

Bolivia & Chile: Andes to Atacama

with Rich Pagen and Ralph Eshelman

BOLIVIA & CHILE | 14 DAYS | May 21–June 3, 2024



Travel with Ralph and Rich

GEOLOGIST & HISTORIAN

Dr. Ralph Eshelman is a specialist in the natural and cultural sciences, particularly in geology, vertebrate paleontology, and American maritime and military history. His interests have taken him to all corners of the globe as a traveler, teacher, and explorer.

“The interrelation of the natural world with the cultural world has influenced our globe. Exploring these interactions through travel helps us not only better understand our past but also helps us make sensible decisions for our future.”



NATURALIST

Rich began working as a guide and educator in nature tourism in 2004, bringing to life the fascinating stories of wildlife and wild places. Rich's career has taken him on an array of fascinating field work by land and sea. Through it all, exploration and sharing nature with others has been his central passion.

“Bolivia, coupled with Chile’s Atacama desert, is the perfect travel destination; a seamless blend of culture, wildlife, history, geology, and stunning landscapes.”

Adventure highlights

- Visit the magnificent colonial cities of Potosí and the “white city” of Sucre, both are UNESCO World Heritage Sites.
- Explore the Atacama Desert geysers, colorful thermal pools, bizarre rock formations, steaming fumaroles and stark lunar-like vistas.
- Observe three species of flamingos: Andean, Chilean, and James.
- Discover the cosmic center of the Incan world, Lake Titicaca.
- Photograph towering volcanoes, extraordinary landscapes, graceful colonial architecture, and vibrant markets frequented by colorfully clad locals.



Valley of Geysers in the Atacama Desert

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Landlocked Bolivia is unique both in terms of the immensity of its landscapes and its strong indigenous culture. Visit some of Bolivia's most impressive natural wonders including legendary Lake Titicaca, the world's highest navigable lake; the magnificent Uyuni Salt Flats, with dazzling white plains of salt, islands of enormous cactus, and spouting geysers; and the multicolored lagoons where thousands of flamingos breed. In contrast this natural beauty are the vibrant cities of Sucre, Potosí, and La Paz whose heritage was shaped by both the Incas and the Spanish Conquistadors, as well as colorful local communities where ancient traditions are still observed. The grand finale of this incredible journey includes a tour of the world's driest desert, San Pedro de Atacama in Chile, famous for its lunar-like valleys, endless horizons, and world-class star gazing.



Itinerary

TUESDAY, MAY 21, 2024

La Paz, Bolivia

Arrive in La Paz and transfer to the Casa Grande Hotel for overnight.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 22

La Paz

Enjoy a leisurely morning adapting to the altitude. After lunch, embark on a tour of the city. The local market offers a variety of handicrafts and colorful weaving, as well as a fascinating witchcraft market. In the colonial section of the city view the San Francisco Church, the Gold Museum, a replica of the Tiwanaku Temple, and the viewpoint Mirador de Killi Killi. On the outskirts of town, observe the unique landscape of the Valley of the Moon, before ending the tour with a scenic ride on the Teleférico cable car.

THURSDAY, MAY 23

La Paz / Copacabana / Lake Titicaca

After breakfast, depart overland for Copacabana, a lovely town set on the shores of Lake Titicaca. Board our hydrofoil cruise to Sun Island, where according to mythology, the sun god sent his children to Earth. Visit the ruins of the Pilcocaina Sun Temple before taking a gentle hike along the local trails for splendid views of the lake. Check in to the Ecolodge La Estancia for dinner and overnight.

FRIDAY, MAY 24

Lake Titicaca / Copacabana / La Paz

Take a hike to visit the Inca Stairs and sip from the sacred fountain, believed to grant eternal youth. Board a hydrofoil to the Island of the Moon and the Inca ruins of the Inak Uyu Temple. Return to Copacabana and proceed overland to La Paz and the Casa Grande Hotel.



James flamingo



San Francisco Church in Potosí



Moon Valley in the Atacama Desert



Sucre Cathedral



Atacama geothermal activity



SATURDAY, MAY 25

La Paz / Sucre

After breakfast, fly to Sucre, Bolivia's charming capital. Our afternoon tour includes an overview of colonial architecture as well as Liberty House. At the ASUR Museum of Indigenous Art, discover the work being done to maintain the cultural integrity of local communities. Check in to the Parador Santa Maria la Real, a beautifully restored 18th-century home, for dinner and overnight.

