Traditional dances include the lively polkas *galopadas* and the *danza de la botella*, with dancers balancing bottles on their heads.

Tango is big in Uruguay, with much spillover from neighboring Argentina. *Candombe*, an African-derived rhythm is occasionally heard, particularly during Montevideo's lively Carnival. Top Uruguayan musicians are singer-songwriter Jorge Drexler, hard-rocking La Trampa and No Te Va Gustar.

Venezuela

Salsa is big in Venezuela, with greats like Oscar D'León achieving nationwide recognition. Other music competing for airtime includes merengue, reggaeton and *vallenato* from Colombia. The country's most popular folk rhythm is *zoropó* (also called *música llanera*), which is usually sung and accompanied by the harp, *cuatro* (small, four-stringed guitar) and maracas.

Caracas is a major center for Latin pop and *rock en español*, which fuses Latin rhythms with a rock sound. The scene's most famous band is the Grammy-winning Los Amigos Invisibles.

Religion

About 300 million South Americans (81% of the population) are at least nominally Roman Catholic, though the number of those who actively practice hangs much lower (only 20% in the case of Argentina). The presence of Catholicism is still quite visible – virtually every town and village on the continent has a central church or cathedral – and Catholic-related festivals are an important part of the calendar.

Among indigenous peoples, allegiance to Catholicism was often a clever way to disguise traditional beliefs that were ostensibly forbidden by the church. Similarly, black slaves in Brazil gave Christian names and forms to their African gods, whose worship was discouraged or forbidden. Syncretic beliefs and practices such as Candomblé in Brazil have proliferated to this day, but they do not exclude Christianity. There is no conflict between attending mass one day and seeking guidance from a *mãe de santo* (Candomblé priestess) the next.

In recent decades, various Protestant sects have made inroads among the traditionally Catholic population. There is also a small number of Jews and Muslims sprinkled throughout the continent.

Sports

Volleyball, baseball, motor racing, cock-fighting, even the rodeo all have a place (albeit an often tiny one) in the pantheon of South American sports. However, nothing unites (or more often *divides*) South Americans like a bang-up game of *fútbol* (soccer). It's the national passion in nearly every country on the continent and can be a source of great pride or utter disgust come tournament time. Speaking of tournaments, Brazil won its fifth World Cup final in 2002, snatching the world record for most titles taken (it's also the only country to have played in every World Cup). Having last hosted the World Cup in 1950, Brazil proudly plays host nation again in 2014. National hysteria is already sweeping through the country. Other important tournaments include the annual South American club-team championship, the Copa Libertadores. Teams from Brazil and Argentina, the continent's powerhouses, often battle for first place, though upsets occasionally occur, as happened in 2008 when Ecuador's LDU Quito team beat Brazil's team Fluminense in the final. The Copa América is a continent-wide championship played in odd-numbered years, with two non-South American teams invited.

Volleyball is popular throughout South America, especially in Brazil. There, people also play a variation called *futevôlei*, in which players use their feet instead of their hands. *Béisbol* (baseball), while not widely followed on the continent, is hugely popular in Venezuela.

Rallies (dirt- and off-road auto races) are big in Chile, Argentina, Bolivia and Brazil. Argentina is famous for polo, Buenos Aires being the best place to see a match.

ENVIRONMENT

The Land

The Cordillera de los Andes, the longest continuous mountain system on earth, forms the western margin of the continent, snaking nearly 8000km from Venezuela to southern Patagonia. Riddled with volcanoes, the Andes are part of the volcanic 'Ring of Fire' running from Asia and Alaska to Tierra del Fuego. East of the Andes, the Amazon Basin – the largest river basin in the world – covers parts of Bolivia, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, the Guianas and Brazil. In the center of the continent (parts of Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay), the vast Pantanal is the largest inland wetland on earth.

Stay up to date on all South American soccer games and tournaments played throughout the continent and the world at www.latinamericanfootball.com.

On the geographical side-stage, other physical features include the Orinoco River Basin, which drains the *llanos* (plains) of Venezuela; the barren Chaco of southern Bolivia, northwestern Paraguay and the northern tip of Argentina; the extensive Paraná–Paraguay river system; the fertile pampas of Argentina and Uruguay; and arid, mystical Patagonia, in the far south.

