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 Carmen Pampa.

Note: To easily navigate this document, either use the bookmark panel found on the left of your screen (look for this button 📖) or click on headings in the Table of Contents on the next page.
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Pre-Visit Handbook for UAC-CP Short-term Group Visitors

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1. Introduction to the Unidad Académica Campesina de Carmen Pampa

History

The idea for the Unidad Académica Campesina-Carmen Pampa (UAC-CP) came about in the 1990s. Sr. Damon Nolan, FMS, who was a 12-year veteran educator in the Yungas, concluded that a high school education was not adequate to give the rural poor control over their own destiny.

The initial planning for the College was a joint effort between the Catholic University of Bolivia, the Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, the Diocese of Coroico, Bolivia, and the sub-central Villa Nilo—a local governing body of the Aymara Indian nation. (The people of the Nor Yungas are mainly of Aymara or Afro-Bolivian decent who, until 1952, were indentured slaves. Though most of the older people speak Aymara, Spanish is now the dominant language.) The four groups were united over their concern regarding the nonexistence of higher education for young people in one of South America’s poorest areas. Building a college, they agreed, would be a way to dismantle educational barriers and lift people out of poverty. In 1992 an agreement was signed with the local Aymaran farmers’ organization to build the College. Some of the farmers signed the pact with a thumbprint.

The College Today

Since the first group of 54 students enrolled for classes at the UAC-CP in 1994, the College has experienced tremendous growth. At the beginning of the 2015 academic year, 710 students enrolled for classes and thesis studies in one of the College’s five specialized degree-granting programs: Veterinary Science, Agronomy, Nursing, Education, and Rural Tourism (Eco-tourism) as well as in the Pre-university program. These areas of study are intentionally offered in order to prepare graduates with skills that are applicable to improving the rural Bolivian economy.

In less than 20 years, the UAC-CP has become a vibrant catalyst for change in a region where the average family income is stunningly low. The first graduates are working to improve the lives of their
families and their communities. In addition, the College’s focus on production, research, community service, and leadership formation reach out to the surrounding region.

One of Sr. Damon’s original goals of the College was to provide equal educational opportunities for both men and women. The College is particularly proud that women make up slightly more than 50 percent of the student body and approximately half of all graduates (of the six UAC-CP graduates who have gone on to earn PhDs, four are women). At the beginning of 2016, the College reported that 555 men and women have graduated from the UAC-CP. To learn more about the work of UAC-CP graduates and other statistics, you can visit www.uaccpgrads.wordpress.com to see the results of a recent survey of alumni.

Mission of the UAC-Carmen Pampa

• To make Higher Education available to young people of rural areas and those who are, for whatever reason, are unable to pursue such studies.

• To prepare men and women who, inspired by principals of Christian vocation, are called to the service of others, with a high quality professional training and a commitment to Christian principals to guide their decisions.

• To be in constant search for truth and goodness by way of learning/apprenticeship, research, and community extension.

• To develop extension programs through specific projects that meet the needs felt in our communities; and integrate the successes of the university community into the countryside, strengthening and developing progress and socio-economic liberation, through academic, research and extension activities.

Goals of the UAC-CP

The UAC-CP has been internationally recognized for both its unique approach and ability to address and dissipate root causes of poverty. The College’s educational approach includes five key areas:

1. Rigorous academic studies;
2. **Extension** programs in neighboring communities that simultaneously provide practical experience for UAC-CP students and services for poor people of the rural area;

3. **Production** projects (i.e. coffee plant, meat factory, vegetable production, etc.) that provide practical experience for students and generate a source of sustainable income for the College;

4. **Research** projects that seek solutions for common problems facing rural communities;

5. An integrated **ethics and morality** component, based on Catholic social teaching that incorporates core, Christian values into professional work and personal lives.

In recognition of their vital work, a United Nations Subcommittee designated the UAC-CP as one of the seven most effective initiatives worldwide for the Eradication of Poverty in 2003. The panel sought to honor programs that are innovative, sustainable, and replicable.

On May 3, 2011, the UAC model was recognized by the Education and Health Committee of the Legislative Assembly of Bolivia as a “Meritorious Institution of the State” for its work in higher education and sustainable development.

