



# KNOW BEFORE YOU GO – COSMOS SOUTH AMERICA

## WELCOME / INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Cosmos, where you are family and can expect to be treated like family. We know you have a choice when it comes to travel, and by choosing us you receive more than 85 years of experience managing travel to worldwide destinations. We do everything to ensure your vacation is worry and hassle free, so you can relax and enjoy the cultures, sights, and people you meet during your travels.

This *Know Before You Go* document is designed with you in mind, with helpful hints to help you prepare for and enjoy your vacation. It is your guide to getting ready and contains general information on travel documentation, customs, and the country/countries you will be visiting, including budgeting, transportation, climate, languages, and much more. With Cosmos, you benefit from our experience

**COSMOS**<sup>®</sup>  
Turning travel dreams into reality<sup>SM</sup>

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## AIRPORT INFORMATION

It is important that you arrive at the airport at least two hours before domestic flights and three hours before international flights. This will allow you time to check your luggage and present your passport and ticket at the ticket counter, get seat assignments and boarding passes, and pass through security to the boarding area. You should be at the boarding gate at least 30 minutes prior to departure, in case there are any gate changes or late notifications.

### Airport Check-In



For airline check-in, you will need the required government-issued photo ID (passport, driver's license, or military ID) and final destination information. Airline representatives can look up your reservation with that information, although knowing your ticket number or reservation number is helpful. Many airlines now have computer check-in, which requires a credit card or passport number to pull up your reservation (reading your personal data from the card/passport to find your reservation in the system). Computer check-in is usually self-explanatory, with a series of checks and questions to ensure you have what you need to board your flight, including checking in your luggage. If you have questions, ask the attendant on duty, who should be able to help you. Make sure you are checked -in to your final destination so you do not need to claim your luggage and recheck it during flight connections. In some airports, but not all, this is mandatory.

The ticketing agent at the counter will verify your ID and tag your luggage for you. They may also be able to help you with seat assignments or changes, if available. After check-in, keep your boarding pass and government-issued photo ID handy, as you will need both to pass through security to your gate.

## Airline Connections

Traveling internationally often requires a change of planes in major airports. Your airline, not Cosmos, determines the minimum connection time required to transfer from one gate to another for each specific airport. At times, these connection times can be tight and may require you to quickly move from one gate to another. At other times, the connections may be very long due to flight availability at time of booking. When booking air-inclusive with us, we do all we can to provide adequate connection times for our travelers. However, we are subject to the rules, regulations, and availability of the airlines while also working within the transfer times for our airport-to-hotel transfer schedules. If you feel a connection time is too short, we recommend you ask for other options before purchasing your ticket or putting down deposit in order to avoid change fees, which can be quite expensive.

We also recommend you review the airline flight magazine's airport maps (when available) prior to landing, so you are familiar with the airport layout, which will assist in making your connections. Another tip is to carry the airline's 800 number (or international dialing number) with you. If you miss a connection, and we hope you don't, you may be in a long line at the service desk with other passengers who have also missed a connection. You may be able to get through to the airline on their direct number and reschedule yourself for another flight. Additional information will be available in your Important Travel Documents from Cosmos about how to contact us if you miss your flight and provide us the new details so we know when to expect your arrival.

## Airport Security

Airport security is becoming more and more advanced, and also stricter for travelers. For information on what is allowed in carry-on luggage and what to expect at security in the U.S., visit <http://www.tsa.gov/traveler-information>.

A couple of simple things can help you move through airport security more swiftly.

- Check the TSA web site for prohibited items ...and leave them at home, or pack prohibited carry-on items in your checked luggage.
- Gifts should be left unwrapped so airport security can open them for inspection, if necessary.
- Undeveloped film should be carried in carry-on luggage, as checked bag screening may damage it.
- Avoid wearing anything with metal (necklaces, watches, etc...). Metal will set off security screeners and will require additional screening by TSA personnel.
- Be prepared to remove your shoes. Many airports require shoe removal and shoe x-rays during the screening process.
- Put identification (luggage tags) on your carry-on luggage and all your checked luggage.
- Any liquids in carry-on bags must be under the size allowance and placed in clear zip-locked bags for screening.
- Electronic devices must be removed from carry cases for inspection and may require placement in the x-ray machine individually. This especially applies to laptops, which require separation from your other items.
- Carry-on bags are usually limited to one carry-on bag and one personal item (purse, laptop bag, etc.). Bag sizes are restricted to what can fit easily into overhead bins and underneath seats. Please check with your airport and airlines to verify luggage requirements and restrictions before leaving home. They can vary based on airline, airport and destination.
- Have your boarding pass and government-issued photo ID available for all TSA personnel. Only put these items away after you have passed through security.

## Airline Tickets

E-tickets are now becoming the norm and paper airline tickets, when available, usually require a fee to obtain. When e-tickets are provided instead of actual paper airline tickets, all you need to check -in for your flight are your flight itinerary information (airline, flight code, and destination) and your passport (or driver's license for domestic flights). Please check your e-tickets or paper tickets carefully. Many airlines have "code shares," which is an agreement or alliance with another airline. Code shares allow passengers to travel from point to point using more than one carrier. If your ticket states "Flight operated by (airline)," you will need to check in with that airline, not the airline listed as the original carrier.

Airline tickets for intra-vacation flights are typically sent with your Tour document but in some cases may be held by your Tour Director and are only provided once you are at the airport for that portion of your vacation.

## Airline Travel Apps

There are several applications you can download to your smartphone or tablet device to help monitor airline check-in times, security wait times, airport terminal information, and maps. Gateguru, flysmart, and gohow airport are just a few.

## Avoiding Jet Lag & Comfortable Airline Travel

- To help get adjusted to new time zones, after take-off, set your watch to the time zone of destination.
- If your flight arrives in the morning, try to sleep on board the plane.
- If available, rub moisturizer on face and hands or spray your face with water from an atomizer to avoid dry skin and feel refreshed.
- If you feel pressure in your ears due to change in altitude, swallow, yawn, blow your nose, or chew gum.
- Loose-fitting clothing is recommended. Wear comfortable shoes and try not to take them off, as feet occasionally swell during long flights.
- When possible, walk up and down the aisle to stretch limbs, get blood circulating, and avoid having the seat press against the back of your legs for long.
- Drink plenty of water and avoid alcohol, caffeine, and carbonated drinks. Eat light meals while traveling.
- Avoid wearing contact lenses because cabin air tends to dry them out.
- If you arrive at your destination in the morning or afternoon, try to keep awake until evening. This will help your body clock adjust more quickly.

## ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE TRANSFER INFORMATION

After arriving at your destination airport you will need to clear immigration (if arriving from an international destination) and claim your luggage. This is usually done in the “customs area,” which is separate from an “arrival hall.” Follow the signs to “baggage claim” and “customs.” Information on customs can be found later in this document. Be prepared to show your luggage tags / luggage claim information to security to prove you have your luggage and not someone else’s.

When you book your Cosmos vacation air-inclusive, the transfer to and from the airport to your start and end hotel is included (on published departure and return dates). You may also choose to purchase transfers from Cosmos for your arrival and/or departure by coordinating your flight information with our transfer times and windows. If you have included or purchased transfers from Cosmos, once you exit the customs area, you will be greeted by a Tour Director or company representative, depending on the type and time of transfer. This person will assist you with a transfer to your hotel. On brochure start dates, included or purchased transfers are usually a group transfer arranged at specific times. A motorcoach or small bus or van will transfer you to the hotel with other passengers arriving at the same time. Your specific, detailed vacation transfer information will be available in your passenger documents, which will be sent approximately 2-3 weeks prior to your departure. Look for this information in the Arrival & Departure Transfer section of your travel documents, which will have specific details for your arrival and departure.

Airport transfers can also be arranged if you purchase additional hotel stays with us prior to or after your vacation. At this time, we are unable to provide transfers if you join your tour late or leave your tour early. To purchase transfers with additional hotel stays (extra nights), please contact your travel agent or travel consultant. Transfers with additional hotel stays may be private car transfers and could be arranged based on your specific flight information and not arranged at pre-set times. Therefore, it is important that you or your Travel Agent provide us with your correct flight information and details, so we can appropriately schedule your transfers. Without your flight information—or if your flight information is incorrect—we cannot correctly arrange for your transfers and you may miss the drivers and be forced to make your own way to your hotel.

If your plane is delayed or you miss your connecting flight, we recommend you contact On Call International at 800-407-0801 and provide them with your name, tour reference, invoice number, and new flight arrival information. On Call will then notify us of your delayed arrival. If your delay causes you to miss your group transfer, you will need to make your own way to your vacation hotel or embarkation point. Keep a copy of your receipt so you may file a claim with the airline for the transfer cost. All of this information will also be available in the Important travel documents for your vacation.

## CALLING HOME & PHONE CARDS

Calling home and being able to stay in touch with family is often an important part of your vacation. In your travel documents, which are sent approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure, you will receive a detailed hotel list that will include hotel names, addresses, phone numbers, and dates of stay. We recommend you leave a copy of this hotel list with family and friends so they may contact you, if necessary. When calling from the United States or Canada, you dial 011 followed by the appropriate country code, city code, and phone number.



You may wish to bring a cellular phone with you on your vacation. When doing so, make sure to contact your wireless provider to inform them of your travel itinerary and dates prior to departure. Most cellular companies have an “international plan,” which will allow you to make calls from outside your home country. If you don’t already have this, you will need to purchase it prior to leaving on vacation in order to make calls from other countries. At times, cellular service may not be available as you travel from one city to another, but all metropolitan cities have cellular service which you can utilize.

Making long-distance calls home from hotel rooms is possible, but very expensive. You may call collect (reverse charge) from your hotel, but most hotels charge a connection or service fee, which can range from \$1-\$20 and is in addition to any other calling fees or charges. This connection or service fee is also applied to calling cards, though calling cards provide better rates once connected. If purchasing a calling card for use while on vacation, make sure the card covers the country/countries you will be visiting. A list of covered countries should be clearly displayed on the card itself or its packaging. We recommend you check these countries carefully before purchasing.

Tour Directors may be able to assist you with making calls, but each calling card and cellular phone is unique and it would be impossible for them to know every plan or phone. Tour Directors should not be relied on to assist with personal phone calls. Therefore, we recommend you familiarize yourself with calling internationally before leaving home. Please refrain from using your cell phone during sightseeing commentary, so everyone can hear what is being said.

For cruise ships, many staterooms have their own telephone. This may be used to call room to room and ship to shore. Any charges are placed on your shipboard account. Because the phone system for ship-to-shore calls function via satellite, there may be times, depending on routing, when reception (and, therefore, calling) is not possible. Instructions for using the phone are in each stateroom. Please be aware that the cost of calls from and to the ship is considerably higher than from normal land lines. Please check rates on any calls before making them. Not all ships have phone services.

## CHILDREN

On Cosmos vacations, passengers are considered children if they are 17 or under on the vacation start date. Age restrictions apply to Cosmos tours, and generally children under the age of 8 are not permitted on tour.

Cosmos offers many discounts to children traveling on our vacations. Children ages 8-17 receive a 10% discount off the land vacation package price, except on vacations that include a Galapagos cruise. Discounts are also available on many of our optional excursions available on tour. In your travel documents, which are received approximately 2-3 weeks prior to vacation start, will be a list of optional excursions available and applicable discounts (if any).

Many of our activities are suitable for children over the age of 8. Please be aware that Cosmos does not offer babysitting services.

### Traveling Internationally with Children

Many countries have adopted practices to prevent international abductions of children. Because of this, we recommend you secure a “Child Travel Consent” prior to departure if you will be traveling with a minor under the age of 18. A Child Travel Consent is a document that shows authorities and foreign officials that a minor (under age 18) has permission from his or her parent(s) or guardian(s) to travel. The document may be requested by authorities when a child is traveling internationally:

- With one parent or guardian
- Without a parent

- Alone
- With an adult who is not a parent or guardian

If the traveling parent has sole custody, he or she will need a notarized true copy of a court order or equivalent proving custody. If both parents have custody, or the non-traveling parent has custody, the traveling parent will need notarized consent from the non-traveling parent. If the other parent has legal rights of access (e.g. visitation rights), it is advisable to obtain his or her consent. If it is not possible to obtain consent or if the other parent has no legal rights, you should carry a notarized true copy of a court order or equivalent to prove that you have sole custody. You should also be prepared to prove your relationship to the child by producing government-issued certificates (e.g. certificates of birth, marriage, adoption, or change of name). We suggest you contact appropriate consulates and airlines for additional requirements.

