



Lake Titicaca

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ La Cúpula Restaurant (p81)
- ➔ La Orilla (p81)
- ➔ Huanchaco (p81)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Las Olas (p80)
- ➔ Hotel Rosario del Lago (p81)
- ➔ La Estancia Ecolodge (p89)

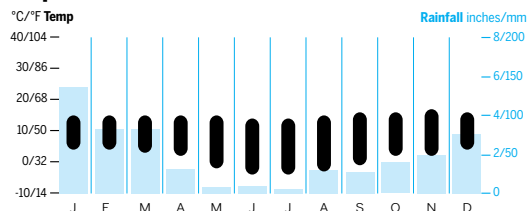
Why Go?

Everything – and everyone – that sits beside this impressive body of water, from the traditional Aymará villages to the glacier-capped peaks of the Cordillera Real, seems to fall into the background in contrast with the shimmering opal jewel set into the spare altiplano earth. It is not hard to see how Inca legends came to credit Lake Titicaca with the birth of their civilization.

Set between Peru and Bolivia at 3808m, the 8400-sq-km lake offers enough activities to keep you busy for at least a week. There are trips to the many islands that speckle the shoreline, hikes to lost coves and floating islands, parties in the tourist hub of Copacabana, and encounters with locals that will provide insight into the traditions of one of Bolivia's top attractions.

When to Go

Copacabana



Feb–Nov Sunny by day, but bitterly cold nights. Lots of festivals including Semana Santa.

May The Fiesta de la Cruz (Feast of the Cross) is popular around the lake.

Aug The Fiesta de la Virgen de Copacabana involves the blessing of cars and possessions.

History

When you first glimpse Lake Titicaca's crystalline, gemlike waters beneath the looming backdrop of the Cordillera Real in the clear altiplano light, you'll understand why pre-Inca people connected it with mystical events. Those early inhabitants of the altiplano believed that both the sun itself and their bearded white god-king, Viracocha,

had risen out of its mysterious depths. The Incas, in turn, believed that it was the birthplace of their civilization.

Archaeological discoveries indicate that the areas around the lake have been inhabited since about 1500 BC by civilizations like the Tiwanaku, Aymará and Inca. Recent discoveries of a subaquatic temple and ancient wall have led some to speculate that the lake

LAKE TITICACA



Lake Titicaca Highlights

1 Visit tiny **Isla Pariti** (p92), with its lovely museum featuring exquisite Tiwanaku finds from a recent excavation.

2 Discover vestiges of the Inca culture in and around **Copacabana** (p75), check out a baptism (or even a vehicle

blessing!) at the cathedral and watch the sunset from the top of Cerro Calvario.

3 Travel through **lakeside villages** (p84) between Copacabana and Yampuputa, and take a spin in a reed boat to eat fresh grilled trout on a floating island.

4 Explore **Isla del Sol** (p85) on foot, hiking from tip to tail over a few days.

5 Head out to **Isla de la Luna** (p90) for spectacular lake views, ancient ruins and landscapes straight out of the Mediterranean.