

# Unidad Académica Campesina - Carmen Pampa, Bolivia

## Visitor Handbook

We are thrilled that you are coming to the Unidad Académica Campesina-Carmen Pampa (UAC-CP)! Part of what makes the UAC-CP experience so unique for students and faculty are visits from people like you. This handbook was assembled to help you prepare for your trip and to allow you to feel more comfortable and “in the know” once you get to campus. You will find that the UAC-CP is a very busy place, and while we do our best to answer all your questions once you get here, having a basic understanding of life in Bolivia and on campus beforehand goes a long way.

Please read this entire handbook carefully and feel free to let us know if you have additional questions, suggestions or additions. It was created by seasoned travelers and your observations about what you’ve learned traveling will help future visitors to the UAC-CP.

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### **1. PRE-VISIT PROTOCOL**

The information requested on this page **MUST** be relayed to the UAC-CP well in advance of your visit.

#### Planning arrival and departure with the UAC-CP

Hye-Jung Park and Hugh Smeltekop coordinator international visits to the UAC-CP.

When planning your trip, be sure to contact Hye-Jung or Hugh at least three months in advance of your intended departure date to provide the following information in brief:

1. Purpose of your visit (goals and objectives must be stated clearly)
2. Approximate arrival and departure dates (tentative length of stay)
3. Contact information (email address, postal address, and home, work and cell phone numbers)

**Hye-Jung’s e-mail address: [hjparkcorea@yahoo.com](mailto:hjparkcorea@yahoo.com)**

**Hugh’s e-mail address: [boliviahugh@gmail.com](mailto:boliviahugh@gmail.com)**

Hye-Jung and Hugh will need to confirm that the UAC-CP will be able to provide you with housing and transportation during your proposed stay, as space in the Guest House is limited. When considering a travel schedule, note that it is most convenient for UAC-CP staff if you arrive on Sunday or Monday.

## **2. CONTACT INFORMATION AND CHANGE-OF-FLIGHT PROTOCOL**

Please leave a copy of the following information with a friend or relative at home whom we can contact in the event of an emergency. E-mail Hye-Jung your emergency contact's information including home/work/cell phone, email address and home address.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Hye-Jung Park will be your primary contact for your visit. If you must call the UAC-CP, calls can be received Tuesday through Saturday, between 8:00 and 12:00 in the morning and again between 2:00 and 6:00 in the afternoon. Bolivia is four hours behind Greenwich Mean Time, which means that if it is noon in Chicago, it is 2:00 pm at the UAC-CP (or 1:00 pm if you are in daylight savings—Bolivia does not use daylight savings time).

### **UAC-CP Address:**

Unidad Academica Campesina – Carmen Pampa  
Coroico, Nor Yungas  
La Paz, BOLIVIA  
South America

Please contact Hye-Jung first by email for the telephone number. (Her email address appears above.) Please note that the receptionist at the College does not speak English. When receiving calls while at the UAC-CP, your caller should say your name clearly and the receptionist will attempt to find you, or an English speaker that can facilitate the conversation. Generally, it is difficult to receive phone calls.

Internet is available and readily accessible in the Guest House. Most international visitors find it most convenient to communicate with friends and family via Skype. Skype calls are free when “calling” from computer to computer and are very reasonable (about \$0.02 US a minute) when calling from computer to a phone.

### **Airline Reservations:**

Most visitors travel from the United States to Bolivia on American Airlines through Miami.  
(See “3. TRAVEL PREPARATION GUIDELINES” below)  
Flight information: 1-800-433-7300  
Baggage information: 1-800-535-5225  
La Paz office: 591-2-235-1360 (dial 011 first if calling from the US)

### **Carmen Pampa Fund**

If you are having difficulty getting through to the UAC-CP, call or email Carmen Pampa Fund, the U.S.-based fundraising arm of the College, located in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Phone: 651-641-1588  
info@carmenpampafund.org  
Website: [www.carmenpampafund.org](http://www.carmenpampafund.org)

### **CHANGE OF FLIGHT PROTOCOL**

Occasionally, visitors may miss a flight or other circumstances arise to delay their arrival. If you have a change of arrival time or date, email Hye-Jung or Hugh immediately. They will be checking email regularly in the days leading up to your arrival. In the event that you are unable to inform them about a missed flight or change of schedule, e-mail them at the earliest possible opportunity, even if you do not yet know your future flight information. If you have not communicated your change-of-flight information, and you do not arrive at the La

Paz airport at the scheduled time, the person meeting you at the airport will check email immediately and will work with you to coordinate next steps. Under these circumstances, try to check your email regularly—at least every hour or so.