## CONVERSION TABLES

Below is information on standard conversion tables, which you may find useful while traveling to international destinations.

### Time Chart

#### Time

0100 = 1:00am	1300 = 1:00pm
0200 = 2:00am	1400 = 2:00pm
0300 = 3:00am	1500 = 3:00pm
0400 = 4:00am	1600 = 4:00pm
0500 = 5:00am	1700 = 5:00pm
0600 = 6:00am	1800 = 6:00pm
0700 = 7:00am	1900 = 7:00pm
0800 = 8:00am	2000 = 8:00pm
0900 = 9:00am	2100 = 9:00pm
1000 = 10:00am	2200 = 10:00pm
1100 = 11:00am	2300 = 11:00pm
1200 = 12:00pm (noon)	2400/0000 = 12:00am (midnight)

### Temperatures

#### Fahrenheit/ Celsius

Celsius to Fahrenheit:  $(C \times 9) / 5 + 32$

Fahrenheit to Celsius:  $((F-32) \times 5)/9$

32°F = 0°C

50°F = 10°C

68°F = 20°C

77°F = 25°C

86°F = 30°C

95°F = 35°C

### Other Measurements:

1 (lb) = 0.45 (kg)	(lb)-pound
2.2 (lb) = 1 (kg)	(kg)-kilogram
1 (oz) = 28.3 (g)	(oz)-ounce
1 US (pt) = 0.47 (l)	(g)-gram
1 UK (pt) = 0.57 (l)	UK (pt)-UK pint
1 (in) = 2.54 (cm)	US (pt)-US pint
10 (in) = 25.4 (cm)	(l)-liter
1 (ft) = 30.5 (cm)	(in)-inch
3.3 (ft) = 1 (m)	(cm)-centimeter
1 (mi) = 1.6093 (km)	(ft)-foot
100 (mi) = 160.93 (km)	(m)-meter
2.5 acres = 1 hectare	(mi)-mile
100 acres = 40 hectares	(km)-kilometer

### Roman numerals:

1 = I	100 = C
5 = V	500 = D
10 = X	1000 = M
50 = L	

**Examples:** 4= IV, 6=VI, 9=IX,  
80=LXXX, 90=XC

## CUSTOMS & BORDER CROSSINGS

### Border Crossings

Before leaving home, check your itinerary carefully and ask your local consulates about visa and passport entry requirements for the countries you are visiting. You are responsible for obtaining and paying for all visas and



entry documents. Requirements will vary based on passport place of issue. In the country portion of this *Know Before You Go* document you will find visa requirements for U.S. and/or Canadian citizens.

Entry documents and passports will be required at all border crossings, so please carry proper identification on you at all times (not in your luggage). Generally, crossing borders while on tour is straightforward, and the process of going through immigrations and customs is facilitated by your Tour Director. You must be prepared to open your luggage for inspection at any time, even though border crossing and customs formalities are not generally a problem.

Standard questions may be asked of you by a border guard, especially when arriving by airplane, such as “where are you from,” “where are you going,” “how long will you be there,” or “what is the purpose of your trip.” Answer honestly, directly, and politely. Though making jokes and wise-cracking may ease your apprehension, it can be seen as rude in other countries and may bring you under more scrutiny than necessary and cause delay. Turn off cell phones and other portable devices while passing through customs and remove sunglasses and hats. Be sure to declare any items you have purchased.

### Returning Home

Most items you purchase internationally are suitable for bringing back home. However, we recommend you check with the embassies of the countries you are visiting for items that you can and cannot bring in or out. For more information, visit the U.S. Department of State at:

<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go/customs.html>.

If you are taking laptops, cameras, or other electrical equipment with you that has been purchased within six months of your departure, you may be required to register these with your local customs authority in order not to be charged duty on these items when you bring them back to your country. For information on how to register these items before leaving, visit <http://www.cbp.gov/travel/clearing-cbp/certificate-registration>.

**United States:** When you return to the United States, you should be prepared to declare everything you purchased or acquired while traveling. You will be asked to complete a Customs and Border Protection Form, which will require a description and a value of the item(s). To assist with this process, we recommend you keep any sales receipts for items purchased and pack things you are declaring in a place that is easily accessible. These forms are usually handed out during your flight home so you can prepare them in advance of landing. You will need your flight number as well as itinerary information when completing this form.

Returning U.S. residents are granted a tax exemption on articles totaling US\$800 or less in retail value if they accompany you, are for your own use, and are declared. The US\$800 exemption may not be claimed if you have used the exemption, or any part of it, within the preceding 30-day period, but a US\$200 exemption may apply. The exemption is not cumulative. No more than 200 cigarettes (one carton) and 100 cigars (of non-Cuban origin) may be included in your exemption. One liter (33.8 fl. oz.) of alcoholic beverages is allowed duty-free for those over 21 years of age, if it is not in violation of the laws of the state in which you arrive. Customs regulations permit U.S. residents traveling abroad to send home one gift each day (except tobacco, perfume, and liquor worth more than \$5) not exceeding a value of US\$100 per day. The package must be clearly marked “Unsolicited Gift Enclosed,” and the value must be clearly indicated on the outside. Gifts mailed home in this way need not be included in your customs declaration.

The above information is a general guideline to U.S. customs regulations and can change. For up-to-date information, contact U.S. Customs & Border Protection or visit <http://www.cbp.gov>. Click “travel,” then click “Know Before You Go.”

## DIET REQUIREMENTS

We know that some travelers may have specific dietary requests. Unfortunately, dietary requirements cannot be guaranteed on our vacations. We make our best effort to accommodate your requests, but not all hotels and restaurants are able to manage specific diet requirements. Please discuss any dietary requirements you may have with your Tour Director on the first day of your tour. Please see the Meals & Beverages section for more information on included meals and menus while on vacation.

## FERRIES AND CRUISES

Many trips in South America include travel on catamarans, ferries, or boats. This is a wonderful way to enjoy the scenic coastline and offer a relaxing break from the motorcoach. Many ferries do not have specific seating classes. For some Small Ship Cruises on specific itineraries, cabins are selected at the time of booking. More information about ships offered on Cosmos, please visit our web site at <http://www.cosmos.com/Ships/>



## GRATUITIES & TIPPING

Tipping is a personal way to show your satisfaction for good service and is a general practice on all vacations. It is recommended that tips be paid in cash —unless when paying by credit card there is a specific gratuity line added to a restaurant bill. *General* tipping guidelines can be found below. Each country in Europe and Africa has different customs regarding tipping and guidelines can be found in each country-specific guide.



