

Country Handbook: Bolivia



Introduction

Travelling to see the work of Compassion and our local church partners firsthand is an unforgettable experience. On this trip, you'll see for yourself how children are known, loved and protected by their church communities and are being released from poverty in Jesus' name.

This Country Handbook is designed to start preparing you for your trip to Bolivia. Please read it before you depart, and we'd also recommend that you keep it handy for easy reference.

We pray that God will bless your time in Bolivia!



Country Information



Bolivia is known for being home to Salar de Uyuni, the world's largest salt flats, and for its high-altitude cities. Bolivians are warm and friendly people who care for others and place high value on family relationships.

Main languages:

Spanish, and indigenous languages including Quechua, Aymara and Guaraní

Climate:

Tropical (high humidity, high temperatures, heavy rainfall)

Main religions:

Roman Catholic (65%),
Protestant (19.6%)

Currency:

Boliviano



Compassion in Bolivia

Compassion has been working to release children from poverty in Jesus' name in Bolivia since 1975. 36 per cent of people live below the poverty line.

Compassion's Child Sponsorship Program is tailored to be age-appropriate for each child.

Children **AGED 1 TO 3** receive home-based care.

Children **AGED 3 AND OLDER** attend their local Compassion centre two days a week.



For more information on Bolivia, scan the QR code or visit:
compassion.com.au/where-we-work/bolivia

Compassion assisted children in Bolivia typically attend program activities at their local child development centres. Here is an example of what a typical program day looks like:

Devotional time - Children are taught to pray.

Spiritual lessons - Children sing songs and learn Bible stories.

Break and snack time - Children can play in a safe environment and develop friendships. A snack often consists of an egg sandwich with tea, fruit shake with crackers, fruit salad, or bread.

Social-emotional lessons - Children learn conflict resolution skills and how to develop healthy self-esteem and a godly character. Children often come from challenging home environments and are taught social and personal skills.

Lunch and social time - Children generally receive a snack and lunch at the centre twice a week. The meals typically consist of vegetable soup, a lentil burger, salad, rice, dessert and apple juice.

Health lessons - Children learn practical health and hygiene lessons.

Letter writing and career planning - Older children work with local staff to identify their strengths and interests and set goals for their future.

Children are encouraged to join in sports teams, church and regional retreats. Youth are also given the opportunity to volunteer by doing service activities such as cleaning up town squares and painting. Students can elect vocational training skills, such as computer literacy, pastry making, dressmaking and English.

Cultural Considerations



Clothing

- **Women:** It is appropriate to dress casually, with pants, shorts, t-shirts, skirts and dresses all acceptable. Please dress modestly, ensuring your clothing is knee-length or longer and your shoulders are covered. Low-cut tops should be avoided.
- **Men:** It is appropriate to dress casually, with pants, shorts and t-shirts all acceptable.
- Please be mindful that many churches are conversative, and it is best to wear long pants, dresses or skirts. More casual clothing can be worn when visiting children or doing other activities.
- Both open-toed shoes and sneakers are appropriate. However, please be mindful that sandals may not be appropriate in the western part of the country for men.
- Tattoos are uncommon, so it is best to cover them if possible. Please be aware that you may need to remove piercings when visiting certain local church partners.

Greetings

- Handshakes are the most common greeting. Some adults and children may offer a hug.
- It is polite to wish adults a good morning/afternoon. A simple 'hello' is a polite way to greet children.

Visiting homes

- It is best to keep your shoes on when visiting someone's home unless they prompt you to take them off.
- Gifts are generally opened after you have left. Similarly, if you receive a gift, it is polite to wait to open it.

Emergency contact information:

Local emergency number: 911

Compassion Bolivia office: 011-591-4-4533-722

Australian Embassy (closest full consular assistance is in Peru): +511 630 0500

Language

- Useful Spanish phrases:

Hello: ¡Hola!

How are you? ¿Cómo está usted?

Pleased to meet you: Mucho gusto

Very well, thank you: Muy bien, gracias

Goodbye: Adiós ('Chou' is also commonly used in Bolivia)

What is your name? ¿Cómo te llamas?

My name is: Me llamo...

Yes: Sí

No: No

Please: Por favor

Thank you: Gracias

I don't understand: No entiendo

Do you speak English? ¿Usted habla inglés?

God bless you: ¡Qué Dios te bendiga

I am praying for you: Estoy orando por ti

Body language

- Beyond an initial handshake or hug, it is best not to initiate physical affection. However, please be aware that Bolivians are generally quite friendly and affectionate people who may stand quite close to you when speaking.
- It is not appropriate for men to hug children or youth.
- Couples may hold hands but further affection should be avoided.
- Winking is considered inappropriate.

Eating and drinking

- It is common to wait until everyone is seated around the table to begin serving.
- In most settings, it's polite to allow guests and women to serve themselves or be served first and wait until everyone is served to start eating.
- In Christian settings, people pray before meals.
- It is not appropriate for Christians to drink alcohol.



Key Challenges and Prayer Points

34 per cent of the population lack access to basic sanitation facilities and nearly 25 per cent of people in rural areas don't have access to clean water. Compassion's local church partners are providing wells, handwashing facilities and other infrastructure to support the health and hygiene of local children and families. Please ask God to bless this work.

Bolivia has high rates of child abuse, with girls particularly vulnerable. Our local church partners are trained on how to identify abuse and partner with local authorities to ensure children are supported. Please pray that children who have suffered will receive physical and psychological healing and that the advocacy of the local church will effectively prevent further abuse.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, children and youth were unable to attend school and have missed education. Our local church partners skilfully supported children through this time with home visits and remote lessons, but students still need to catch up on missed learning. Please pray that the long-term effects of this education gap will be minimised.



**SEARCH FOR
COMPASSIONAU**

COMPASSION AUSTRALIA

PO Box 1, Hunter Region MC NSW 2310
Phone: 1300 22 44 53 | +612 49 35 5000
Fundraising Authority: CFN10658
ABN 67 001 692 566

compassion.com.au

Christ-centred | Child-focused | Church-based