

welcome to South America



Setting for Big Adventures

From the snowcapped peaks of the Andes to the undulating waterways of the Amazon, South America spreads a dazzling array of natural wonders. This is a continent of lush rainforests, towering volcanoes, misty cloud forests, bone-dry deserts, red-rock canyons, ice-blue glaciers and sun-kissed beaches. As landscapes go, there aren't many other places on earth that offer so much range – or so many opportunities for adventure.

You can hike past ancient temples first laid down by the Incas, contemplate the awe-inspiring power of Iguazú Falls or spend the day watching wildlife from

a dugout canoe on one of the Amazon's countless *igarapés* (narrow waterways). You can barrel down Andean roads by mountain bike, go whitewater rafting on class V rivers and surf amazing breaks off both coasts. And once you think you've experienced it all, head to the dramatic landscapes in Tierra del Fuego, go eye-to-eye with extraordinary creatures in the Galápagos, and scramble up tableland mountains in the Gran Sabana for a panorama that seems straight out of the Mesozoic era.

Cultural Treasures

South America's great diversity doesn't end with geography. Across the continent

Andean peaks, Amazonian rainforest, Patagonian glaciers, Incan ruins, colonial towns, white-sand beaches and vertiginous nightlife: the wonders of South America set the stage for incredible adventures.

(left) Patagonia's Cerro Fitz Roy (p146)
(below) Festival in Cuenca, Ecuador (p671)



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you'll find magnificent colonial towns where cobblestone streets lead past gilded churches and stately plazas – a scene little changed since the 18th century. Elsewhere, you can haggle over colorful textiles at indigenous markets, share meals with traditional dwellers of the rainforest and follow the pounding rhythms laid down by Afro-Brazilian drum corps. South America is home to an astounding variety of living and ancient cultures, and experiencing it all firsthand is as easy as showing up.

La Vida Musical

Welcome to one of the world's great music destinations. Colombian salsa, Brazilian samba, Argentine tango and Andean

folk music all receive airtime across the globe, but nothing quite compares to hearing those rhythms in the place where they were born. Sultry *milongas* (dance halls) in Buenos Aires, simmering samba clubs in Rio, *salsotecas* (salsa clubs) in Quito – all great places to chase the heart of Saturday night. Yet this is only the beginning of a great musical odyssey that encompasses poetic Peruvian *trovas*, soulful Ecuadorian *pasillos*, fast-stepping Brazilian *farró*, whirling Venezuelan merengue, steel-pan Guyanese drumming, Paraguayan harp music and scores of other regional styles. The best way to experience it is to simply plunge in – though you might want to take a dance class along the way!