With Cosmos, all your hotel taxes, service charges, tips for luggage handling, tips for hotel maids, and gratuities for included meals are included in the vacation price.

For services with gratuity not included in the vacation price, we recommend the following as general tipping guidelines. More information can be found in the country-specific sections of the *Know Before You Go* document and in your Important Travel Documents, which will be available 2-3 weeks prior to your vacation. Since each country is unique, the below are merely guidelines to assist with budgeting:

### Hotel Services

It is customary to tip hotel staff for room service delivery if the charge has not already been added to the bill. If ice machines are not available and you get ice from the bar, a small tip to the bartender is always appreciated. Cosmos includes gratuities for luggage handling for one bag per person as well as gratuities for included hotel meals.

### Local Guides

Traveling with us means you get specialized sightseeing with Local Guides in each major city. To make each location come alive throughout your vacation, these Local Guides share their vast knowledge about culture and history with you. Gratuities for your Local Guides are not included in the vacation price. For a good job, we suggest the equivalent of 3-5 dollars in the local currency per sightseeing outing per person for the Local Guides. Your Important Travel Documents may have an alternate amount for your vacation, so the above is a general guideline.

### Restaurants

For restaurant meals not included in the Cosmos itinerary, when the service charge is already included, round up the check/bill by the equivalent of a few dollars to show appreciation to your wait staff. Otherwise, 10-15% is a reasonable amount for restaurant service gratuity, depending on customer satisfaction and the quality of service. Tips in restaurants are usually left in cash and not added to the credit card payment unless there is a specific line for it on the credit card signature receipt. Your travel documents and Tour Director will be able to give you other guidelines for tipping in the countries you are visiting.

### Taxis

Usually rounding up the fare for gratuity for the driver is more than adequate in most countries. A few dollars is usually reasonable for service, equal to 10% of the fare. If possible, we recommend you pre-negotiate taxi fares in foreign countries to avoid unpleasant surprises at the end of your journey. Ask hotel staff or airport security for the best cab companies and make sure pricing is either clearly indicated prior to departure or pre-negotiated.

### Tour Directors

Gratuities for your Tour Director are not included in the vacation price. For a good job we suggest the equivalent of 4-6 dollars in local currency per day per person for your Tour Director, which can be handed to him or her at the end of your vacation. An envelope will be provided in your travel documents for you to deposit any gratuities you would like to provide your Tour Director.

## Tour Driver

Gratuities for your driver are not included in the vacation price. For a good job we suggest the equivalent of 4-6 dollars in the local currency per day per person for your driver. Providing tips to your driver each day may not be necessary. Your Tour Director will let you know when a driver's services have ended, so you know the appropriate time to provide a tip.

## Ship's Crew

Gratuities for ship crew on Cosmos itineraries are not included in the price. If gratuities are not included in the vacation price, we will include a suggested amount in your detailed vacation documents. Typically there is a per person per day amount ranging from \$12-\$16 for the ship's crew. This will be pooled and distributed fairly among those who have been of service to you, including the personnel who work behind the scenes and whose service is equally indispensable to your enjoyment of the cruise.

In all instances, we recommend that you carry some small change with you, as it is unusual to ask for change when you are tipping.

## HOTELS



### Amenities

One of the many interesting aspects of your vacation is the variety of hotel accommodations you will enjoy. Our hotel ratings follow standards set by the independent Hotel & Travel Index and by national tourist boards. The specific rating for each hotel is determined by our quality controllers.

Sometimes we must substitute hotels listed in the itinerary. Rest assured, your hotel will be of equivalent standards or better than the original hotel. With your travel documents you will receive a list of hotel addresses, telephone numbers, and fax numbers for your vacation.

At our chosen hotels, you'll always feel well looked after because we know that relaxing in comfortable, clean, attractive accommodations at the end of a busy day of sightseeing is essential. The hotels we carefully select have mastered the fine art of handling group check-ins and luggage, and of balancing efficiency with the individual attention you deserve.

Cosmos hotels are always located in good neighborhoods, some more central and others in residential areas. Especially in large cities, we sometimes prefer good hotels in residential areas on the outskirts to less desirable or overpriced downtown hotels. Hotels are mainly superior tourist-class (ST) and tourist-class (T) establishments, but we also feature some first-class (F) hotels

### Check-in

If your flight arrives in the morning at the city where your vacation starts, you may arrive at your hotel before noon. Official check-in and check-out times vary from hotel to hotel, so it could be mid-afternoon before the staff has your room ready. We do our best to prevent this from happening, but check-in times cannot be guaranteed. Some people use the time to explore the neighborhood and maybe shop or sightsee. Others relax in the hotel lobby. If your room is not available when you arrive, you may leave your luggage with the hotel staff, who will store it for you until your room is ready. This storage is usually free of charge.

When checking into your first hotel, you simply need to check in at the main counter under your name. The staff will assist you from there. They will know you are traveling with a Cosmos tour and have your reservation available.

After checking in, or in the event you arrive before your room is available, you will want to see if your Tour Director has posted information in the lobby on the Cosmos Notice Board. Should you have any problems, reception staff usually can assist you in contacting your Tour Director or locating the Notice Board.

At other hotels throughout your vacation, your Tour Director will assist you with check-in and advise you of the procedure and expectations prior to arrival. Often (but not always), when arriving at the hotel, you will have the opportunity to unwind in the hotel lounge or lobby while the Tour Director checks you in, secures your keys, and handles luggage delivery to your room. We take the worry out of this process for you.

## Check-Out

During your vacation, we suggest you pack your luggage and check your hotel room the night before each departure. Leave out only those items needed in the morning, so you start the day in a comfortable and relaxed manner, and the possibility of forgetting items is reduced. In the morning, make a last-minute check of safety boxes, wardrobes, tables, and drawers. Settle any incidental expenses (minibar, telephone, or restaurant bills) at Reception and return your room key. Your Tour Director will advise the time to leave your luggage outside your room so hotel porters can carry it to the motorcoach for you. There is dedicated space in your Travel Documents to write down luggage timing.

Normal check-out times vary, but are usually between 9:00 a.m. and noon. If you have a late-afternoon or evening flight, most hotels have luggage rooms where you can store your luggage.

