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B2B TRAINING KIT

COURSE **2**

# SALAR DE UYUNI

## PLANNING A TRIP

Bolivia: The Largest Salt Flat in the World

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Tips for travel planning and implementation of the most visited destination in Bolivia

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# Introduction

You are currently reading the second part of our training kit about Salar de Uyuni, a promising destination that your customers will love. In course 2 you will find all the important information you need to plan and carry out the trip and sell this destination. In the following chapters you will find recommendations for travelling to Uyuni, details of the most beautiful sights, available types of excursions, possible challenges and problems in the region as well as useful tips and recommendations for your customers.

If you have not read [course 1 \(Overview of the Salar de Uyuni\)](#) yet, we recommend that you take a look at it. In Course 1 we will talk about the destination itself: The origin of the salt flat, historical data, demography, biodiversity and everything you need to know about the world's largest salt desert.

Read also [course 3 \(Frequently asked questions about the Salar de Uyuni\)](#). There you will find a summary of the first two courses and thus receive a practical guide to the 20 most frequently asked questions your clients might have about the Salar de Uyuni.

We hope you enjoy this second course of our training material, which our Logistur team has created with great commitment for you and your agency.







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# Arrival at the Salar de Uyuni

Uyuni is well connected thanks to its own airport and the paved roads to La Paz and Potosí. There is also a train line to Oruro, as well as to Chile and Argentina. Your clients can start their journey to the Salar de Uyuni from the Bolivian capital La Paz, from where there are daily flights to Uyuni. In addition, it is possible to start from the neighboring countries Chile (San Pedro de Atacama) and Argentina (Jujuy province): the trip from or to the neighboring countries usually takes three days and is made in jeeps (four-wheel drive) in groups of up to 6 people per vehicle. During these trips you can get to know the Sud Lipez region and stop at beautiful tourist attractions such as Laguna Colorada and Laguna Verde.



## Arrival from Bolivia

Your customers can take the opportunity to explore the capital La Paz or other nearby cities. It is possible to travel to Uyuni by plane with a duration of about one hour, because Uyuni airport is served by two commercial airlines (Amaszonas and Boliviana de Aviacion) in addition to military air traffic.

It is also possible to take the bus from La Paz to Uyuni. This is a cheaper alternative, but it takes much longer: the journey takes approximately 10 hours. Ideally, you offer your clients a package that includes a transfer from the airport or bus terminal to their accommodation and/or vice versa.

## Arrival from Chile

Starting from this neighboring country of Bolivia, your customers will have the opportunity to get to know the city of San Pedro de Atacama and the famous Atacama desert, considered the driest in the world, as well as other attractions in the north of Chile. The region is so diverse that no one will ever be bored there. Uyuni can be reached from Chile by land through the LÍpez region. You should plan at least 8 hours for the drive. From Chile you can also start jeep tours through the Salar, which usually take three days.

## Arrival from Argentina

When arriving this way, your customers can take the opportunity to visit beautiful Argentinean cities like Salta and Jujuy. A trip to those cities can be perfectly combined with this itinerary to Uyuni. The route leads from the north of Argentina (Jujuy) to Bolivia and the southern region of Lipez. It goes along new roads, passing interesting landscapes with rivers and red mountains, until the Salar de Uyuni is reached. The advantage is that this route is still relatively unknown and therefore has its very own charm.







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# Touristic Highlights





# Sights in Salar de Uyuni

We would like to tell you about the most beautiful sights in the Salar de Uyuni and give you an insight into the different excursions one can take. These are day trips as well as tours lasting several days.

## THE CITY OF UYUNI

### Die Stadt Uyuni

Uyuni is a city in the southwest of Bolivia and is known as the beginning of the salt desert. The city of Uyuni earns its money mainly with tourism, therefore you can find hotels, travel agencies and restaurants in its streets. There is also a market and a pedestrian area where you can find a variety of shops selling typical souvenirs of the region. In the city one can find the "Museo Arqueológico y Antropológico de los Andes del Sur", that is the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology of the Andes. It has a collection of mummies, skeletons, textiles and ceramics from several regions. It is open from 8:30 to 12:30 and 14:30 to 18:30 from Monday to Friday. Uyuni was originally known for its crucial role as a hub for train traffic: The picturesque railway station of Uyuni is therefore also worth a short visit.