SUNDAY, MAY 26

Sucre / Potolo / Sucre

Take a hike along an ancient Inca trail, enjoying lovely mountain scenery along the way. Our hike ends at the small town of Chaunaca for a picnic lunch. Continue to Potolo, home to the Quechua-speaking Jalq'a community, where we learn about their traditional weaving techniques. Return to Sucre and overnight.

MONDAY, MAY 27

Sucre / Potosí

After an early breakfast, depart overland along amazing ridges and valleys to Potosí. This city boasts many restored colonial buildings and colorful winding streets full of charming vendors. Tour the Cerro Rico silver mine and learn about the living and working conditions of the Bolivian miners. Then visit the Casa de la Moneda (Royal Mint) before checking in to the Hacienda de Cayara for dinner and overnight.

TUESDAY, MAY 28

Potosí / Uyuni

This morning, take a drive through stunning mountain vistas, observing colorful rock formations and desert wildlife. Make stops at traditional villages and the Pulacayo tin mine. Arrive in Colchani, adjacent to the famous Uyuni Salt Flats and check in to Hotel de Sal Luna, an amazing hotel constructed entirely of salt.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 29

Uyuni Salt Flats

Set out on a 4x4 for a full day excursion to discover the Uyuni Salt Flat. Visit Incahuasi Island, or Fish Island, a unique ecosystem which includes a stranded colony of viscacha (relatives of chinchillas), and enormous cacti. Learn about the 3,000-year-old Coquesa mummies; see salt processing and extraction; and watch for bubbling springs, called Ojos de Agua or "eyes of salt."

THURSDAY, MAY 30

Uyuni / Villamar

Visit San Cristobal church and the villages of Alota and Culpina K, and the Stone Valley, to view a group of famous rock formations caused by wind erosion. Continue to Catal and Vinto Lagoons and the rock formation Italia. In Villamar, view the cave paintings and ruins near Tomas Lakjas. Check in to Mallku Cueva for dinner and overnight.

FRIDAY, MAY 31

Villamar / San Pedro de Atacama, Chile

Explore the milky Laguna Blanca, blood-red Laguna Colorada and the green Laguna Verde, each getting their striking color from algae. This region is home to thousands of breeding flamingos, including James', Andean, and Chilean. The lagoons and the birds provide a variety of colorful photo opportunities. At Sol de Mañana Geysers, watch lava boil at the bottom of craters, while fumaroles spout water and steam. After a full day, cross the border into Chile and check into the Desertica Hotel.

SATURDAY, JUNE 1

Atacama Desert

Today, visit the traditional village of Toconao before exploring the Miccanti and Miniques lagoons. Return

to the hotel in the late afternoon for an early dinner. Then, depart for the Atacama Telescope where we hope to observe some of the most prominent celestial objects in this stunning night sky, nearly free of any artificial light.

SUNDAY, JUNE 2

Atacama Desert

Depart early this morning to visit one of the world's most incredible geothermal fields at Geysers El Tatio. Here there are thermal pools, colorful rock formations, and with luck, we may spy vicuñas, foxes, and birds in this stunning landscape. Continue to the stark lunar landscape of Moon Valley and after exploring the area. Return to the hotel for a festive farewell dinner.

