



SOUTH & CENTRAL AMERICA
INCLUDING MEXICO



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From the Amazon to the Andes and all of the mystical wonders in between, Mexico, South and Central America are full of stories to tell. Whether you prefer to look for clues to the successes of ancient Incan and Mayan civilizations or take in the unrivaled variety of exotic plants and wildlife, these lands are sure to awaken your inner explorer.

HISTORY

Mexico, South America and Central America were home to several indigenous cultures prior to the European discovery of the New World in the late fifteenth century. The Mayan civilization populated Central America and Mexico as early as 1000 B.C. Their architectural prowess is illustrated by their monolithic stair-stepped pyramids, which stand to this day. The Incan civilization dominated the Andes region from 1438 to 1533 with precise stonework and agricultural techniques that enabled them to flourish in the harsh mountainous terrain.

In 1494, Spain and Portugal signed a treaty to share the western lands the two maritime powers were exploring. The result would put modern-day Brazil in the hands of the Portuguese with the rest of the continent going to Spain. The following years were difficult, as native cultures were plagued by European diseases and the incursion of the conquistadors. Independence from Europe did not come to the continent until the early part of the nineteenth century with the South American Wars of Independence. Brazil peacefully seceded from Portugal in 1822.

The Cold War made for political turbulence in South and Central America in the twentieth century. Chile was overthrown in the 1970s, and Peru suffered from internal conflicts in the '80s and '90s. Many a nation's presidencies were overthrown under a cloud of corruption. A wave of democratization came over South America beginning in the '80s and cooled much of the dissension. Although tough economic times have recently touched the region, the promise holds for development and growth well into the future.

ARGENTINA

FAST FACTS

<i>Capital</i>	<i>Buenos Aires</i>
<i>Population</i>	<i>40.2 million</i>
<i>Language</i>	<i>American Spanish and indigenous languages</i>
<i>Currency</i>	<i>Peso (ARS)</i>
<i>Time Zone</i>	<i>EST plus 2 hours</i>
<i>Electricity</i>	<i>220V, 50Hz</i> ⓈⓈ

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BRAZIL

FAST FACTS

<i>Capital</i>	<i>Brasília</i>
<i>Population</i>	<i>190 million</i>
<i>Language</i>	<i>Portuguese</i>
<i>Currency</i>	<i>Real (BRL)</i>
<i>Time Zone</i>	<i>EST plus 1-3 hours</i>
<i>Electricity</i>	<i>110/220V, 60Hz</i>  

COSTA RICA

FAST FACTS

<i>Capital</i>	<i>San José</i>
<i>Population</i>	<i>4 million</i>
<i>Language</i>	<i>Spanish and indigenous languages</i>
<i>Currency</i>	<i>Costa Rican colón (CRC)</i>
<i>Time Zone</i>	<i>EST minus 1 hour</i>
<i>Electricity</i>	<i>110V, 60Hz</i>  



ECUADOR

FAST FACTS

<i>Capital</i>	<i>Quito</i>
<i>Population</i>	<i>13.8 million</i>
<i>Language</i>	<i>Spanish, Quechua</i>
<i>Currency</i>	<i>U.S. dollar (USD)</i>
<i>Time Zone</i>	<i>EST</i>
<i>Electricity</i>	<i>120-127V, 60Hz</i>  

MEXICO

FAST FACTS


<i>Capital</i>	<i>Mexico City</i>
<i>Population</i>	<i>109 million</i>
<i>Language</i>	<i>Spanish, indigenous languages</i>
<i>Currency</i>	<i>Peso (MXN)</i>
<i>Time Zone</i>	<i>EST minus 1 hour</i>
<i>Electricity</i>	<i>127V, 60Hz</i>  

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PERU

FAST FACTS

<i>Capital</i>	<i>Lima</i>
<i>Population</i>	<i>28.7 million</i>
<i>Language</i>	<i>Spanish, Quechua, indigenous languages</i>
<i>Currency</i>	<i>Nuevo sol (PEN)</i>
<i>Time Zone</i>	<i>EST</i>
<i>Electricity</i>	<i>220V, 60Hz</i> 

HOLIDAYS &

FESTIVALS

<i>February</i>	<i>Carnival in Rio de Janeiro</i>
<i>February 5</i>	<i>Constitution Day (Mexico)</i>
<i>March 19</i>	<i>St. Joseph's Day (Costa Rica)</i>
<i>April</i>	<i>Maundy Thursday (Costa Rica)</i>
<i>May 1</i>	<i>Labor Day</i>
<i>May 5</i>	<i>Cinco de Mayo (Mexico)</i>
<i>May 24</i>	<i>Battle of Pichincha (Ecuador)</i>
<i>May 25</i>	<i>National Day (Argentina)</i>
<i>June</i>	<i>Inti Raymi (Peru)</i>
<i>July 9</i>	<i>Independence Day (Argentina)</i>
<i>July 28</i>	<i>Independence Day (Peru)</i>
<i>September</i>	<i>Yamor's Day in Otavalo (Ecuador)</i>
<i>September 7</i>	<i>Independence Day (Brazil)</i>
<i>September 15</i>	<i>Independence Day (Costa Rica)</i>
<i>September 15-16</i>	<i>Independence Day (Mexico)</i>
<i>October 12</i>	<i>Our Lady of Aparecida Day (Brazil)</i>
<i>November 2</i>	<i>Día de los Muertos</i>
<i>November 5</i>	<i>Puno Day (Peru)</i>
<i>November 15</i>	<i>Proclamation of the Republic Day (Brazil)</i>