If your baggage is lost, contact American Airlines at the baggage information number above.

### **TRIP CANCELLATIONS**

In the event of certain political situations (blockades, strikes, etc), it may be necessary to cancel or postpone your trip. The decision to cancel is often a difficult one to make and will be made after considering several informed assessments of a situation, but will sometimes be made at the very last minute, relative to your travel plans. It is for this reason that it is essential we have your contact information prior to your departure. At times, it is necessary to cancel trips when there is only speculation of potential political problems. While this is disappointing, please respect our decision. We are not willing to compromise the safety of our visitors, nor our UAC-CP staff.

If your trip is cancelled, please contact American Airlines to determine the re-booking of your flight or reimbursement of funds if you are unable to postpone your visit. Again, the political situation can change quickly and it may be possible, depending on your schedule, to arrive one or two days after your original arrival date.

### **3. TRAVEL PREPARATION GUIDELINES**

#### **APPROXIMATE TICKET COSTS AND SUGGESTED AGENT**

Most visitors take American Airlines' daily flight from Miami to La Paz. American Airlines is the only major airline with regular, direct service to La Paz. One flight leaves Miami at approximately 11:00 p.m. and arrives in La Paz around 6:00a.m.; another leaves early afternoon from Miami and arrives in the evening in La Paz. Roundtrip ticket costs are approximately \$1,300 US and can be booked through an online travel site or travel agent.

#### **VACCINATIONS**

Visitors are encouraged to consult a physician or travel clinic at least two months in advance of arrival regarding immunizations. Recommended immunizations for Bolivia are Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B and typhoid. Documentation of yellow fever is required for the visa. Also, be sure that your tetanus shot is up-to-date.

Anti-malarial medication is not necessary because carrier mosquitoes are not present in areas of higher altitude such as La Paz and the UAC-CP. They are, however, suggested for visitors who plan for travel in lower elevation areas. Again, please consult your physician.

#### **PASSPORTS AND DOCUMENTATION**

A passport is necessary to enter Bolivia. If you do not currently carry a passport, apply for one several months in advance of your trip. If your passport expires soon, be sure to apply for a new passport (they must be valid for at least six months beyond the date of entry in Bolivia). Make two copies of all important documents (passport, driver's license, birth certificate, health insurance card, personal contact information, etc.). Leave one copy at home and carry the other copy with you in case your documents are lost or stolen.

The following recommendations are for **US citizens only**.

**United States citizens traveling with a US passport must have a visa to enter Bolivia.** Short-term visitors (90 days or less) should obtain a tourist visa. (The *objeto determinado* visa is generally recommended for longer-term professional visitors. Please consult with Hye-Jung or Hugh before applying for this visa).

Visas can be obtained through the mail from the Bolivian Embassy in Washington, D.C. or upon arrival at the airport in La Paz. For visitors coming from Minnesota, it is recommended they contact the Bolivian Consulate in Maple Grove. Gloria Steine, the Honorary Bolivian Consular, can be reached at 763-424-0265. The cost of the tourist visa is \$135 US through the Bolivian embassy. This cost may be slightly higher if obtained elsewhere.

For more information, consult the Bolivian embassy's website: [www.bolivia-usa.org](http://www.bolivia-usa.org).

### **MEDICAL INSURANCE**

Know the extent of international coverage you have through your medical insurance provider before arriving in Bolivia. Bring copies of important medical records, prescriptions and your insurance card. You may need to talk with your insurance agent to learn exactly what your coverage includes. The following are suggested questions to ask your agent:

- Does the plan include hospitalization for accidents and illnesses while abroad?
- What is the maximum amount of coverage provided?
- What is the coverage for medical evacuation?
- In the event of death, what is the coverage for repatriation of remains?
- Do you need to pay cash up front at a clinic or for a hospital stay? What if you have no money?
- Does the plan cover visits to the doctor or medication prescribed while abroad?
- If you must use your insurance, what do you show as proof of world-wide coverage?
- If you obtain medical assistance while you're abroad, when/how should you inform the agency?
- What documentation of expenses is required? Does the bill need to be in English and the amount of the charges in U.S. dollars?