## Conservation

In many Central & South American hotels, key cards operate room lighting, air conditioning/heat, elevators, and stairwell entrance. The card may require insertion into a special slot or box located immediately upon entrance to the room by the bedroom door for lighting and air conditioning/heat to function. When leaving the room, remove the card and lighting and air conditioning/heat are conserved per the hotel's guidelines. In some hotels, corridor and bathroom lighting may be automatic, which turn on and off by your entering and exiting the room. Liquid soap dispensers are often fitted in bathrooms and/or showers containing shampoo and body gel. You can assist hotels by putting dirty towels on the floor for washing and leaving clean ones on towel racks, minimizing lighting use, and throwing away paper and plastic bottles in recycling bins if available.

## Electricity

For safety reasons, most hotels have very sensitive triggers to electrical surges, so try to minimize the number of items you plug in at one time, as even basic items could overload the system and cause a black-out to your room or floor. Bathroom sockets are usually for razors only and do not carry enough voltage to charge or operate other items. In South America, most voltage is 220-240 whereas the common voltage in the United States & Central America is 110. Therefore, you will want to bring a converter with you to prevent burning out your personal items or tripping the circuit. A converter is an electronic device designed to reduce 220 volts to 110 volts for small electrical items (hair dryers, irons, etc.). You will also need an adapter, a small item in which you plug your American plug to fit into a foreign outlet. You will need to switch your adapter when changing countries (electrical outlets vary throughout Central & South America). See the individual country information for specific electrical guidelines. Adapter and/or converter kits that include a range of plugs can be purchased at better electrical supply stores. Kits can also be found at most K-Mart, Radio Shack, Target, and Wal-Mart stores.



## Room Amenities

In bathrooms and bedrooms, furniture may not be the same as found back home. Rooms may be slightly smaller than you are used to, and minibar items and access to pay-TV channels are at your expense. Refrigerators may be on an automatic charge system based on sensors that know when items have been removed (so be careful when even looking through the items), and queen-size beds are rare. Double beds (also known as a "full" bed) are more common. In addition, in-room ironing boards and irons are often not available in hotel bedrooms nor are tea or coffee machines. You may inquire with the hotel reception about these items. Most hotels provide hair dryers either in the room or by calling reception and asking for one to be delivered when you need it.

## Room Location

Hotel room location (such as near the elevator or on the third floor) may be requested but are not guaranteed. Adjoining rooms are not as common in Central & South America and may be across the hall rather than connected. Even side by side, they may not be connected by an entry door. Adjoining rooms can be requested but are not guaranteed.

## Single and Triple Rooms

In Central & South American hotels, single rooms are usually the same size as double rooms, and they have all the advantages of privacy. Triple rooms are usually no larger than twin or double rooms. The additional bed is often a rollaway bed put in for the night.

## INSURANCE / TRAVEL PROTECTION

If you have not yet taken out Travel Protection, please contact us or your travel agent to inquire about Travel Protection before your trip. Foreign doctors and hospitals often require payment in cash prior to providing services, and medical evacuation can be exceptionally expensive. Damage or loss of baggage can occur while traveling. Cosmos has no responsibility or acceptance for damage, loss, or delay to personal belongings or baggage. For these reasons, Travel Protection and baggage insurance are highly recommended. Cosmos has Travel Protection you may purchase prior to your vacation. It includes a “cancel for any reason” policy, which will give you peace of mind. For more information on Cosmos’ Travel Protection plan, please visit our Website at [Cosmos.com/Trust](https://www.cosmos.com/trust).

## LOCAL GUIDES

Cosmos uses professional Local Guides in specific cities and at specific sites to conduct sightseeing. These guides share their extensive and specialized knowledge with our passengers, discussing the aspects of a city or site that make it worth visiting. All our Local Guides speak English and are some of the top guides in the industry.

## LUGGAGE

### Luggage Allowance

Cosmos invites each traveling member to bring one suitcase and one carry-on bag. Due to limited capacity for luggage storage on motorcoaches, Cosmos does not accept more than one suitcase per person, in order to avoid motorcoach weight issues and in order to avoid additional charges for excessive luggage.

Our luggage allowance and/or weight and size regulations may be different from airline requirements. We recommend you check with your airlines directly on luggage restrictions to avoid any additional or excess luggage fees.

Some Cosmos vacations will have restrictions on the type, size, or weight of luggage that is allowed. Your Important Travel Documents will have specific luggage information and restrictions for your vacation.

Make sure when checking luggage on planes that you leave it unlocked, or locked with a TSA-approved lock. Checked bags are often screened on flights and any locks will be cut off for inspections

### Luggage Porterage / Luggage Service

Hotel portering (luggage or baggage service) for one suitcase per person is included in the vacation price. This includes transferring your luggage from the hotel lobby to and from your hotel room at time of check-in and check-out at each hotel throughout your vacation. You will be asked prior to loading luggage onto the motorcoach, and at time of removing luggage from the motorcoach, to identify your luggage and confirm all pieces for your traveling party are accounted for. The hotel porter or tour driver will then load your luggage onto the motorcoach or transport your luggage to your room. Airport and/or train station luggage services are not included unless otherwise specified in your travel documents. Please be prepared to carry your own luggage on and off airplanes and trains and through airports and train stations. For this reason, we recommend luggage be light enough for you to carry short distances.

### Hand Luggage

Carry-on bags should be small, easy to carry and compact enough for carry-on use while touring. Generally, wheeled carry-on bags that may be suitable for air travel are not suitable as hand luggage on motorcoaches and mini-buses, since wheels can cause the luggage to move dangerously when stored under seats or in overhead bins. It is unsafe to store luggage in the aisles or to have it protrude into your legroom or the person’s next to you while traveling. Therefore, carry-on bags that do not fit in the overhead bins or fully under the seat in front of you may need to be stored in the luggage compartments under the motorcoach for the safety of all passengers.

We recommend your hand luggage have a place for a water bottle and zipper pouches for easy storage. Bags that can be carried in front of you, and not on your back, are better options for traveling and are less likely to be susceptible to a pesky pick-pocket.