BOOKS

- *Andes to the Amazon: Seven Journeys in Mexico, Central and South America*, by Bruce B. Junek and Tass Thacker
- *Brazil: A Guide to the People, Politics and Culture*, by Jan Rocha
- *Evita: The Real Life of Eva Peron*, by Nicholas Fraser and Marysa Navarro
- *The Shaman's Apprentice: A Tale of the Amazon Rain Forest*, by Lynne Cherry and Mark J. Plotkin
- *The Trail to Titicaca: A Journey Through South America*, by Rupert Attlee
- *Travels in a Thin Country: A Journey Through Chile*, by Sara Wheeler
- *Tigres of the Night: The True Story of Juan and Amalia Arcos, Naturalists and Lay Missionaries in the Jungle of Eastern Ecuador*, by Robert W. Howe

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VIDEOS

- *Romancing the Stone* (1984)
- *The Mission* (1986)
- *Evita* (1996)
- *Frida* (2002)
- *Motorcycle Diaries* (2004)

LOCAL TOURISM

WEB SITES

<i>Argentina</i>	<i>www.turismo.gov.ar</i>
<i>Brazil</i>	<i>www.turismo.gov.br</i>
<i>Costa Rica</i>	<i>www.visitcostarica.com</i>
<i>Ecuador</i>	<i>www.vivecuador.com</i>
<i>Mexico</i>	<i>www.visitmexico.com</i>
<i>Peru</i>	<i>www.peru.org.pe</i>

SPANISH CHINESE

FOR TRAVELERS

<i>Hello</i>	<i>Hola</i>	<i>OHlah</i>
<i>My name is</i> _____	<i>Me llamo</i> _____	<i>May YAHmoh</i>
<i>I would like</i> _____	<i>Quisiera</i> _____	<i>KeeSYAYrah</i>
<i>Please</i>	<i>Por favor</i>	<i>Pohr fahVOR</i>
<i>Thank you</i>	<i>Gracias</i>	<i>GRAHsyahs</i>
<i>Do you speak English?</i>	<i>¿Habla usted ingles?</i>	<i>Ahblah ooSTAYD</i>
		<i>eenGLAYS</i>

WEATHER

The Andes mountain range represents the only area of South and Central America with consistently cooler temperatures. Warm and humid in the north and mild and drier in the south is a pretty consistent climate pattern for South America. Be sure to bring comfortable rain gear for travel through Brazil, Ecuador and Peru, as wet weather is a common occurrence.

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AVERAGE

TEMPERATURES

	January	April	July	October
Buenos Aires	75°	62°	50°	61°
Lima, Peru	72°	69°	62°	63°
Oaxaca, Mexico	64°	73°	70°	68°
Quito, Ecuador	57°	56°	57°	56°
Rio De Janeiro	79°	75°	69°	72°

Temperatures in °F. For more specific weather information, visit www.accuweather.com.

TIPS FOR

TIPPING

Throughout South America, Central America and Mexico you can follow some general rules of thumb. In restaurants, check and see if a service charge has been added. If so, leave an additional 5 percent. If not, tip 10 to 15 percent of the bill. For porters, tip a U.S. dollar (or equivalent in local currency) per day. Leave hotel maids the equivalent of a dollar a day.

CURRENCY

NOTES

When traveling in South and Central America, you may want to bring along a small calculator to determine U.S. price equivalency, especially if you plan to visit more than one country. Ecuador is the sole exception, since the U.S. dollar became this country's standard currency in 2000. Check up-to-the-minute currency rates for South and Central America at www.exchangerate.com.

DID YOU KNOW?

- *The Amazon retains about 30 percent of the genetic store of the planet and represents the most diversified and complex ecosystem known to mankind.*
- *Mexico has more UNESCO World Heritage sites than any other country in the Americas.*
- *Machu Picchu, the Lost City of the Incas, was not discovered until 1911 by Yale professor Hiram Bingham, who wondered in his diary if anyone would believe what he had found.*
- *The cloud forests of Monteverde, Costa Rica, host more than 425 bird species and an innumerable variety of insects.*
- *Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world and is large enough to fit all of the countries in Europe.*
- *In Mexico, cats are believed to have seven lives, Tuesday the 13th is unlucky, and Fool's Day falls on December 28.*