### **TRAVEL INSURANCE**

Travel insurance can come in handy in case of an emergency. As life in Bolivia is often unpredictable, you may want to consult your local travel agent about options for purchasing a plan for your travel. There are many insurance options for travelers which are generally inexpensive, such as the following:

- **Baggage Insurance.** Including cameras, clothing and incidentals, your baggage is worth at least \$300 to \$500. Simple baggage insurance plans are available at banks and travel agencies. Check your homeowners insurance policy as it may already provide this coverage.
- **General Travel Insurance.** You may want to consider a standard travel policy which not only covers stolen or damaged baggage but will reimburse you for expenses incurred due to travel mishaps such as airline strikes, etc. Again, banks and travel agencies have such policies available.

## **4. MONEY: FEES, CURRENCY, ETC.**

### **EXCHANGING MONEY**

Money is easily exchanged from US dollars into *bolivianos* or *Bs* (pronounced 'bees'). The exchange rate is approximately 7 Bs per US dollar. Dollars can be exchanged for bolivianos in La Paz or Coroico (the closest town to the UAC-CP). Dollars can be changed most easily in denominations of \$20, \$50 or \$100, but the bills must be in perfect condition (slight tears or marks on the bills will not be accepted).

It is recommended to exchange \$200 for a ten day stay in Carmen Pampa. However, past visitors have spent well under and well over this amount, so budget according to your spending habits. Note that there are few opportunities to spend cash at the UAC-CP. Also note that currently there are no ATMs in Coroico. Most visitors withdraw money—dollars or bolivianos or both—from the ATM at the airport when they arrive. At this time they should withdraw all the money needed for their stay at the UAC-CP as there may not be a chance to return to La Paz. With the exception of hotels, credit cards are rarely accepted in Coroico. If an ATM fails to dispense requested money, copy down the name of the Bank, the location, and the time of the attempted withdrawal in case you find out later that money has been mistakenly withdrawn from your account.

Should visitors spend time in La Paz after their stay at the UAC-CP, note that ATMs are common in the city. Visitors are advised to consult their credit card companies in advance of travel about service rates for international withdrawals. You may want to call your credit card company to tell them you are traveling abroad so they do not begin to investigate purchases you make in Bolivia.

Past visitors have found that check cards offer lower service rates than credit cards. Credit cards and check cards can be used only at select hotels, restaurants, etc., in La Paz. Travelers' checks are not recommended as many visitors have found them difficult to cash.

Again, before leaving, make two copies of all credit cards front and back. Keep one copy at home, and take the other with you. It will come in handy if your credit cards are lost or stolen.

## **5. MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION ABOUT BOLIVIA: TIME, CLIMATE, ALTITUDE, DISTANCES AND SAFETY**

### **TIME**

Bolivia is four hours behind Greenwich Mean Time, which means that if it is noon in Chicago, it is 2:00 pm at the UAC-CP (or 1:00 pm during daylight savings).

### **CLIMATE**

Temperature varies considerably with altitude. During summer (December to March)—the rainy season in Bolivia—daily rains can last for hours at a time.

- **UAC-CP:** The temperature at the UAC-CP stays relatively constant at a comfortable 70 to 80° Fahrenheit year round and is a few degrees cooler at night. Humidity is moderate. Note, however, that the weather can change at the drop of a hat, from rainy and cooler to sunny and hot. Be prepared for weather changes with a raincoat or rain poncho, a hat for the sun, sunglasses, and comfortable shoes that are not too hot but good for the mud.
- **La Paz:** Temperatures are also relatively constant throughout the year in La Paz, although considerably cooler at night or in the shade. Average daytime temperatures range from the 50 to 75° Fahrenheit. Nighttime temperatures dip to 32°. The air is very dry.