Wildlife

Plant and animal life are generally unique to their habitats. There are numerous habitats throughout South America, but the following are the most important.

AMAZON BASIN RAINFORESTS

Biodiversity seems an insufficient word to describe the seven million sq km of the Amazon. The world's greatest rainforest is home to more plant and animal species than any other place on earth. It contains one in 10 of the world's known species, including over 40,000 plant species, 1300 bird species, over 400 mammal species, 4000 fish species and 2.5 million insect species (bring repellent). In some of its two-hectare plots, it's possible to find more than 500 tree species; a comparable plot in a mid-latitude forest might have three or four. One study found 3000 species of beetle in five small plots and estimated that each tree species supported more than 400 unique animal species. The rainforest canopy is so dense, however, that little to no sunlight penetrates to the forest floor, and nearly all life is found in the trees.

More than 75 monkey species reside in the Amazon, and they're wonderful to spot. Other Amazonian animals include sloths, anteaters, armadillos, tapirs, caiman, pink and grey dolphins, the Amazon manatee and the western hemisphere's greatest feline, the jaguar.

TROPICAL CLOUD FORESTS

In remote valleys at higher elevations, tropical cloud forests retain clouds that engulf the forest in a fine mist, allowing wonderfully delicate forms of plant life to survive. Cloud-forest trees have low, gnarled growth; a dense, small-leaved canopy; and moss-covered branches supporting orchids, ferns and a host of other epiphytes (plants that gather moisture and nutrients without ground roots). Such forests are the homes of rare species such as the woolly tapir, the Andean spectacled bear and the puma. Some cloud-forest areas host over 400 species of birds.

HIGH-ALTITUDE GRASSLANDS

Even higher than the cloud forest, the *páramo* (humid, high-altitude grassland of the northern Andean countries) is the natural sponge of the Andes and is characterized by a harsh climate, high levels of ultraviolet light and wet, peaty soils. It's an enormously specialized habitat unique to tropical America and is found only from the highlands of Costa Rica to the highlands of northern Peru. Flora of the *páramo* is dominated by hard grasses, cushion plants and small herbaceous plants, and features dense thickets of the *queñoa* tree, which, along with Himalayan pines, share the world-altitude record for trees. Animals of the *páramo* include Andean foxes, deer and *vicuña*, a wild, golden-colored relative of the llama.

CENTRAL ANDEAN REGION

Another unique ecosystem exists between the coast and the *cordillera*, from northern Chile to northern Peru. The coastal Atacama Desert, the world's driest, is almost utterly barren in the rain shadow of the Andes. The cold

The Amazon River, from its inconspicuous source in the Peruvian highlands to its mouth near Belém, Brazil, measures some 6275km. Its flow is greater than the next eight largest rivers combined, and it carries one-fifth of the world's freshwater.

Peru current (also called the Humboldt Current) moderates the temperature at this tropical latitude and produces convective fogs (*garúa* or *camanchaca*) that support *lomas* (hillside vegetation) in the coastal ranges.

SAVANNAS

Savannas are vast, low-altitude, primarily treeless tropical and semitropical grasslands. Because of their openness, they can be the best places to observe wildlife in South America. The most famous example is Brazil's Pantanal, which spills over into Bolivia. Other savannas include the Venezuelan *llanos* and, to a lesser extent, the pampas of southern Brazil and Argentina.

TROPICAL DRY FORESTS

Hot areas with well-defined wet and dry seasons support the growth of dry forests. In South America these climatic conditions are mostly found near the coast in the northern part of the continent. Because many of these coastal regions have a dense and growing population, tropical dry forest is a fast-disappearing habitat – only about 1% remains undisturbed. The majestic bottle-trunk ceiba (kapok) tree is the forest's most definitive species. It has a massively bulging trunk and seasonal white flowers that dangle like lightbulbs from otherwise bare tree branches. Parrots, parrotlets, monkeys and a variety of reptiles inhabit these forests.

