



Itinerary Planning Document

This general information is provided to help ensure that your itinerary is planned best to suit you. Please have a thorough read of the areas below as many of these items may incur costs to change after your booking is made. You may have discussed much of the following information with your sales consultant already, however we provide this checklist to ensure that you can make an informed decision before confirming your itinerary.

If, after reading this document, there are aspects of your itinerary you would like to discuss and possibly change, please contact your sales consultant, prior to confirming anything - especially flights.

Peru

The Andes and Altitude Sickness

Please be aware that altitude sickness affects everyone differently, irrespective of age or fitness. Altitude sickness symptoms can occur above an elevation of approximately 2,400 metres. Machu Picchu has an elevation of 2,400 metres, Cusco an elevation of 3,400 metres and Puno an elevation of 3,800 metres.

If you have not been at high altitudes before or if you are concerned about how altitude will affect you it's recommended that you consider one or two rest days without activity when you first arrive at higher altitudes. If in the unlikely event you do suffer badly from altitude sickness and rest days have not been built-in, you may risk missing some activities on your itinerary.

As mentioned above, Puno is one of the highest locations amongst the regular tourist areas in the Peruvian Andes. Many of our itineraries do enter the Peruvian Andes via Puno, continuing to Cusco and then to Machu Picchu. We organise itineraries this way so that Machu Picchu is the final highlight of your time in Peru, giving you ample time to acclimatise to the altitude beforehand. Although Puno's elevation is higher, any symptoms that you may experience are unlikely to be different than those you would experience in Cusco in the first few days. If you feel that starting at the higher elevation and working down is not the best option for you, we are happy to organise itineraries to start in Cusco/ Machu Picchu and end in Puno should you wish to organise your itinerary this way. If you do choose to begin your trip in Cusco, you may want to consider spending a day or two in the Sacred Valley at 2700m, a beautiful area with great scenery, ruins and colourful markets, before continuing to Cusco, to aid the acclimatisation process.

Andean Explorer Train

A first class train service operates between Cusco and Puno (or vice-versa) 3-4 days a week. It is a spectacular train journey that travels down the spine of the Andes. Most of our standard category tours include a bus journey between these locations to keep costs down. If you would prefer to travel by train, please discuss this with your sales consultant.

Trains to Machu Picchu

There are three standards of trains to Machu Picchu:

- **Standard Train:** A regular train with no meals and no glass ceiling.
- **Vistadome Train:** A superior train service including a small meal and glass ceilings, which allow you to easily view the surrounding mountains.
- **Hiram Bingham Train:** A first class service including silver service meals and large seats. No glass ceilings.

Bolivia

Bolivia is home to some of Latin America's most amazing destinations, but it is one of Latin America's poorest countries. The tourist infrastructure is therefore, at times, dramatically different to what you may experience in surrounding Peru, Chile, Brazil or Argentina. When visiting Bolivia it is important to allow some extra time, pack an open mind and expect that things won't always run like clockwork. With the right attitude, this may well be one of your most memorable journeys as you take a little step back in time. Please be aware that you are likely to experience the following:

- Comparatively basic accommodation and transportation standards (long distance buses in Bolivia don't have working toilets for example). This is especially the case outside La Paz.
- Most guides are Spanish speaking (especially outside La Paz) so we do recommend taking a guide book along with you, or learn a little Spanish before you arrive.
- Accommodation in the Uyuni area is extremely basic (1-2 star) and the nights are very cold so pack enough layers to deal with sub zero temperatures.
- If looking to travel to the Bolivian Amazon area of Rurrenabaque, then please be aware that the runways into this area are not sealed and if there has been heavy rain, flights can be delayed for 2-3 days.

Argentina

Iguazu Falls Hotels and Brazilian Visas

Please note that most of the hotels we use in Iguazu are on the Argentinean side of the falls. The facilities, range of hotels and evening activities in Puerto Iguazu are far superior to those in Foz de Iguacu on the Brazilian side. You will also need a full day to visit the Argentina side of the falls as the walkways are far more extensive.

We do this because passport holders from Australia, Canada and the US require visas to enter Brazil. The visas are expensive and require you to post your passport away for up to six weeks. If you will be travelling on one of these passports and don't have a wider itinerary in Brazil then you may wish to consider only visiting the Argentinean side of the falls.

If you want to stay overnight at the falls we generally recommend the Sheraton Iguazu because there is so much more to see on the Argentine side of the falls. The hotel is located within the National Park, so it gives you the flexibility to come and go throughout the day. The hotel has Jungle View and Falls View rooms. They are the same standard, but only the 'Falls View' rooms have views of the falls.

The Hotel Das Cataratas on the Brazilian side is a better standard hotel. It has recently been completely renovated by the Belmond hotel group and the service at the hotel is first rate. The hotel is set in lush vegetation, so the view of the falls is obscured from the majority of the rooms. You can take in spectacular panoramic views of the falls, just a few steps from the front of the hotel.

Please note that the boat ride in front of the falls and the helicopter flight over the falls depart from different locations. The boat ride departs inside the National Park on the Argentina side and the helicopter rides depart from the Brazilian side.

Ushuaia Port Transfers for Antarctica Cruises

If you are taking an Antarctica cruise from Ushuaia, then you may want to book a transfer from your hotel to the pier. Please note that the pier is very close to the centre of town, so if you are staying in a central hotel, it is only a 200-400 metre walk to the pier and you may find a transfer unnecessary. If you are staying at Hotel Beagle or Hotel Albatross they are located directly across from the pier entrance.

Please note that Ushuaia's pier is approximately 500 metres long, so if your ship is at the end of the pier, it will be a considerable walk even from the pier entrance.