The Carmen Pampa Fund
In 1999, Carmen Pampa Fund (CPF) was established in St. Paul, Minnesota, with the mission of generating resources to assist the growth and development of the UAC-CP. Today, CPF is responsible for fundraising, disseminating information about the College in the US, facilitating relationships with US colleges and universities, and participating in the Joint Planning and Oversight Council that manages the relationship between CPF and the UAC-CP. In the current fiscal year, Carmen Pampa Fund will raise a little less than 40% of the operating budget of the College. In addition to CPF, the College receives funds from other international grant-making institutions. The UAC-CP receives no financial assistance from the Bolivian government or the Catholic University of La Paz.

Both the College and Carmen Pampa Fund share a vision of economic, environmental, and social justice for the people of Bolivia. Both institutions expect Visiting Professionals at the College to help us accomplish this joint vision. More information about Carmen Pampa Fund can be found on their website: www.carmenpampafund.org.

2. **Communicating with the UAC-CP**

The External Relations Coordinator (ERC) will be the primary contact for your group. The secondary contact will be the Carmen Pampa Fund.

**External Relations Coordinator (ERC)**
*Primary Contact in Bolivia*

Nora Harless
Email: externalrelationscp@gmail.com
Phone: (Bolivia country code: 591) 73593127
Communication During Your Trip
Your group leader or coordinator has identified a contact person for your group, for example someone at your home university. The External Relations Coordinator (ERC) will contact this person to advise them of the groups arrival, flight delays, or other pertinent information. This person is then responsible for contacting parents and relatives of group participants to inform them of group happenings. Individual participants will not necessarily have reliable cell or internet service to communicate with people at home. Both the group contact person and your group leader should have a copy of the emergency contact information for each group participant, pertinent medical instructions for emergencies, etc.

Group participants and relatives/family should first contact the group’s identified contact person, who will then communicate with the ERC via phone or email. If there is an emergency and you are unable to reach the ERC, please call the Carmen Pampa Fund. They will assist with contacting someone at the College.

Internet: Internet use is available in the computer labs on both Campuses for a minimal cost. However, the internet may not always work and the facilities may not always be open. Internet is also available in internet cafés in Coroico.

Cell Service: There is cell service in Carmen Pampa only through the company ENTEL. International cell phone plans do not work in Carmen Pampa, but may work in Coroico and La Paz. Groups or group participants can opt to buy a cheap Bolivian phone (approx. $15) and calling card. These can be used to communicate within the group, as well as to receive and make international calls. The cheapest option is probably calling from Skype or Google to a Bolivian phone (approx. 9-12 cents / minute). The ERC can assist your group with phone purchases and use. Please be aware that service can occasionally go out in Carmen Pampa due to electricity outages.

In case of an emergency or an urgent communication need, the ERC will assist group participants to call home.

3. Travel Preparation Guidelines

Passports and Visa
The following recommendations are for US citizens only. Non-US citizens should look at the Bolivian embassy page for their country for requirements.

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 your scheduled return date). 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.

United States citizens traveling with a U.S. passport must have a visa to enter Bolivia. (Please let the ERC know if someone in your group plans to travel to Bolivia with a passport issued by a country other than the U.S.) The ERC will assist in the visa process, including providing you with necessary paperwork and details for application. Visa costs are usually around $160. For more information consult the Bolivian embassy’s website: [http://www.boliviawdc.com/visas-en/tourism](http://www.boliviawdc.com/visas-en/tourism). We recommend starting the visa process at least 2 months prior to their trip date.

**US Embassy Registry**

U.S. citizens residing or traveling in Bolivia are encouraged to register and update their contact information at the U.S. Embassy in La Paz. Registration with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) should be done online and can be done in advance of travel. Information on registering may be found at the Department of State's Consular Affairs website: [https://step.state.gov/step/](https://step.state.gov/step/)

**Vaccinations and other Health Information**

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. Also, be sure that your tetanus and other routine shots are up-to-date.

Anti-malarial medication and the yellow fever shot are not necessary because carrier mosquitoes are not present in areas of higher altitude such as La Paz and Carmen Pampa. They are, however, suggested for visitors who plan for travel in lower elevation areas. Again, please consult your physician or local travel clinic. Documentation of yellow fever may be required for the visa depending which consulate you apply to.