MANGROVES

Found in coastal areas of Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, the Guianas and Venezuela, mangroves are trees with a remarkable ability to grow in salt water. They have a broadly spreading system of intertwining stilt roots to support the tree in unstable sandy or silty soils. Mangrove forests trap sediments and build up a rich organic soil, which in turn supports other plants. Mangrove roots provide a protected habitat for many types of fish, mollusks and crustaceans, while the branches provide nesting areas for sea birds.

National Parks

There are over 200 national parks in South America and a staggering number of provincial parks and private reserves. They are undeniably one of the continent's highlights, covering every terrain imaginable, from tropical rainforest and cloud forest to Andean *páramo* to tropical and temperate coastal regions. The most popular parks have well-developed tourist infrastructures, attract high-season crowds and are fairly easy to reach. Some parks have only faint trails, basic camping facilities or refuges and, if you're lucky, a park ranger to answer questions. Others are impossible to reach without 4WD transport or a private boat. Maps are generally tough to come by, so if you plan to do any trekking, research the park first and check larger cities for topographical map sources. See Maps in the South America Directory (p993) and in individual country directories for information on where to obtain maps.

Environmental Issues

One of the gravest environmental threats to South America is well known. Every day wide swaths of forest are felled at an alarming rate across the continent. Deforestation is happening in the Amazon rainforest; the temperate forests of Chile and Argentina; the Atlantic rainforest of Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay; the coastal mangroves and cloud forests of Ecuador; and the Chocó bioregion of Pacific Panama, Colombia and Ecuador.

The forest is being destroyed for many reasons, including farming (particularly soy, one of the fastest-growing farming industries in South America), oil drilling, mining and cattle ranching. Oil exploration has opened pristine

Believe it or not, there are still uncontacted tribes in the Amazon. Survival International estimates that there are 15 uncontacted tribes in Peru alone, living in the deepest regions of the Amazon. Most have refused all attempts at contact by the outside world, sometimes with violence.

tracts of Amazon rainforest to colonization and has led to large-scale toxic spills and the poisoning of rivers and streams. Urban sprawl has also wreaked havoc on local ecosystems, as cities and shantytowns spread into national parks and environmentally sensitive areas. Pulp mills, which pollute rivers, and uranium mining are other destructive practices.

Overdevelopment of certain areas (notably the northeastern coast of Brazil) also plays a role in environmental degradation, as do unsustainable fishing and farming practices. Patagonia faces profound changes to its natural environment, with proposals under consideration to build a series of hydroelectric dams in Chile. Desertification is another issue facing Patagonia, where global warming has melted glaciers at rates even faster than experts predicted.

You can read more about conservation and environmental threats in South America on the following websites:

Amazon Watch (www.amazonwatch.org)

Ancient Forests International (www.ancientforests.org)

Birdlife International (www.birdlife.org)

Conservation International (CI; www.conservation.org)

International Rivers (www.internationalrivers.org)

Rainforest Action Network (RAN; www.ran.org)

World Land Trust (www.worldlandtrust.org)

World Wildlife Fund (WWF; www.wwf.org)

For news on the indigenous struggles in South America and beyond, check out the website of Survival International (www.survival-international.org).

Behind the Scenes

THIS BOOK

This 11th edition of *South America on a Shoestring* was written by an outstanding team of authors led by Regis St. Louis. Regis wrote the front and back chapters as well as the Ecuador chapter. He was assisted by the following contributing authors: Sandra Bao (Argentina), Gregor Clark (Brazil), Aimée Dowl (the Guianas), Beth Kohn (Venezuela), Carolyn McCarthy (Chile), Anja Mutić (Bolivia), Mike Power (Colombia), Kevin Raub (Brazil and Peru), Paul Smith (Paraguay), Andy Symington (Brazil) and Lucas Vidgen (Argentina and Uruguay). David Goldberg, MD wrote the Health chapter. The Bolivia chapter was adapted in part from research and writing by Kate Armstrong and Paul Smith. *Gracias* also to the authors of the previous 10 editions, especially Danny Palmerlee, who coordinated the 9th and 10th editions. This guidebook was commissioned in Lonely Planet's Oakland office and produced by the following:

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