## GREAT TRAIN GRAVEYARD

This attraction is a collection of a dozen rusty locomotives, some of them from the 19th century: A remnant of the time when Uyuni was still an important traffic junction and production site of trains. Eaten up by salt, most of the more than 100 wagons and locomotives today are impressive witnesses of those times. Visitors can climb up and explore the numerous wagons and steam locomotives. The deserted character gives this place a nostalgic atmosphere and an impressive photo-op. This open-air museum is located near the town of Uyuni and is one of the obligatory stops before going to the Salar.





## ISLA INCAHUASI

### Die Stadt Uyuni

Isla Incahuasi is an area of 246 m<sup>2</sup> (2,647 sq ft) surrounded by desert salt and is therefore called an "island". However, Incahuasi is actually of volcanic origin.

On the "island" your customers can go on several hikes on well marked paths. One of the most famous is a visit to a lookout point from which one has a 360° view of the Uyuni salt desert. Incahuasi is entirely covered with giant cacti, some of them up to an incredible height of 10 meters (32 feet), which give the island the appearance of an oasis in the heart of the salt desert.





## COLCHANI, THE "GATE TO SALT"

The municipality of Colchani is located only a few kilometers from the city of Uyuni and is characterized by the accommodation of the workers who extract salt from the salt flats. There is a small museum built from salt and a market where souvenirs (made of salt) are sold. During most of the tours to the Salar de Uyuni, a stop is made there to buy some food and snacks for the journey.

In addition, travelers have the opportunity to have conversations with locals in Colchani.



## EXCURSIONS THROUGH THE SALAR

A tour through the Salar de Uyuni is definitely the most performed and most popular attraction in the region. It is done in Jeeps with four-wheel drive and is only possible in two ways: as a group tour (up to 6 people per jeep) or as a private tour.

The visit of the Salar de Uyuni can be done as a full day excursion. However, our tip is to combine the tour with a trip to the neighboring province of Sud Lípez. In order to experience all the magic of the place, we recommend excursions of up to three days and staying overnight on site.



## CLIMBING VOLCANO TUNUPA

The imposing Tunupa volcano has a height of 5,432 meters above sea level (*17,822 feet above sea level*) and can be seen from the Salar de Uyuni. The mountain has different colours, from earthy brown to red. But the real highlight is to climb to the top, from where you can enjoy the view over the immeasurable salt desert. Tunupa is mostly climbed by climbers, but anyone with good physical fitness can make it to the first viewpoint (about 4,700 meters / 15,420 feet). The effort is worth it! Since this excursion is obviously not for everyone, this experience has to be offered to your customers individually. (The excursion is not recommendable for older people and is not suitable for people with walking difficulties)





## Sights in the Lipez region

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Lípez is a region near Uyuni and therefore a perfect addition to a several day trip to Salar de Uyuni. Located on the border of both Chile and Argentina, this fascinating region offers countless alternatives to extend your adventure. A multi- destination trip always leaves a lasting impression, especially with perfectly planned logistics. For this reason, we would like to introduce you to some of the most beautiful attractions in the region.

Die Stadt Uyuni

### RESERVA NACIONAL EDUARDO AVAROA

Approximately five hours by car from the Salar de Uyuni, close to the borders with Chile and Argentina, lies the Eduardo Avaroa Nature Reserve: home to colorful lagoons, geysers, geothermal waters, volcanoes, deserts and an interesting biodiversity. The mountains in the region are the highest ones on the border between Bolivia and Chile as well as Argentina and are partly volcanoes, many of which are still active.



## LAGUNA COLORADA

Within the Eduardo Avaroa Nature Reserve, in the southwest, is one of the most important destinations in the region: the Laguna Colorada, a lagoon of 60 km<sup>2</sup> (14,826 acre). It has its name because its water has an exotic red color, which is produced by algae. Laguna Colorada is especially beautiful during the Bolivian summer months, when thousands of flamingos move in. During this time it is also possible to observe some foxes, llamas, alpacas and even condors and pumas around the lagoon.



## LAGUNA VERDE

The Laguna Verde is also located at the southwestern end of the Reserva at the foot of the Licancabur volcano (border to Chile). Tourists are particularly impressed by the color of the water, which varies from turquoise to dark emerald. This is caused by algal sediments. As in Laguna Colorada, there are also many flamingos in Laguna Verde, especially in summer, a scenery that offers your customers an excellent photo-op!