Please also be sure to talk to your doctor about any medical issues or concerns you have about visiting Bolivia, and find out if there are any precautions you should take. Carmen Pampa is located in a remote area, and while medical care is available, it is always better if you can avoid needing it! Group leaders should compile a list of health concerns (severe allergies, asthma, etc) and emergency contact information for all members of the group. A copy of this information should be on file in the US as well as on hand in Bolivia for each participant in case of an emergency situation.


**Insurance**

Visitors should have medical and travel insurance that will cover them in Bolivian. Please talk to your group leader if you have concerns about this. Often it is a requirement of your home institution as well, and will be facilitated through them.
Packing List
For trips of one month or less, one or two pieces of smaller luggage is sufficient (a backpack and a small suitcase or duffle). Depending on the length of your stay, we recommend that short-term visitors bring carry-on luggage, as if your checked luggage is lost you may not get it back before the end of your short trip. Groups often opt to bring one large, shared checked bag for liquid items (sunscreen, shampoo, etc), donations, and group items such as a health kit, snacks, etc. Checked 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.

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

Packing Hints
Many UAC-CP visitors have found the following packing guidelines useful.

• Bring clothes you can wear multiple times
• Do not pack anything you would be upset to lose—such as valuables and jewelry.
• Bring only comfortable shoes that have been broken in.
• 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.
• If you bring older items, you can leave them behind when you leave to make room for souvenirs in your luggage. (Towels, clothes, etc)

Clothing
Dress is mostly casual at the UAC-CP. We ask visitors to wear appropriately modest clothing on campus. 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 acceptable. You will be able to hand wash laundry during your stay at Carmen Pampa.

• Pants and light, long-sleeve shirts. To protect yourself from bugs
• Short-sleeved shirts
• Rain poncho or jacket and umbrella
• Sturdy shoes for hiking and sports
• Boots and/or shoes for hiking or working good in mud and rain
• Sandals for around campus or in the shower
• Work clothes for painting or other tasks
• Fleece jacket or sweatshirt (or 2) Nights can be cool in Carmen Pampa. It can be quite cold in La Paz. If you have two, you can layer!
• Warm hat and gloves. Again, La Paz can get quite cold
• Pajamas
• Underwear and socks
• Modest swimsuit. For swimming activities, and showering (there are not always curtains)
• One normal/nicer outfit to wear in La Paz or Coroico (jeans and a nice shirt)
• A towel for showering

Toiletries
If you forget a general toiletry item, most are available for purchase in Carmen Pampa or Coroico. In addition to your regular toiletries, we recommend:
• **Prescription medicine.** Be sure to consult your physician at least two months ahead if you need to request an extended prescription for the time you will stay at Carmen Pampa. Carry medicines in original, labeled prescription bottles. Bring any prescription medicine you take regularly or might need in an emergency as well as a prescription for travelers’ diarrhea (generally ciprofloxacin).

• **General medicines:** Aspirin/Tylenol, allergy medicine, Pepto Bismol, decongestant, anti-diarrheal medicine, anti-motion sickness medicine, anti-itch cream (Groups may want to bring one health kit to share, with general over-the-counter medicines, first aid kit, sunscreen, bug spray, hand-sanitizer, etc.)

• **General topicals:** Hand sanitizer, sun screen, insect repellant with DEET, lip balm

• **Back-up contacts or glasses.** It can be dusty and dirty in Carmen Pampa, so you may prefer glasses to contacts.

• **Small packages of toilet paper or Kleenex.** Most bathrooms require you to carry your own!

• **Baby wipes or Germx wipes.** In case the water goes out or you eat a messy orange while traveling.

• **Towel and or Face wash.**

• **Soap**

**Miscellaneous**

• **At least US$200 in small bills and medium bills.** Please see section 4 for more information about money and exchange rates.

• **Credit or Debit Card.** To use at ATMs. We recommend having 2 types of money, just in case (cash and card, for example).

• **Emergency info, phone numbers, insurance information, etc.**

• **Plastic baggies.** For keeping important things like cameras, phones, and passports dry

• **Snacks.** Especially if you are a picky eater or have dietary restrictions. You will not get to choose what is served to eat, and you will not be happy if you are hungry! Plan ahead and bring some granola bars or other food, just in case!