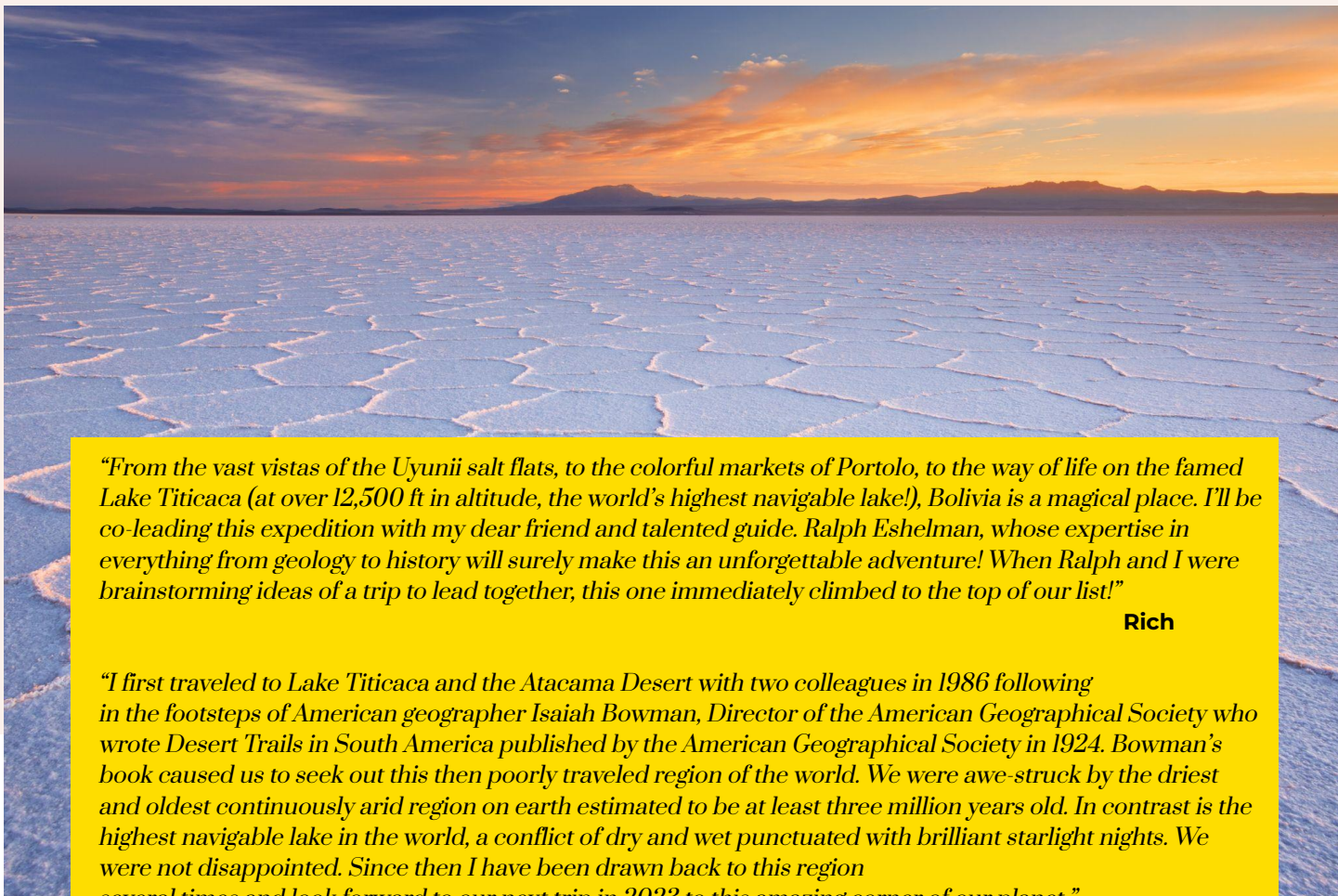
MONDAY, JUNE 3

Calama / Homeward

Explore the charming town of San Pedro de Atacama. After lunch, depart Calama on your independent homeward flight.



Why we love this trip...



“From the vast vistas of the Uyuni salt flats, to the colorful markets of Portolo, to the way of life on the famed Lake Titicaca (at over 12,500 ft in altitude, the world’s highest navigable lake!), Bolivia is a magical place. I’ll be co-leading this expedition with my dear friend and talented guide, Ralph Eshelman, whose expertise in everything from geology to history will surely make this an unforgettable adventure! When Ralph and I were brainstorming ideas of a trip to lead together, this one immediately climbed to the top of our list!”

Rich

“I first traveled to Lake Titicaca and the Atacama Desert with two colleagues in 1986 following in the footsteps of American geographer Isaiah Bowman, Director of the American Geographical Society who wrote Desert Trails in South America published by the American Geographical Society in 1924. Bowman’s book caused us to seek out this then poorly traveled region of the world. We were awe-struck by the driest and oldest continuously arid region on earth estimated to be at least three million years old. In contrast is the highest navigable lake in the world, a conflict of dry and wet punctuated with brilliant starlight nights. We were not disappointed. Since then I have been drawn back to this region several times and look forward to our next trip in 2023 to this amazing corner of our planet.”

Ralph

PRICE

\$9,990 per person
(add \$1,990 for a single room)

DEPOSIT

\$1,500

Group size: 16 travelers

INCLUSIONS

- 13 nights accommodation
- All meals, non-alcoholic beverages and beer with lunch & dinner
- All excursions, transportation and local guides
- Park fees, taxes, and permits
- Gratuities
- Internal air in Bolivia from La Paz to Sucre
- Arrival and departure transfers



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