## Lost Luggage

Should your luggage be delayed en route by your airline, please note that it is the responsibility of the airline to ensure that it is delivered to you while traveling. Claims for reimbursement for delayed luggage should be addressed to the airline company directly. To assist in this process, fill out a claim form at the appropriate airline desk upon arrival and provide the carrier with a copy of your hotel list, so delayed luggage may be forwarded correctly. Please complete any lost luggage forms and submit to your airline before exiting customs. Your travel protection/insurance provider may also be able to assist, but for security and privacy reasons, timings and method of luggage retrieval are solely in the hands of the airline involved. Your Tour Director may be able to provide assistance contacting the airlines later for information regarding your delayed luggage during your trip, but they cannot submit the initial claim for you.

## Luggage Size and Weight

Cosmos, and most airlines, restrict luggage to 62 linear inches, which is measured as length + width + height. We request you keep your suitcase to a maximum of 50 lbs for travel, unless otherwise noted in your travel documents. Test the weight of your packed suitcase. You should be able to lift and comfortably transport it for short distances. Drivers and hotel porters will be lifting and transporting your luggage during your vacation; on their behalf, we urge you to please keep the size and the weight within the above limits. For safety reasons, hotel porters may refuse to carry very heavy luggage.

We supply a luggage tag for you to fill out and attach to your luggage. We recommend you use these tags, as opposed to using your own tags, as it serves as an identifier throughout your vacation. In addition to your luggage tag, we recommend you put a label with your name, address, and telephone number on the inside of your suitcase and carry-on luggage, as well. In the event your luggage is lost in transit, your contact information will still be available for airline staff. For security reasons, keep all unchecked luggage in your immediate possession. Luggage left unattended can be confiscated.

**Important:** International air carriers are becoming stricter about the size and weight of luggage. Please contact your air carrier or travel consultant for details prior to departure, as size and weight limitations vary from airline to airline and even according to destination, and may also be different from the limitations on your tour (for instance, most airlines allow two pieces of luggage when traveling internationally, whereas on Cosmos tours we have a restriction of one per person). We recommend <http://www.iflybags.com> to review airline luggage restrictions and fees for checked and overweight luggage. We are not responsible for additional bags, luggage weight, or luggage handling fees imposed by air carriers.

## MEALS & BEVERAGES

Included meals are noted on each itinerary at the end of each day. We plan included meals to provide you the best possible enjoyment while on tour. Please check your itinerary for what meals are included on your tour.

### Beverages

Coffee and tea are usually included with meals on Cosmos itineraries. However, other beverages are not. You may order alternate drinks, including bottled water, sodas and alcohol beverages with any meal, and will be asked to pay for them upon completion of the meal. Your Tour Director will advise if payment will be required in cash or if credit cards are acceptable. Hotel rooms are usually equipped with a minibar stocked with ice, soft drinks, and other beverages, but we recommend you check the prices before consuming, as they can be quite expensive. Many hotels also require a refundable deposit for the minibar key.

### Breakfast

Breakfast is included with our itineraries to start your day off right. Each hotel provides a buffet of standard breakfast items. Breakfast items may include whole-grain bread, croissants, cereals, eggs, sausage, bacon, fruit salad, yogurt, sweet rolls, cheese, and cold cuts.

Unlike included breakfasts at hotels in North America, it is not customary to remove food from the restaurant. In many instances, you will be asked to pay for any food removed from the restaurant.



## Lunches

Lunches are generally not included in the daily itinerary. Some people prefer to grab a quick bite and continue to explore the area, while others may want to try a local restaurant, bar, or pub. Your Tour Director will be able to provide you information on local restaurants to consider for dining on your own. Included lunches will have a set menu to choose from and will include tea or coffee.

## Dinners

Most Central & South American countries tend to have dining hours later than what you may be accustomed to in the United States. Most dinners are scheduled between 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. Included Cosmos dinners consist of three courses (mostly local dishes where appropriate), iced water, and tea or coffee after the meal. Other beverages cost extra and you will be asked to pay for them at the end of the meal. Some hotels and restaurants may be able to provide for a special diet, such as vegetarian or salt-free, but this cannot be guaranteed. When special diets can be accommodated on tour, it tends to be repetitive and usually costs extra. Please advise your Tour Director at the beginning of the tour of any food allergies or special requests.

## Tap Water

Water at major hotels and restaurants in Central & South America has been purified and is safe to drink. Tap water, however, is not recommended for drinking. We recommend you purchase bottled water to bring with you. Bottled water is also common in restaurants.

## MEDICATIONS

We recommend you pack an ample supply of any medications you may require while traveling and include copies of your prescriptions and the telephone/fax number of your doctor in case you need them during your travels. Because of strict drug and medication laws in some countries, drugs or medications you take on doctor's orders should be carried in their original container showing the prescription label. As long as this conforms to airline regulations, keep medicines safely in your carry-on luggage, as your checked luggage may not be easily accessible while traveling and to avoid additional problems should your luggage get lost, damaged, or delayed.

Here are some additional items you may want to pack for your travels:

- An extra pair of eye-glasses and/or a copy of your prescription.
- Eye drops if you are traveling in a dry climate and for use while on airplanes. Cabin air can dry out your eyes.
- Spare batteries for hearing aids. It may be time consuming and difficult to find new batteries in European countries.

## Vaccinations

Please contact your doctor or healthcare provider before traveling to determine which vaccinations are recommended for your travels. Most countries where we travel do not require any special vaccinations. However, requirements can change at any time. Your healthcare provider can best guide you in vaccinations for you based on your itinerary. If you would like to research health and safety topics for your travel, we recommend the Center for Disease Control and Prevention web site: <http://www.cdc.gov>.

## MONEY MATTERS



On vacation you will need spending money for meals, beverages, entrance fees or gratuities not already included, additional activities and excursions, shopping, and incidental expenses. We suggest that you take more money than you think you'll need. It is time consuming and sometimes difficult to obtain additional money from home when you are traveling in Central & South America.

For initial convenience, we recommend you bring approximately \$100 cash with you from home in US dollars. You can exchange this money at the airport or your hotel should you need local currency before you get to an ATM. Be aware, however, that exchanging money at the airport incurs high change fees, and hotels usually do not have competitive exchange rates, but for convenience they are good options. ATMS are probably the best and most cost-effective means of money withdrawal while traveling. Most airports have an ATM machine in the customs arrival hall or airport arrival terminal. Fees for cash withdrawal, just like in North America, vary by ATM

and will be advised prior to cash dispensing. Your debit card usually will work in ATM machines worldwide, but you should check with your bank for verification. As not all ATMs take debit cards. ATMs at almost all locations will have an English button so you can be sure of your transaction.