• **Wide brimmed hat and sunglasses.** The altitude makes the sun stronger

• **Flashlight or headlamp**

• **Water bottle.** Nalgene and similar brands are perfect as they don’t break and can easily be filled with hot or cold water.

• **Small back pack for daily use**

• **Camera, CDs, memory card and other camera accessories**

• **Extra batteries**

• **Pocket knife and nail clipper** (remember to put in checked luggage)

• **Book(s)/ cards/ journals.** It get dark early at Carmen Pampa and you may need to entertain yourselves! Card games can also be a fun way to interact and share culture with students

• **Converters/adapters** for American electronics which use 110 volts. The UAC-CP uses a standard current of 220 volts (Note: Newer laptops and digital cameras generally do not require voltage converters, while small appliances (hair dryer, curling iron, electric razor) may need one. Check your piece of equipment before plugging it in to see if it indicates 110V or 220V---or both!)

• **Money belt**

• **Watch/alarm clock**

• **Notebooks and pens/pencils**

• **Spanish/English pocket dictionary**

• **Inflatable neck pillow, ear plugs and eye blinds** for the overnight flight to La Paz and travelling in general. You may be sharing a room and the dogs are quite loud.
If You Have Extra Room in Your Suitcase
If you have extra room in your suitcase, please contact the ERC to see what you can bring down for the UAC-CP or long-term volunteer community. Some ideas may include:

- **Items for cultural exchange or activities.** Please talk to the ERC if you would like to plan a cultural exchange or want to bring items to do an activity with students. These can be really fun opportunities for groups to interact with UAC-CP students and the ERC can help you plan. Some ideas include sports equipment, games, snacks, etc.
- **Donation items for the UAC-CP.** The most beneficial way to help the UAC-CP is through monetary donations to the Carmen Pampa Fund, but small donations for visitors are also appreciated. The ERC can provide you with ideas.
- **Donation items for the Long-Term Volunteer Community.** The volunteer house always appreciates gently used bedding and towels, especially pillows. We also welcome gifts of items that are difficult to find in Bolivia, peanut butter, dark chocolate, cheese, etc. Please contact the ERC for more ideas.
- **Mail and packages.** Family and friends of current UAC-CP visiting professionals and staff often find it helpful to send packages or mail down with visitors, both to save money and assure safe arrival. If you’re willing to carry a package, please share your mailing address the External Relations Coordinator at least three weeks before your departure so that they can make arrangements for a package to be sent to you.

4. Money, Fees, Currency, etc.

**Trip Costs**
Please talk with your group leader about trip costs, payment, and what is included. We generally recommend students bring extra spending money for snacks, outings, and souvenirs.

**Exchanging Money**
Money is easily exchanged from US dollars into bolivianos or Bs (pronounced ‘bees’). The current 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). Most visitors find it most convenient to exchange dollars at the El Alto airport (the exchange fee is very minimal). You will need your passport to exchange money. Dollars can be changed most easily in denominations of $20, $50 or $100, but the bills must be in *perfect condition*, and older bills may not be accepted. *(Even the SLIGHTEST tears or marks on the bills means they will not be accepted)*. We advise visiting your bank during slow hours to request new bills before traveling to Bolivia.

**ATMs and Credit Cards**
Cash is the preferred method of payment while traveling in Bolivia. Travelers’ checks are not recommended as they are very difficult to cash. With the exception of a few places in La Paz, credit cards and debit cards are rarely accepted in Bolivia. They can, however, be used to withdraw money from ATMs. Past visitors have found that debit/check cards offer much lower service rates than credit cards.

There are ATM machines in Coroico and La Paz. It is recommended that visitors withdraw money—dollars or bolivianos or both—from the ATM at the airport in La Paz when they arrive. 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.

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. Visitors are also advised to consult their credit card companies in advance of travel about service rates for international withdrawals. You should also call your credit card company to tell them you are traveling abroad so they do not block your account due to purchases made in Bolivia.

5. Miscellaneous information about Bolivia

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 UAC-CP stays relatively constant at a comfortable 65 to 80° Fahrenheit year round and is a few degrees cooler at night. During the winter months it can get colder. 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°. Due to the altitude, 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 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, walk slowly, and refrain from strenuous exercise. Non-aspirin pain relievers and caffeine work well to fight headaches. If you are concerned about altitude sickness, or know yourself to be susceptible, please talk to your doctor prior to travel. There are some prescription medicines available to treat/prevent altitude sickness (Diamox is a common one).