## SALVADOR DALÍ DESERT

The Dalí Desert is located in the south of the Reserva, measures about 110 km<sup>2</sup> (27,182 *acre*) and is named after the works of the legendary Spanish painter. In the desert, the color of the mountains surrounding the desert is particularly striking: they seem almost supernatural, after all, their color palette consists of red, purple, blue and moss green. The colors are the result of the minerals contained in the region, as well as the volcanic activity and geothermal energy of the place. Believe us, the Salvador Dalí Desert is a surreal landscape and perfect for impressive photos.



## THERMAL BATHS

A highlight that you should not forget to include in your company's portfolio are the hot springs. They are located near the aforementioned lagoons and are very popular within tourists. The thermal water pools are heated by volcanic activity and are ideal for revitalization. They are also good for your health. It is worth to spend a few hours at the Laguna Chalviri at the foot of the volcano Polques. Besides the warm water, the visual scenario is incredible: the expanse of the desert and the rising steam give the hot spring a touch of magic.





## GEYSERS „SOL DE MAÑANA”

This area of about 2 km<sup>2</sup> (494 acre) is also located in the Reserva. It is characterized by its geothermal activity, with amazing geysers as a proof. The intense volcanic activity provides the perfect opportunity to observe the boiling water. The craters emit both water and hot steam: these fountains reach a height of 10 meters (32 feet) up to incredible 50 meters (164 feet). Our tip is to plan an excursion to the geysers early in the morning as the sunrise is very impressive. Not without reason the geysers are called "morning sun". In order to enjoy the hot springs in the area, your customers should not forget their bathing suit.







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# Most popular excursions

Although it is possible to make day trips to the Salar de Uyuni, most companies offer tours of up to three days. On these multi-day tours, your clients travel through the Altiplano and cross the Sud LÍpez region until they reach the border with Chile. The multi-destination adventure can continue through the famous and diverse Atacama Desert in Chile. You will find a wide range of possible combinations with destinations in South America in our tour ideas.

The tours in Salar de Uyuni are always carried out by local companies: This is regulated by law, as tourism in Uyuni is one of the most important sources of income for the locals. Thus, there are only two possibilities to realize these tours which are explained in more detail in the following, including the respective advantages and disadvantages.

## Group tours

Group tours are conducted in four-wheel drive jeeps and in groups of up to 6 people. The group members may therefore not know each other and may be of different ages or nationalities. The tour starts in Uyuni and goes to San Pedro de Atacama in Chile: Another very popular destination for tourists.



## Advantages

This tour is especially recommended for those travelling alone or in small groups. By sharing the jeeps, it is possible to keep the costs of the tour low for your customers, as they are shared among the group members. In addition, your customers will get to know new people from different countries, which gives a great foundation for interesting conversations: One can exchange experiences, get to know new cultures and make friends. The trip will thus be an unforgettable experience.

## Disadvantages

During a group tour one will stay in accommodation in the local communities, some of which have a limited service standard. Additionally, in most cases you will share rooms with the group members. This is a disadvantage for travelers who are looking for more comfort and privacy. If one wishes to stay in a higher hotel category, a private tour is an alternative.





## Accommodations

The group tour includes accommodation in salt lodges belonging to the local communities. These accommodations are basic and offer limited services. It is therefore important to let your customers know that they cannot expect high comfort - but the special experience of staying in salt makes up for every missing amenity! The rooms are shared; usually with the same people with whom your customers are travelling together in a jeep. The bathroom is also shared with other travellers.



## Itinerary

### Day 1

The expedition into the salt desert begins with a visit of the railway cemetery, before it leads into the Salar de Uyuni. On the way the community of Colchani is visited. Lunch is served in a restaurant built entirely of salt stones.

Afterwards your customers will have enough time to take breathtaking and creative photos in the salar. The tour continues to Incahuasi Island, where your clients will have time to explore the island and the many cacti. At the end of the afternoon, they will reach the traditional community of San Juan, where dinner and overnight stay will take place.

Included: Lunch and dinner



## Day 2

Today everyone has to get up early: After breakfast your customers will head to the Eduardo Avaroa National Wildlife Reserve. The national park is well hidden in the Andes and on the way your customers will see the volcano Ollague and the Canapa lagoon. The trail passes several smaller lagoons where birds and flamingos can be observed. At noon they will arrive in the Siloli Desert, where they will have lunch and enjoy the exotic landscape. In the afternoon the impressive Laguna Colorada awaits your clients. Here one can take impressive pictures and enjoy the beauty of the landscape. Tonight will be spent in the Huayllajara community, where dinner is served as well.

