UNCOVER THE ANDES PRESENTS

THE ULTIMATE
ANDES PACKING LIST

Everything you need for high-altitude travel in
Peru, Bolivia & Colombia

180+ ITEMS · ALTITUDE ESSENTIALS · GEAR TESTED AT 3,600 M

MACHU PICCHU · UYUNI · LA PAZ · BOGOTÁ · CUSCO

A FREE GUIDE BY

UNCOVER THE ANDES

uncovertheandes.com

This packing list was built from **20+ years of living, trekking and working at altitude** in Bolivia, Peru and Colombia. We were born in **La Paz at 3,600 m** and we apply the same rigorous methodology from our Failure Analysis Engineering background to every item on this list. If it's here, it needs to be here.

At Machu Picchu (2,430 m), the Uyuni Salt Flats (3,656 m) or on Lake Titicaca (3,810 m), the wrong gear is not a minor inconvenience — **it is a safety issue.**

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Print or keep on your phone. Tick each item as you pack. Items marked ALTITUDE CRITICAL are non-negotiable for travel above 3,000 m. All booking links are on the last page — they are personal affiliate partners at no extra cost to you.

ALTITUDE SICKNESS (AMS) affects up to 50% of visitors to La Paz and Cusco regardless of age or fitness. Acclimatize at least 2 days before strenuous activity above 3,000 m. Symptoms: headache, nausea, dizziness. Descend immediately if symptoms worsen. Consult your doctor about Acetazolamide (Diamox) before travel.

CLOTHING & LAYERING SYSTEM

Andean temperatures swing up to 20 °C between sunrise and midday. The three-layer system is not optional.

— Base Layers — next to skin

- Merino wool thermal top × 2
  Wool regulates temperature and resists odour — essential for multi-day treks
- Merino wool thermal bottoms × 2
- Moisture-wicking t-shirts × 3
- Lightweight long-sleeve shirt × 2

— Mid Layers — insulation

- Fleece jacket, 200-weight minimum
  Essential — Andes nights are cold even in the dry season
- Down or synthetic insulated jacket
  ALTITUDE CRITICAL: Hypothermia risk above 4,000 m
- Fleece or zip-off trekking trousers

— Outer Shell — weather protection

- Waterproof rain jacket — Gore-Tex or equivalent
  ALTITUDE CRITICAL: Andean weather changes in minutes
- Waterproof rain trousers

— Head, Hands & Feet

- Wool beanie / warm hat
  ALTITUDE CRITICAL: 40% of body heat is lost through the head
- Wide-brim sun hat
  UV radiation is 40% stronger at 3,600 m
- Lightweight liner gloves
- Warm insulated gloves for cold treks
- Merino wool socks × 4 pairs
- Waterproof trekking boots with ankle support
  ALTITUDE CRITICAL: Break them in at least 2 weeks before your trip
- Comfortable city walking shoes
- Sandals or flip-flops for hostel/hotel

★ ***Expert tip:*** *Pack your full layer system even for Colombia — Bogotá (2,600 m) and the Coffee Region are deceptively cold at night.*

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GEAR & EQUIPMENT

— Bags & Packs

- ■ Main backpack — 50–65 L (trekkers) or 30–40 L (city travellers)
- ■ Day pack 20–25 L
  Essential for day hikes and excursions from base cities
- ■ Pack rain cover or dry bag
- ■ Padlock for hostel lockers
- ■ Packing cubes × 3
  Transforms packing chaos into organised sections

— Navigation & Lighting

- ■ Headlamp with spare batteries
  ALTITUDE CRITICAL: Power cuts are common in Bolivia
- ■ Offline maps downloaded — Maps.me or Google Maps
  Mobile data is unreliable in Andean valleys
- ■ Foldable trekking poles
  Reduce knee strain by 30% on descents — worth it on the Inca Trail

— Sleep & Comfort

- ■ Sleeping bag liner — silk or fleece
  Adds 5–8 °C of warmth to any hostel blanket
- ■ Sleeping bag rated to –5 °C for Uyuni / high camps
  ALTITUDE CRITICAL: Uyuni nights drop to –15 °C in dry season
- ■ Inflatable travel pillow
- ■ Ear plugs and sleep mask

— Sun & Eye Protection

- ■ Sunglasses — UV400 polarised minimum
  ALTITUDE CRITICAL: UV damage is serious above 3,000 m
- ■ Sunscreen SPF 50+ × 2 bottles
  At 3,600 m you burn three times faster than at sea level
- ■ SPF lip balm × 2

— Tech & Power

- ■ Universal power adapter — Type A / B / C
  Bolivia: 220 V Type A/C · Peru & Colombia: 220 V Type A/B
- ■ Power bank 20,000 mAh minimum
  Power cuts and long treks mean dead phones without one
- ■ Waterproof phone case
- ■ Laptop or tablet (remote workers)

★ ***Expert tip:*** *One universal adapter covers all three countries. Carry it in your day pack — not your checked bag.*

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HEALTH, MEDICATIONS & ALTITUDE

ALTITUDE SICKNESS WARNING — AMS is not related to age, fitness or experience. It affects up to 50% of visitors to La Paz and Cusco. Consult your doctor before departure and consider a prescription for Acetazolamide (Diamox).