Transportation
UAC-CP
The UAC-CP has two campuses, upper campus/Campus Leahy/arriba and lower campus/Campus Manning/abajo. Groups will likely have activities on both campuses. To get between campuses you
can either choose to walk (approx. 20 minutes) or you can flag down privately owned public transportation. Rides between Campus Manning and Campus Leahy cost 2 Bs, and availability can be inconsistent. Visitors will have to walk around campus and potentially to and from nearby communities for group activities.

**Coroico**

Public minibuses and minivans and buses travel (irregularly but relatively frequently) every day to and from Coroico. They charge 5 Bs. to Coroico from both the upper and lower campuses. Transportation is much less frequent when students are not on campus.

On Campus Manning, transportation can be found at the bridge in Carmen Pampa (there is a shelter, too, to wait under) or just outside the Visiting Professionals House in front of the tiendas, stores. On Campus Leahy transportation stops at the edge of the parking lot. In Coroico there is a bus stop ("parada") on the road out of Coroico to Carmen Pampa.

The vehicle may be a van or truck. It is a good idea to confirm that the vehicle is going all the way to Carmen Pampa as some go only go as far as San Pedro. Also, in the rare occasion that you might find yourself stuck in Coroico, you can opt to walk (it is an approximate 2 ½ hour walk from Coroico to the UAC-CP) or take a private taxi. Private taxis generally cost between 60 – 70 Bs. and it is important to differentiate between the College and Carmen Pampa when negotiating a cost prior to travel or you may be left at the upper campus rather than lower. When contracting a taxi, be sure that the vehicle has license plates or that you know the driver.

**La Paz**

When you arrive in Bolivia, the ERC will pick your group up at the airport in El Alto and travel with you down to Carmen Pampa. When you return to La Paz, your group can choose to have the ERC accompany you. UAC transportation will take you directly to your hostel in La Paz.

Many tourist sites in La Paz are within walking distance from the hostels, maps are available at most hostels and people are always willing to give you directions. Public minibuses can be used to access sites outside walking distance, they generally cost 2-3 bs. It is best to confirm with the driver that they will take you where you want to go prior to getting on. There is also a network of telefericos or cable cars in La Paz that run like a subway, with different lines and stations. Telefericos cost 3 bs per trip.

To get to the airport from your hostel, you or the ERC will arrange for the hostel to call a taxi service. Generally you can fit 4 people in each taxi (though they will let you squish in a fifth for an extra fee). Taxis to the airport cost 70-90 bs. When taking taxis, it is best to always use a taxi service or radio taxi that you call. Taxis that you flag down on the street are not always safe. You can always ask at any hostel, restaurant, museum etc for help calling a taxi.

**Safety**

Relatively speaking Bolivia is one of the safest countries in South America. Nevertheless, visitors should follow basic, common sense safety precautions and err on the side of caution. This is especially true in urban areas and after dark. Visitors should be aware that violent crimes, although rare, do occur in rural areas and as foreigners they do stand out.
General Safety Rules:

- Please store your valuables (including passports) in safe, dry places such as in your suitcase in a locked room. If you would like an important item stored in a more secure place while at Carmen Pampa, talk to the ERC to make arrangements.
- When walking after dark in Carmen Pampa or Coroico, and when exploring La Paz please use the buddy system.
- Be sure to advise other group members of your whereabouts and plans. Someone should know where you are at all times and when you plan to join back up with the group.
- In La Paz especially, do not flaunt your money. Know where your passport and wallet are at all times, and do not put them in your back-pocket or the outside pocket of a backpack.
- Carry your phone, and use it! If you are running late or your plans change, let people know so they do not worry!
- Know what you are eating/drinking. You should drink only bottled beverages or water you know has been treated (if you are unsure, ask! Most touristy places are careful with how they prepare their food/drinks). Avoid raw fruits and vegetables unless you can peel them (such as oranges). Especially do not eat lettuce/salad.
- Practice common sense road safety: If you have a seat belt, use it! Use radio taxis, trusted drivers, and vehicles with license plates.