Due to expensive port taxes, transfers to the pier (which include entry to the pier and transfer all the way to the ship) are reasonably expensive. If you are comfortable walking from your hotel to the ship, then you may wish to consider doing this in order to save the cost of the transfer. If your hotel is out of the main town centre, if you have heavy luggage or are not overly mobile then we strongly recommended that you do book a transfer to the pier.

El Calafate Hotels

Please note that many hotels in the El Calafate area are located outside the main town. Most of the out-of-town hotels benefit from fantastic views but please be aware that they often do not serve food outside of regular meal times. If you are arriving into El Calafate in the evening and transferring to a hotel outside the main town centre, please be aware that it is unlikely there will be food options available to you on arrival. You can take a bus into the centre or you may want to consider one of the more central hotels.

Ecuador

Galapagos Flights and Quito's New Airport

Please be aware that Quito has a new airport. The journey from the airport to downtown Quito can take, depending on traffic, up to 90 minutes. There are currently no hotels in the vicinity of Quito airport. Quito is a fascinating city, with a stunning colonial centre and well worth a visit. It does also remain the hub to many of the tourist destinations in Ecuador, so you may find yourself transferring in and out on more than one occasion. Where possible, we will do our best to avoid busy times, to reduce transfer time, but if this concerns you, please discuss other itinerary options with your sales consultant.

Quito is at altitude of 2,800 metres, so if you are concerned about altitude sickness, it is advisable to factor in some rest days in order to acclimatise.

The majority of Galapagos flights depart from either Guayaquil or Quito. Although Quito is Ecuador's capital, Guayaquil is a larger city and the country's business hub. The airport is a lot more accessible and there are generally more international flight options out of Guayaquil compared to Quito. Guayaquil itself has few tourist attractions, but to avoid long transfer times and possible altitude sickness, you may find it more convenient to flight to the Galapagos or other domestic airports in Ecuador from here.

For flights to and from the Galapagos in particular, it is easier to fly out of Quito (or take a tour along the Avenue of the volcanoes ending in Guayaquil and fly out from here) and return to Guayaquil and straight onto your international flight.

Please also be aware that with any Galapagos itinerary, there is always a full day of travel between Quito/ Guayaquil and the Galapagos in each direction. Therefore a five-day itinerary will have three full days on the boat, an eight-day itinerary, only six and so on. Please discuss the various duration options with your sales consultant.

Brazil

Visas

Please be aware that if you are travelling on an Australia, Canadian or US passport that you will need to apply for a visa to enter Brazil. In order to do this you must complete application forms, pay a fee and post your passport to the Brazilian Authorities. Your passport may take up to six weeks until it is returned. If you travel regularly and may need your passport in the lead up to your trip to Brazil then please be aware of this. Further details on how to apply for your Brazil visa will be provided in your confirmed itinerary.

Transfers in Brazil

Please bear in mind that in most large Brazilian cities, the airport is out of town and transfer times can vary due to traffic. For this reason, in Rio in particular, we recommend an overnight in the city, before continuing to other coastal areas.

We offer shared and private transfers to and from the airport to the coastal areas around Rio de Janeiro. With shared transfers the travel can vary dramatically due to traffic and the pick up times will always err on the side of caution to ensure that everyone arrives on time for their flight. This may mean that you have several hours in the airport waiting for your flight. We can book an airport lounge for you, but it is preferable to spend an additional night in the city before your flight to avoid this.

Cuba

Cuban Tourist cards

Tourist cards can be arranged prior to travel through the Cuban Embassy although if your visit to Cuba is part of a larger trip to Central America, we recommend flying into Cuba from either Panama City or Cancun, as Cuban Tourist Cards are easily obtained from these airports. In other countries you will need to visit the embassy or consulate, which is a lengthy and expensive process.

Travelling in Cuba

Cuba is a wonderfully unique, culturally rich country, but the tourist infrastructure is as such that travelling can be challenging, especially outside Havana and main beach resort areas. You may find that the punctuality of transfers varies and the standard and service in hotels below what you would expect elsewhere in Latin America. If you bear this in mind and go with an open mind and realistic expectations, visiting Cuba is an unforgettable experience.

Mexico

Safety in Mexico

A lot has been made in the international press in recent years of Mexico's drug wars and safety of the country in general. The North of Mexico is generally considered to be focal point of this violence and although most of the cartel hubs are away from the main tourist areas, the Copper Canyon and coast areas near Acapulco and Puerto Vallarta are nearby. Although there is very little threat to tourists, you will notice a higher concentration of armed police officer in these areas. In the main tourist areas in the central and southern areas of Mexico, cartel related incidents are extremely rare and for the vast majority of visits to Mexico the cartel activity goes completely unnoticed.

Guatemala

Chichicastenango Markets

The market at Chichicastenango is widely considered to be the most colourful best local markets in all of Latin America. The market is only open on Thursday and Sundays. The town itself offers only very primitive accommodation, so we recommend visiting the market from either Lake Atitlan, Antigua or in transit between the two. If visiting the market is a must, please discuss the best way to fit it in with your sales consultant.

Panama

Panama links Central America to South America and the airport at Panama City is a great hub for flights connecting between the two and destinations throughout Central America. If you are planning on travelling extensively in Latin America it is likely you will transit through Panama. The country is not without its own highlights and it is well worth factoring in a few days to explore them.

Belize

If considering travelling from Belize City overland up into Mexico, please be aware that there are no regular, direct tourist service on this route. If travelling by bus, you will need to travel on series of local bus services with connections. Our team in Belize can help you organise bus tickets in Belize city, but if you don't speak any Spanish, you may find the journey and connections challenging. We can arrange a private transfer from Belize into Mexico but please be aware that the cost for this is significantly higher than the bus service. Alternatively we can arrange from you to fly between Cancun and Belize City.