— Altitude & Prescription (consult your doctor)

- Acetazolamide / Diamox
  ALTITUDE CRITICAL: Start 2 days before ascending above 2,500 m
- Ibuprofen or Paracetamol — for altitude headaches
- Coca leaves or coca tea bags
  Legal in Bolivia and Peru — traditional and genuinely effective

— General Health Kit

- Anti-diarrheal medication — Imodium / Loperamide
- Oral rehydration salts × 6 sachets
  Dehydration is accelerated at altitude
- Antibiotic — Ciprofloxacin, prescription required
- Blister treatment kit — Compeed pads, moleskin
- Wound cleaning kit — antiseptic wipes, plasters
- Elastic bandage for twisted ankles
- Antihistamine tablets
- Motion sickness medication
  Andean mountain roads are seriously winding
- Insect repellent DEET 40%+
  Amazon border areas of Peru and Bolivia carry dengue risk
- Hand sanitiser × 2 small bottles
- Water purification tablets
  Critical in remote trekking areas
- Travel insurance documents — printed and digital
  ALTITUDE CRITICAL: Medical evacuation from remote Andes can cost $50,000+

★ ***Expert tip:*** *Drink coca tea on your first day in La Paz or Cusco. It genuinely helps with altitude adaptation and is a beautiful local ritual.*

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DOCUMENTS, MONEY & CONNECTIVITY

— Essential Documents

- ■ Passport — valid minimum 6 months beyond return date
- ■ Passport photocopies × 3 — keep separate from the original
- ■ Digital scans stored in cloud — Google Drive or Dropbox
- ■ Travel insurance certificate — printed and digital copy
  ALTITUDE CRITICAL: Must explicitly cover medical evacuation
- ■ Yellow fever vaccination card
  Required for Amazon border regions of Peru and Bolivia
- ■ Emergency contacts list — printed
- ■ Hotel / hostel confirmations — printed for first 2 nights

— Money & Banking

- ■ ATM cards from at least 2 different banks
  Bolivian ATMs frequently reject foreign cards
- ■ USD cash $300–500 in clean, unfolded bills
  USD is accepted everywhere and essential in Bolivia
- ■ Notify your bank of travel dates before departure
- ■ Hidden money belt or neck wallet
- ■ Wise or Revolut card for best exchange rates

— Connectivity

- ■ Unlocked mobile phone
- ■ Local SIM — Claro (Peru) / Entel (Bolivia)
  Buy at the airport on arrival for best coverage
- ■ WhatsApp and Signal installed
  Primary communication apps throughout South America
- ■ Google Translate — Spanish downloaded for offline use
- ■ VPN subscription — useful in Bolivia

★ ***Expert tip:*** *In Bolivia always carry USD. Small bills ($1, $5, $10) are more useful than $100 notes in rural areas.*

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QUICK REFERENCE — ALTITUDE & SEASONS

Key Destinations — Altitude & Temperature Range

Destination	Altitude	Day Temp	Night Temp	Critical Gear
La Paz, Bolivia	3,600 m	16–18 °C	2–5 °C	Insulated jacket, Diamox
Cusco, Peru	3,400 m	18–20 °C	4–6 °C	Fleece, Diamox
Machu Picchu	2,430 m	20–22 °C	10–12 °C	Rain jacket, sun hat
Uyuni Salt Flats	3,656 m	14–16 °C	–10 to –15 °C	Sleeping bag, full layers
Bogotá, Colombia	2,600 m	18–20 °C	7–9 °C	Light layers, rain jacket
Medellín, Colombia	1,495 m	26–28 °C	17–19 °C	Light clothing
Lake Titicaca (Puno)	3,810 m	12–15 °C	0 to –3 °C	Full winter layers

Best Time to Visit by Region

Region	Season	Months	Key Notes
Machu Picchu (Peru)	Dry / best	May – Sep	Clear skies; crowds peak Jul–Aug
Uyuni — mirror effect	Wet	Jan – Mar	Shallow water creates mirror
Uyuni — white expanse	Dry	May – Oct	Better road conditions
La Paz (Bolivia)	Dry	May – Oct	Year-round accessible
Colombia (all regions)	Dry	Dec–Mar / Jul–Aug	Two dry seasons per year
Patagonia (Chile/Arg.)	Summer	Nov – Feb	Only viable trekking window

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Your Andes Adventure Starts Here

You have the list. Now let's make the trip happen.

We only recommend tools and services we personally use and trust for Andes travel. Every link below was hand-picked by our team — booking through them costs you **nothing extra** and directly supports this free guide.

Click any partner below to start planning your trip:

✈	**Skyscanner**	Best flights to Lima, La Paz & Bogotá	Book Now →
■	**Booking.com**	Hotels & stays across the Andes	Book Now →
■	**Viator**	Guided tours & Inca Trail treks	Book Now →
■	**GetYourGuide**	Skip-the-line & top experiences	Book Now →

■	**AirHelp**	Claim up to €600 for flight delays	Book Now →
■	**IATI Seguros**	Adventure travel insurance	Book Now →
■	**Asegura Tu Viaje**	Medical coverage for the Andes	Book Now →
■	**Civitatis**	Local tours in Spanish & English	Book Now →

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