Safety in 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. Actual law enforcement officers will not stop you on the street or demand 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, phones, or money in your pockets or backpack. If possible, keep passports and excess money in a safe at the hostel and only care the money you will need that day.

6. Life at the UAC- What to expect during your visit!
During your stay at the UAC we want you to be able to experience what life is like for our student and begin to understand the realities of structural poverty in rural Bolivia. Life at the UAC is different than life in the US. Here are a few basic things to expect during your stay.

Housing
You will be housed either in separate visitor spaces or, depending on available space, in the student dormitories. Both dorms and visitor spaces will have multiple people (up to 20) sharing one room. You will be provided with a simple bed, sheets, pillow, and blanket. You are expected to bring your own towel and toiletries (soap and TP will also be provided). Visitor spaces have bathrooms that may or may not have hot water. Dorm bathrooms do not have hot water. While you should not expect to be staying in a luxurious accommodation, we do hope you will be warm, safe, and dry. If you find any issues with your accommodations, please let us know so we can get them fixed.
Schedule
Students have a 10:30 pm curfew and are not allowed in the dorms during class hours (7-11am and 2-6 pm). They are open for half hour breaks at 8:30am and 3:30pm. Even if you are not staying in the dorms, we ask that you try to respect these rules as much as possible.

Eating
If you are visiting the UAC while school is in session, you will likely be eating in the food cooperativas (or copes) with the students. The copes are open Monday-Saturday for breakfast (8:30am-9:00am), lunch (12-00pm-1:00pm), and dinner (7:00-8:00 pm). Breakfast in the cope often consists of a piece of bread accompanied by very sweet coffee, hot chocolate, or tea. Lunch consists of soup and a main course (usually meat and rice), and dinner is just a main course (again, meat and rice).

If you are eating in the cope, keep in mind that we cannot accommodate food allergies or dietary restrictions. We understand that for health and religious reasons, some people are unable to adjust their diets. But if you are able, we ask that you consider being flexible with your diet during your stay. Food is an important part of the Bolivian culture that we hope you are able to experience. If you do not wish to, or are unable to eat what is provided in the cooperativa, please plan ahead and bring snacks so you do not go hungry.

If you are visiting when school is not in session, you will likely be eating at a kiosko or small food store near campus. Food at the kiosko will be similar to what is served in the cope. You will be provided with breakfast, lunch, and dinner at the times arranged with the owner of the kiosko. If you would like to purchase additional drinks, meals, or snacks at the kiosko, you are more than welcome to do so using your own money. Kioskos are also generally unable to accommodate food allergies or dietary restrictions.

When eating in the cooperativa, kiosko, or restaurants in Bolivia, please be careful that the food you eat is safe. Do not eat raw vegetables, especially lettuce. Cooked foods such as rice, meat, and soup are generally safe. Be aware of what you drink, especially if you didn’t see it made or the bottle opened. If you are unsure of whether something is safe, skip it!

Laundry
If you stay at the UAC for more than a week, you may want to wash your clothes or bed sheets. All laundry at the UAC is washed by hand. Buckets, soap, and a clothes line will be provided for you. While washing clothes by hand takes a bit more work than a machine, it is really not too bad! Keep in mind that clothes take a while to dry, especially during the rainy season. It helps to pack a few quick-dry items.

Comunitario
The goal of the UAC is to provide affordable education to poor, marginalized, rural populations. In order to help keep the costs low, all students are required to do 80 comunitario hours a semester (4 hours a week). Comunitario can be thought of like a work study program, the students do maintenance and cleaning at the school, and as a result they pay less for their studies. We encourage all visitors to participate in comunitario. It is a great opportunity to work alongside and get to know the students. Comunitario hours are open Monday-Friday from 7-11am and 2-6pm. The ERC can help set up your participation in comunitario.
**Alcohol, Drugs, and Smoking**

Alcohol is not allowed on the UAC campus. Furthermore, students are not allowed to drink anywhere in the municipality of Coroico (like the county). Visitors are allowed to have a drink with a meal in Coroico, if they choose. We do ask, however, that you be respectful and discrete if drinking. Alcohol is viewed differently in rural Bolivia, people seen having one drink are assumed to be having many. Remember, your actions reflect on future visitors to the College. Please refrain from drinking in the presence of students and staff or being around students who are drinking. We ask that visitors do not go out with students in Coroico.