### **ALTITUDE SICKNESS**

Altitude sickness can affect those who normally live at low altitudes and ascend approximately 8,000 feet. Visitors often experience altitude sickness in La Paz, nearly 12,000 feet above sea level. Symptoms include headache, nausea, breathlessness, racing pulse, lethargy, insomnia, loss of appetite and dehydration. Altitude sickness is significantly less prevalent at the UAC-CP, at about 6,000 feet, although visitors often feel lethargic in their first few days on campus. To stave off the effects of altitude sickness, drink plenty of water (two liters a day), rest often, eat lightly and refrain from strenuous exercise. Non-aspirin pain relievers and caffeine work well to fight headaches. Some visitors may want to ask their physician to prescribe something like diamox for altitude sickness.

### **DISTANCES**

La Paz to the UAC-CP: Approximately 3 ½ hours.

NOTE: The “Most Beautiful Road in the World” (MBRW)—perhaps better known as the “Most Dangerous Road in the World”—is no longer in use for normal travel. The UAC and public vehicles now use the new, paved road that runs parallel to the MBRW, and is much less dramatic. The new road (called the Cotapata-Santa Barbara road) also has spectacular views and the travel time is still about three hours.

Coroico to Carmen Pampa: The distance is approximately thirty-five minutes by car or a three-hour walk. Public transport is available during the school year and costs 3.5 Bs. Taxis are also available between Coroico and

Carmen Pampa, but are relatively more expensive (45-55 Bs, *mas o menos*).

## **SAFETY**

Relatively speaking, Bolivia is one of the safest countries in South America, but you should take basic precautions, especially in urban areas:

- La Paz: Pickpockets are common in La Paz and often work in teams with elaborate schemes that attempt to distract you. You may be spilled on, or a person may “accidentally” drop something in front of you. If this happens, keep walking. Do not accept assistance from anyone who offers to “help” wipe off whatever has been spilled on you. There are also a growing number of scams that involve thieves impersonating law enforcement officials who demand your identification. Again, keep walking or if you are in a cab, ask to get out immediately. To avoid robbery, wear a money belt and keep no important documents or money in your pockets or back pack.
- UAC-CP is quite safe. The Guest House is generally left unlocked. It is locked at night, during times when people are not in the house and when the UAC-CP is on break. To err on the side of caution, please keep your important documents tucked away in your room. If you need items secured, please let Hye-Jung or Hugh know, and they will make the appropriate arrangements for you.

## **6. PACKING LIST**

Many UAC-CP visitors have found the following packing guidelines useful. As these packing guidelines were generated by people who normally stay at the UAC-CP for months to years, you certainly don't need all of the items on the list.

### **PACKING HINTS**

- Mix and match several items of clothing—pick a scheme like black, brown or navy.
- Each piece of clothing should match at least two other items.
- Do not pack anything you would be upset to lose—such as valuables and jewelry.
- Bring only comfortable shoes that have been broken in.
- Do not bring anything that wrinkles easily or needs to be dry cleaned.
- Roll your clothing in your suitcase to maximize space and cut down on wrinkling.
- Use large-zip lock bags or mesh bags to keep items visible and separate.
- Bring at least a few articles of clothing that will dry quickly.

### **LUGGAGE**

One or two pieces of larger luggage is sufficient. Canvas bags and backpacks or hard suitcases with rollers are all recommended. Luggage should be labeled. It should not be locked during flights as routine luggage searches are common and require airport personnel to break locks to open luggage. A smaller backpack or bag is also recommended for short trips or carrying around campus.

Please check American Airlines' website for current baggage and weight limit restrictions.

### **CLOTHING**

Dress is very casual at the UAC-CP. As teachers and administrators, visitors are expected to wear appropriately modest clothing both inside and outside the classroom or office. Sleeveless shirts and shorts are acceptable, but not recommended for daily wear as bug bites are common and itchy! Low cut tank tops and/or midriff shirts and short shorts/skirts are not recommended. Clothing can be purchased in La Paz.

- **Pants.** Many find the biting insects bothersome and opt to wear pants around campus.

- **Shorts.** For traveling, playing sports, etc.
- **Long-sleeved shirts**
- **Short-sleeved shirts**
- **Fleece jacket**
- **Rain poncho**
- **Warm jacket.** Nights can be cool in Carmen Pampa. It can be quite cold in La Paz.
- **Warm hat and gloves.** Again, La Paz can get quite cold
- **Sturdy sandals with back straps such as Chacos or Tevas**
- **Boots and/or shoes for general use or hiking that are good in mud**
- **Slippers or flip flops for around the house or in the shower**
- **Pajamas**
- **Underwear and socks**
- **Modest swimsuit.** There is a little pool an hour's walk from the UAC-CP. A suit will be handy if you intend to do some traveling.