While traveling, your Tour Director will be able to assist you in locating ATMs when you need it.

You might also consider purchasing local currency of the countries you are visiting before you leave on your vacation. This is available at major banks and international airports. The exchange rate may not be advantageous, but the convenience and peace of mind may be worth the small extra cost. The country sections of this *Know Before You Go* guide will tell you about each country's currency and any details about accepting various currencies, money exchange and costs for standard items for your budgeting.

### **ATM Machines**

ATMs connected to bank networks, such as PLUS or Cirrus, are available in most major metropolitan cities, including airports, city centers, and in some hotels. ATMs will be similar to those in North America and most will offer English as a language option. The PLUS and Cirrus logos are now displayed at many ATM locations worldwide. Your bank can tell you which network your ATM card can access and whether a credit or debit card may be used. Be sure to activate your ATM and/or credit card before traveling, and don't forget to bring your PIN code to facilitate use. There are usually fees associated with money withdrawals; these fees vary from location to location.

### **Credit Cards**

It is recommended to notify your bank or credit card company prior to your departure with information on your travels. The number to call for this notification can be found on the back of your credit card. We recommend you contact them with your travel information because more and more credit card companies are denying payment for overseas purchases unless they know you are traveling. In addition, we recommend you bring an overseas contact number for your bank or credit card company in case you require any assistance while traveling.

While major credit cards are generally accepted by shops and hotels throughout the world, you may encounter stores or restaurants that require a minimum charge for using them. Be sure to take more than one credit card, as some outlets may not accept all cards. Check that your credit cards are valid for at least 30 days after completion of the vacation. As credit card fraud is increasing worldwide, it is becoming more and more common for identification to be requested when making payment by credit card. Therefore, be sure to have your passport with you or a photocopy of your passport or driver's license/birth certificate in case identification is requested. Shops, restaurants, and bars in some small villages may not accept credit cards at all. Therefore, it is wise to always carry some cash.

When making credit card purchases abroad, you will be charged in local currency by the vendor. Your credit card company will convert the charges based on the exchange rate they implement and may charge a fee for doing such. Visa, MasterCard, or American Express are usually your best options while traveling, as these will be accepted at most shops, stores, and restaurants. The Discover Card and Diner card are not accepted in many Central & South American cities and are not recommended as means of payment for traveling in Central & South America.

More information on credit card usage may be found in the country information in this guide.

### **Exchange Rates**

Currency Exchange rates vary by currency and change daily. You may find up-to-date exchange rates at [Cosmos.com/currency](http://Cosmos.com/currency). If you are traveling with a laptop or other mobile device, you can also download exchange rates from the Internet, which will continually update you with information during your travels.

### **General Budgeting**

"How much money should I bring?" is a common question. The answer is difficult, as each person is different and chooses to spend money on different things. The amount will vary, depending on if you are a "grab a sandwich and soda and walk the city" type of person, or a "sit down and enjoy a good meal" type of person. How much do you like to spend on gifts and mementos for yourself or others? All these things can alter the amount of money you should bring with you while traveling.

As a general guideline, we recommend 5-15 Dollars per day while traveling in Central & South America. This is the guideline for incidental items such as bottled water, postcards, and a cup of coffee. More will be required for any major gifts you wish to purchase.

### Travelers checks

Although a secure means of carrying money, please be forewarned that travelers checks are rarely accepted, and you will experience difficulties cashing them, even in banks. If you do bring travelers checks, follow the advice of the company issuing them. Keep your receipts and the list of checks already used in a place separate from the checks themselves. Never countersign a travelers check until the moment you use it. Banks cashing travelers checks, if they do so, will charge a processing fee. Be aware that travelers' checks in Euro are practically impossible to exchange. A fixed-rate service charge is usually levied if you can exchange them.

## MOTORCOACHES



On most Cosmos tours, the transportation between cities is by private motorcoach. The length and width of modern motorcoaches is standard, prescribed by law. All our coaches have panoramic windows, air conditioning, state-of-the-art sound systems and reclining seats.

Distances between cities and destinations will vary based on your itinerary. On some days, the time on the motorcoach will be short (30 minutes to 2 hours). Other days may be longer (up to 6 hours). For longer days, we make your ride comfortable by stopping every 2-3 hours for bathroom breaks, stretching, and/or lunch stops. Commentary is provided along the way, with your Tour Director pointing out points of interest.

### Emergency Washrooms

Motorcoaches in Central & South America are equipped with an emergency washroom (in most major cities). We deliberately use the term "emergency washroom," because this facility is not meant to be used regularly in lieu of the restrooms at our frequent comfort stops. The emergency washrooms are small, tight and in some motorcoaches at the bottom of the coach stairs. They are not easy to maneuver in and out of and for that reason we recommend it only for emergency use.

For transfers and sightseeing in Cusco, this amenity is not available due to size of coaches allowed in this ancient city.

### Etiquette on the Motorcoach

- Everyone wants to make the most of the time available and to see as much as possible while on vacation. Here are a few guidelines to ensure you and your traveling companions have the best experience possible.
- Be on time—all the time. Your Tour Director will let you know at each stop how much time you have and when the group will be leaving. Please be on time.
- Your Tour Director will review with you a daily seat rotation schedule, which will allow all passengers to be in different seats throughout the vacation. We ask that you respect the daily seat rotation so everyone can enjoy the views.
- Avoid conversation while commentary is in process. This ensures everyone can hear what is being said.
- When reclining seats, please be conscious of the person behind you and recline slowly.
- When bringing on extra parcels, please place them in the overhead bins or under your seats. Items should never be left in the aisles or clutter the legroom areas.
- Please refrain from using a cell phone on the motorcoach, except in emergencies.
- Heavy perfume or strong aftershave can inconvenience other passengers; please use sparingly.
- To avoid food odors and to keep the motorcoach as clean as possible, bring only dry foods and water on board, not perishable foods. Sodas, ice cream, alcohol, and hot drinks to-go should be consumed before re-boarding (strong -smelling items, such as peanuts or oranges, can cause allergic reactions in others).
- The motorcoach restroom should be reserved for true emergencies and should not be used in lieu of the restrooms at comfort stops.

- It is generally not permitted to operate air -conditioning when the motorcoach is stationary, as doing so emits additional gases into the environment. Therefore, air-conditioning is turned off while the motorcoach is parked.