Smoking is not allowed on the UAC campus. If you must smoke, please walk off campus and do it where you are not plainly visible. Ask the ERC to show you appropriate places to smoke.

Drug laws in Bolivia are very strict. Even the US Embassy warns that the US government can do nothing for you if you are arrested for drugs in Bolivia. Many people wait years for a trial. Do not purchase or consume drugs in Bolivia. *Note: Coca is not a drug. It does contain the substances used to make cocaine, but in very trace amounts. (Think tea versus pure caffeine.) Coca is a very important part of the life and culture in Bolivia. We encourage you to try coca or coca tea, and learn about this interesting plant during your visit.

**Romantic Relationships**

We ask visitors to please refrain from starting romantic relationships during their time at the UAC. You are here for a short time to learn and volunteer. Romantic relationships may distract you from those goals. Please try to focus your energy on building understanding and friendships instead of romantic relationships.

Additionally, we ask you to consider that cross-cultural relationships involve many complicated factors, especially when people are from such starkly different realities as the US and rural Bolivia. The amount of time you are at the UAC is not sufficient to work through these challenges or create the foundation for a lasting relationship.

While we encourage working alongside the students and getting to know them, personal boundaries are important. Be cautious of things such as body language, and use of social media. It is important to remember that male-female friendships do not exist in rural Bolivia as they may in your home country. Spending a lot of one-on-one time with someone of the opposite gender might easily be misconstrued as more than friendship, even to one of the parties involved.

**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 with everyone, 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 UAC-CP speak Aymara or Quecha as their first language. Campesinos living in Carmen Pampa and the surrounding communities speak Aymara.

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.

If you have dietary restrictions, please understand that these may be difficult to accommodate during your visit to Bolivia. We highly encourage people to be as flexible as possible with their diets in order to experience Bolivia to the fullest. If you have concerns about your diet, please discuss this with the ERC prior to your trip. It is also a good idea to bring along granola bars or other snacks in case you are unable to eat what you are served. Please keep in mind that while it is generally considered impolite to reject food in Bolivia, people will understand if you politely explain that you are unable to eat something for health reasons. Do not feel obliged to eat anything you feel might make you sick.

Shopping
Visitors can find nearly every handicraft in La Paz in the shopping area around San Francisco church. If you want to spend time shopping in La Paz, please let the ERC know, and they will arrange your schedule accordingly. Clothing can also be purchased in La Paz. Bartering is acceptable in La Paz.
**Gift giving**
Gift giving is not expected in Bolivia. 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.

If you would really like to give to your new friends at the UAC-CP, please talk to the ERC about getting in touch with the Carmen Pampa Fund to help with fundraising efforts support the College now or in the future. Donations to support general operations at the College are the most beneficial way to support the UAC-CP and all of its students. The ERC can also guide your group if you would like to bring material donations or work on a service project during your visit.

**Comfort**
Part of a successful trip to the UAC-CP is experiencing what it is like for students to live and study here, as well as understanding the realities of structural poverty in rural Bolivia. This means, you will be experiencing and seeing somethings that are not always easy. **Physically and mentally, you will not always be comfortable during your time at the UAC.** Your discomfort may range from taking cold showers every morning to being unable to communicate in Spanish to having to take a hard look at your own biases, misconceptions, and worldview. This discomfort is an important part of your learning and growing experience here, however, we also want you to enjoy the experience. The ERC and other long term volunteers are happy help you address any issues with your lodging/food arrangements, as well as help you process and understand the realities you see here. We just ask that you please keep an open mind and come prepared to be outside your comfort zone!

**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 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 UAC-CP. If you want to do something special for people you meet, talk about its feasibility with members of the long-term volunteer community who have more experience 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.
• This is a learning adventure, *it will not always be “fun”*. The water will go out, the electricity will go out, you may be hot, cold, wet, tired or hungry. This is part of the experience! Try to relax and go with the flow. It is the not-so-fun things that sometimes make for the best learning- and the best stories when you get home.
• If you believe in what we do at the UAC, please consider supporting the College when you get home. The ERC and Carmen Pampa Fund can guide you in leading a fundraiser or making donations!

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