Included: breakfast, lunch and dinner

### Tag 3

The last and final day of the group tour starts in the early morning hours. Before daybreak your clients will set off to the famous geysers "Sol de Mañana" (morning sun). They will find the impressive towers of hot water and steam that rise from the ground and can reach an incredible height of up to 50 meters (*164 feet*). This natural spectacle is most beautiful when the first rays of sunshine appear. Shortly after, the group visits the famous thermal water lagoons, which are well known for therapeutic and relaxing effects. The perfect place to take an revitalizing bath. Finally, the trip continues to the Dalí Desert and the Laguna Verde, located just in front of the Licancabur volcano, which is one of the most beautiful places of the whole trip. The last part of the tour leads to the border to Chile, very close to San Pedro de Atacama, where your clients can continue their adventure by getting to know the driest desert in the world and its charms.





# Private Tours

The private tour has the same elements as the group tour: it is done with the same vehicles and local drivers, the same sights are visited and the duration is 2 nights / 3 days as well. The private tour also ends near San Pedro de Atacama. The difference lies in the choice of accommodation. In addition, unlike to the regular tour, the travelers usually already know each other and have a certain social relationship, e.g. friends, family, work colleagues



## Advantages

As a private group it is possible to adapt certain elements of the trip. This gives your clients more flexibility with special requests and allows them to negotiate these directly with their driver or tour operator, for example a special lunch in the middle of the salar. The big difference is in the accommodation. Accommodation is not in shared accommodation, but in hotels that offer more comfort in terms of services, rooms and meals. It should be noted however, that the comfort is always relative to the region - in general, the standard of accommodation in Bolivia is not comparable to that in the European or North American countries.

## Disadvantages

The biggest disadvantage is the price. Since it is a tour with better comfort, the price is much higher compared to the group tour. Especially for those who travel in small groups, the price difference is a considerable amount. Another disadvantage for some travelers is also the low social interaction when travelling alone or in pairs. Usually the drivers only speak Spanish and during the tour there are also only few places where it is possible to meet other people outside the group. Keeping this in mind we can say that a private tour is ideal for larger groups who like to travel at a higher standard.

## Itinerary

The itinerary of the private tour is identical to the itinerary of the group tour and differs only in the choice of accommodation.





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# Packing List Uyuni



Important for the trip to Uyuni are good and comfortable shoes. Although your customers will spend a lot of time of the journey in a jeep, it is still an adventure trip and they will also be walking from time to time. The temperatures in the salt desert change, as it can cool down a lot, so a jacket for the low temperatures, preferably a windbreaker, should also be part of your luggage. In contrast, the sun shines very strong, so sunscreen and a sun hat should be in one's backpack, as well as moisturizing cream for skin and lips to protect against dry weather. We have summarized a small overview of the most important things on the packing list for you here, which you can pass on to your customers:






## UYUNI ESSENTIALS

- COMFORTABLE SHOES
- LIGHT CLOTHING, BUT ALSO WARM CLOTHING FOR LOW TEMPERATURES
- SMALL DAYPACK FOR WALKS WITH SPACE FOR CAMERA AND DRINKS
- SUNGLASSES, SUN HAT, SUN CREAM AND LIP BALM
- CASH
- TOILET PAPER
- WATER (ONE LITER OR MORE PER PERSON FOR THE FIRST DAY, THEN ACCORDING TO THE INSTRUCTIONS OF THE GUIDE / DRIVER)
- INSECT REPELLENT
- PERSONAL TRAVEL FIRST-AID KIT
- FLASHLIGHT / HEADLAMP
- POWERBANK



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# Problems to Expect

Operating a trip through South America is not an easy task. If you are working with a DMC, they should always be aware of the potential problems to prevent them as much as possible. In addition, a DMC should always have a “plan B” in case the problems occur. In the following we would like to show you the most common problems that, in our experience, occur.

## Accommodation during the group tour

As explained above, the service and comfort of accommodation during the group tour through the Salar de Uyuni are limited. They may also differ in the quality of various aspects such as hygiene, food, heating, etc.

### Our advice:

Your partner DMC should be familiar with the conditions in South America by being directly on site. A good DMC has the knowledge to identify and offer the best accommodations in the region for your customers and therefore facilitates your efforts. The DMC will inform you about the condition of the accommodations and emphasize the value of the adventure tourism with unique experience, which make up for the lack of service.