## TOILETRIES

- **Prescription medicine.** Be sure to consult your physician at least two months ahead to request an extended prescription for the time you will stay at Carmen Pampa. Carry medicines in original, labeled prescription bottles.
- **General medicines:** Aspirin/Tylenol, allergy medicine, Pepto Bismol, decongestant, anti-diarrheal prescription such as Cipro, antibiotics, etc.
- **General topicals:** Hand sanitizer, sun screen, insect repellent with DEET, lip balm, anti-itch cream
- **Toothpaste, floss, toothbrush**
- **Razors**
- **Travel packs of toilet paper and tissue.** Again, travel sizes of these items are very convenient.
- **Contacts and contact solution.** If you wear heat-disinfected contacts, you may want to consider switching to chemical as heated water is mainly available only when warmed on the stovetop. Consider bringing extra contacts and a copy of your contact/ glasses prescription, just in case
- **Make up.** If you wear it at home, there may be occasions to wear it at the UAC-CP.
- **Daily vitamins** such as calcium and iron
- **Deodorant / Antiperspirant**
- **Anti-nausea medication** if needed for car sickness

In the case that you should forget any of these items from home, note that most of these things are available at pharmacies in La Paz.

## MISCELLANEOUS

- **US\$200 in small bills and medium bills.** This is in addition to the US\$200 you bring to exchange at the UAC-CP
- **Pocket knife and nail clipper** (remember to put in checked luggage)
- **Flashlight or headlamp**
- **Book(s)** The Guest House has an excellent selection of books left by past visitors. Feel free to add to the collection.
- **Journal**
- **Favorite recipes.** Limited ingredients are available in Coroico, but you may be able to modify your recipes with local foodstuffs.
- **Wide brimmed hat and sunglasses**
- **Converters/adapters** for American electronics which use 110 volts. The UAC-CP uses a standard current of 220 volts (most electronics such as laptop computers, battery charges, iPod charges, etc., use both 110 and 220—check your piece of equipment before plugging it in!)
- **Camera, CDs, memory card and other camera accessories**

- **Water bottle.** Nalgene and similar brands are perfect as they don't break and can easily be filled with hot or cold water.
- **Business cards**
- **Extra batteries**
- **Money belt**
- **Office supplies:** pens, notebooks and other materials such as paperclips, small calculator, etc.
- **Address book (small) and envelopes**
- **Inflatable neck pillow, ear plugs and eye blinds** for the overnight flight to La Paz.
- **Maps and guidebooks....** but only if you are traveling around Bolivia before you come to the UAC. We have many Bolivia guidebooks for reference at the Guest House that you can borrow or keep.
- **Spanish/English pocket dictionary**
- **Alarm clock:** travel size battery-powered. Bedside alarm clocks are not provided at the Guest House.
- **First aid & sewing kits**
- **Safety pins and rubber bands**
- **Stationery** for thank you notes
- **CDs and/or iPod.** We have a CD player in the house.
- **Pictures of family and friends,** both for you and to share with UAC-CP students
- **Hand sanitizer**
- **Laptop computer**

#### **IF YOU HAVE EXTRA ROOM IN YOUR SUITCASE . . .**

Please consider bringing and leaving the following GENTLY USED items for the Guest House: pillows, single/double bed sheets and blankets, towels, etc. Any and all items will be greatly appreciated and put to valuable use.

Those living more permanently in the Guest House always welcome visitors bearing gifts. Frequent requests include: peanut butter, parmesan or other cheese, chocolate, non-yellow mustard, pancake syrup, etc...

Additionally, family and friends of current UAC-CP long-term Professional Visitors often find it helpful to send packages down with visitors, both to save money and assure safe arrival. If you'd like to carry a package, please share your mailing address with Hye-Jung or Hugh at least three weeks before your departure. They will arrange for a package to be sent to you.

## **7. CULTURAL PRIMER**

"Perhaps the greatest power of educational exchange is the power to convert nations into peoples and to translate ideologies into human aspirations."