# Taxis at the airport or bus station

In the region of Uyuni the departures from the airport and bus station are a bit chaotic. Taxi drivers do not work with a taximeter, which makes it difficult to recognize their prices. As in other parts of the world, your customers might fall into the hands of "fake taxi drivers" who take advantage of tourists, especially foreigners. The most common problems are overpriced charges, theft of luggage and money change in the form of counterfeit money.

## Our advice:

Your DMC partner should offer its travel packages including transport to and from the airport/bus station. It is a big advantage if the drivers at least speak English in order to communicate with your customers. Your customers will appreciate this little detail.



# Language barrier

The official language in Bolivia is Spanish and only few people speak English. If your clients do not speak Spanish, this fact may cause them stress and uncertainty. The language barrier also leads to misunderstandings, which can cause serious problems in a region like Uyuni.

## Our advice:

Your DMC partner should be able to guarantee the presence of a person on the trip who speaks both English and Spanish. This person can translate in all eventualities. At Logistur, for example, this role is performed by a tour guide, a local expert who is always available to help your customers.



# Poor quality of some local service providers

Some agencies and local people in Uyuni try to sell excursions through the Salar de Uyuni at suspiciously low prices. But especially in such a remote destination, safety and good quality are very important. Cheap offers could, at worst, cost your customers their lives.

## Our advice:

A professional DMC can prove and guarantee the quality, punctuality and sense of responsibility of its local service providers. In addition, they are in constant contact with the service providers to ensure customer satisfaction. Make sure that you know the references of your DMC partner.



## Altitude Sickness

Uyuni is located in the Andes region far above sea level. The extreme height can surprise some tourists, especially in the first days. However, every body reacts differently: there are people who have no problems at all with altitude. Others feel nausea, dizziness and headaches. It is always good to be aware of this and be prepared for it.



## Our advice:

In the first days of the journey, your customers should take it easy, without physical exertion, so that their body can get used to the altitude: Proper acclimatization is very important. They should drink enough water (at least 3 litres / 100 ounces, better more) and avoid alcohol. In Bolivia, coca tea is a true miracle cure for altitude sickness (note: the import of coca leaves into Europe or North America is prohibited).

If you work with a DMC, they should have this knowledge and the necessary local contacts to be able to react in time in case of a health emergency. At best, your DMC partner will plan the trip with enough time for relaxation and acclimatization at the beginning of the trip.



# Strikes and demonstrations in the region

In Bolivia, especially in the Uyuni region, strikes and demonstrations are not uncommon. Although they will rarely endanger the safety of your customers, they can lead to changes in the planned itinerary. Understandably, such circumstances dampen the enthusiasm of the travelers.

## Our advice:

A professional DMC will always make sure that your clients have a great trip despite the events. They have the necessary local knowledge to react quickly, provide answers and put together alternative plans.

# Unreliable service providers

A multi-destination trip through South America and especially through the Uyuni region requires organized planning. Your customers should always feel well cared for and in safe hands, so that they can enjoy their adventure to the fullest without stress. Unreliable and unpunctual service providers threaten this smooth process.

## Our advice:

Compare local service providers, look for experiences that other travelers have already had and read reviews. If you work with a DMC, make sure you know their references. Find out which local service providers the DMC works with. Make sure you know that your customers are in good hands.



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# Summary





The beauty and charm of the Salar de Uyuni and the Sud LÍpez region are of unbelievable variety. The region is definitely one of the most impressive in the world. The experiences that are made on this trip are particularly breathtaking.

However, these also depend on the organization of the trip. There are some challenges that you will face in Bolivia.

Accordingly, it is important to work with a DMC who has the appropriate planning skills and knowledge of the region. In this way, complications during the journey can at best be avoided or at least solutions can be found.



→ You are also welcome to have a look at our [course 3 "The 20 most frequent questions about the Salar de Uyuni"](#). There we will give you a summary of course 1 and course 2. This summary serves as a short guide with the 20 most frequently asked questions that travelers have about the Uyuni region. With this guide you can answer all kinds of questions quickly and easily.

→ Did you find this e-book interesting? Then you might also be interested in our [other courses](#).





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# About Logistur DMC



# Contact

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info@logistur.travel

www.logistur.travel

Whatsapp +56 9 3388 0095



Logistur plans, implements and carries out journeys to various destinations throughout South America, according to the specific requirements of each of our partner agencies.

We have a team of experts and the necessary technology to facilitate the operational work of your agency. Put everything in our hands and you will be able to focus on the most important thing: the satisfaction of your customers and your sales.

Do you know someone for whom this e-book might be useful?

We invite you to recommend the Logistur Academy to others and to [share this link](#).