—J.W. Fulbright

### **“BOLIVIAN TIME”**

The Bolivian time-table is always subject to change, which means not everything happens when it is scheduled and sometimes, without warning, it doesn't happen at all. The best way to deal with unpredictable schedules is to accept that you are on “Bolivian Time” and go with the flow. Embracing “Bolivian Time” can be a good opportunity to take a break from the fast pace of American life and enjoy the moment.

### **SOCIAL GRACES**

Greet people individually when you meet them and say goodbye individually when you leave. If the greeting is male-female or female-female, Bolivians will often press their right cheek to yours with a small kiss when they meet you or say hello. Greetings between men consist of a combination of handshakes and pats on the shoulder.

Accept Bolivians' offers of food, drink or small gifts. However, don't feel obligated to eat or drink something

you think could cause illness.

Be conscious of rural Bolivians' hunger. Please do not eat in front of UAC-CP students or local community members, unless you are at a meal or in an environment where everyone has food. Often people have not eaten. If you must eat around or with students—on a nursing trip to the rural communities, for example—please bring sufficient food along to share, as others may not have food.

Even if you know only a little Spanish, speak it with Bolivians. They are generally very patient listeners and will try to help you speak.

### **THE AYMARA**

Between fifty and sixty percent of Bolivians are of Indigenous heritage and speak either Aymaran or Quechua. The native people of Bolivia are often called *campesinos* because they live in the *campo*, or rural area. Until the 1950s a significant portion of the Aymaran people lived in slave-like conditions. Many students at the UAC-CP speak Aymara or Quechua as their first language. *Campesinos* living in Carmen Pampa and the surrounding communities speak Aymara.

### **VISITING RURAL COMMUNITIES**

Visits to nearby rural communities can be arranged. These visits provide dramatic insight into the lives of Bolivians who are poor. If you go, note that the first and perhaps only language of most people in rural communities is Aymara. Please tell Hye-Jung or Hugh if you are interested in a rural community visit. If an opportunity arises for a visit, they will coordinate it for you.

### **LOCAL FOOD**

Bolivian meals typically consist of a bowl of soup, followed by a meat dish that includes at least two forms of carbohydrates, such as breads, potatoes or rice. Many fresh fruits and vegetables are available. Be sure to have a *salteña*, Bolivia's most popular and unique pastry.

Bolivians wish each other "bon appetite" with the word *provecho*, the reply to which is *gracias*. *Provecho* is said both before and after a meal.

### **GIFT GIVING**

Gift giving is not expected in Bolivia. However, if you'd like to give gifts, UAC-CP suggests you bring a few small gifts such as pens or postcards to share with select professors and students you meet at the UAC-CP. Please do not bring many gifts and/or distribute them broadly, as this reinforces the stereotype that visitors are rich, and it can build an expectation of gift-giving for future visitors.

### **TO BE A WELL PREPARED TRAVELER AND CONSIDERATE GUEST IN BOLIVIA . . .**

- Travel in a spirit of humility and with a genuine desire to meet and talk with local people.
- Do not expect to find things as you have them at home. You have left your home to find difference.
- Do not be too serious. An open mind and a sense of humor is the beginning of a wonderful experience at the UAC-CP.
- Do not let others get on your nerves. You have come a long way to be a good ambassador for your country, to learn as much as you can and to enjoy the experience.
- Know where your passport is at all times.
- Do not worry. It can take the fun out of your Bolivian experience!
- Do not judge the people of Bolivia by the one person with whom you have had trouble. This is unfair to the Bolivian people as a whole.
- Remember that you are a guest in Bolivia.
- Cultivate the habit of listening and observing, rather than merely hearing and seeing.

- Realize that other people may have ideas, lifestyles and concepts of time which are very different from yours—not inferior, only different.
- Be aware of the feelings of local people to prevent what might be offensive behavior.
- Taking photographs must be done with respect. Always ask before taking a photograph of a community member or student.
- Make no promises to new local friends that you cannot fulfill. This is especially important around the UAC-CP. If you want to do something special for people you meet, talk about its feasibility with long-term UAC-CP staff before suggesting it to your new Bolivian friend. This includes even such small things as promising to send pictures of local people that you have taken.
- Devote some time to daily reflection in order to gain a deeper understanding of your experiences.

Last updated: August 2011