### Legroom

Cosmos installs fewer seats and limits group size. This lends to extra leg room for you. Our motorcoach leg room compares to the airlines' upgraded "plus" seating. To ensure the most legroom possible, please store all belongings in the overhead bins or in your luggage stored in the motorcoach luggage compartment.

### Regular Stops

Rest stops are often at roadside restaurants for your convenience, as all services are under one roof. This is a practical solution to avoid losing precious sightseeing time traveling between destinations.

### Ride in Comfort

Each Cosmos motorcoach has upholstered, reclining seats with headrests and individual air-conditioning vents. A high-fidelity sound system broadcasts your professional Tour Director's or Local Guide's commentary to every seat, so you will be sure to hear about and enjoy the sights along the way. Our custom of daily seat rotation gives everyone a variety of vantage points to see the passing countryside and city scenes. All Cosmos touring motorcoaches are fully air-conditioned.

### Smoke-Free Coaches

All of our Cosmos motorcoaches are smoke-free. There are plenty of opportunities to smoke during the frequent stops

## NOTICE BOARDS

Throughout your trip, your Tour Director or Local Host will be discussing with you daily plans and activities. He or she may also post a daily schedule for you in the lobby of your hotel. We recommend you check this regularly for any changes or modifications. If you cannot locate the information in the lobby of the hotel, please ask Reception. The notice board will include timings of sightseeing and other important messages.

## OPTIONAL EXCURSIONS

You can enhance your vacation and make it truly special to you by viewing and purchasing additional activities and excursions that are coordinated with your itinerary. Now not to worry! We include the must-see sights and experiences in all our itineraries but we also understand that people take interest in different activities and may want to craft a more personal vacation. We accommodate these wishes by allowing you to hand-pick from our selection of activities and excursions that appeal to you. Whether it's a special dinner, a local show, or a special behind-the-scenes glimpse into an historical sight, additional activities and excursions are a wonderful way to enrich your vacation even further.

In order to assist you in maximizing your free time, each vacation offers several optional highlights that are specifically planned for your vacation at reasonable all-inclusive prices. A listing of excursions available for your tour will be available in your travel documents, which are generally received 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

Cosmos also offers the opportunity for you to review and pre-purchase excursions for your tour in advance of departure. After making your booking, log in to [Cosmos.com/MyCosmos](https://www.cosmos.com/MyCosmos), to see available activities and excursions that were selected especially for your vacation. Once you register, you can purchase available activities and excursions that are of interest to you, hand-crafting your vacations exactly as you desire. Our specially designed system will show you, by city, what is available, with descriptions, pricing, and timings for each excursion. Review at your leisure. Purchase what you want. All that is required to purchase excursions is a valid, open invoice number and your login information.

### Payment for Optional Excursions

Payment for activities and excursions will vary based on the vacation and from where the excursion is purchased. Purchasing excursions and activities at [Cosmos.com/MyCosmos](https://www.cosmos.com/MyCosmos) can only be made by credit card. On tour,

payment can be made by cash, credit card, or travelers checks. Your Tour Director will advise you of any exceptions. We accept Visa and MasterCard. We are unable to accept debit cards of any kind or personal checks as payment on vacation for activities and excursions.

## PACKING

Sometimes luggage is briefly delayed during air transport. Therefore we recommend you take a change of clothing and essential toiletries in your carry-on luggage, or pack some of your clothing in your traveling companion's luggage, so you don't have to wear the clothes you have traveled in until your luggage is delivered. Do not leave essential medication in your checked luggage; always keep it in your carry-on luggage, as long as this conforms to airline regulations. We also recommend placing a copy of the hotel contacts inside each piece of luggage. If your luggage is lost, this will help the airline find you while you're traveling.

Traveling light is recommended. Adopt a simple color coordination plan for your vacation to reduce the quantity of clothing required. For every week of travel, five to seven tops or shirts and three skirts, shorts, or slacks that can be coordinated are enough. Pack jackets and slacks that have plenty of pockets so you can carry documents and money in separate places on you, reducing theft and loss risk. Sportswear is fine during the day (there may be a restriction on shorts and bare shoulders for some religious sights, where men as well as women are required to cover their shoulders and legs or remove their shoes when entering temples and shrines). Wrinkle-resistant, easy-care cotton/polyester clothing is preferable for travel.

**Tip:** Put dryer sheets (fabric softener sheets) in your luggage. Your clothes will smell fresh and clean throughout your travels.

Below is a list of items to consider when packing for your trip.

- Passport, visa(s), Travel Protection/insurance, flight information, and other necessary documents
- ATM/debit/credit cards and their applicable PIN codes. Do not pack your passport or your money in your checked luggage
- Jackets and slacks with plenty of pockets and inner pockets
- Light bag with a strap that can be worn crosswise over your body. Purses/handbags are best avoided unless they can be carried close to your body in front of you
- Sportswear/casual wear for daytime
- Smart casual outfits for evenings
- Shorts, sneakers, or tracksuits are not considered acceptable apparels when dining at your hotel
- Enough underwear/socks to avoid frequent laundry. Pack at least one pair of warm socks even in summer in case of an unusually cold day
- Warm sweater for evenings
- A dressier outfit for an evening at the theater or elegant restaurant
- Comfortable, sturdy, tried-and-tested walking shoes (rubber soles help grip slippery/uneven surfaces)
- Sandals and/or non-slip socks that double as slippers
- Swimwear
- Warm jacket, socks, and cap
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Sun hat
- Insect repellent and balm
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Shampoo and soap (if you prefer to use your own brand)
- Deodorant
- Razor and shaving cream
- Comb, brush, hair ties
- Lady's necessities
- Band aids
- Aspirin/Tylenol/Ibuprofen/cold medicines/Pepto Bismol
- Motion sickness pills
- Chap stick or lip balm
- Antibacterial wipes/small bottle of hand sanitizer gel
- Travel pack of Kleenex

- Medicines (carried in their original container) and copy of prescriptions, telephone/e-mail/fax number of your doctor
- Manicure set and mending kit
- Travel alarm clock (to avoid relying on hotel automatic wake-up calls)
- Mini umbrella or fold-up poncho for the occasional shower
- Glasses, plus extra pair and/or copy of prescription, eye drops for contact lenses
- Spare batteries for hearing aids
- Collapsible walking stick if you have mobility difficulties
- Small travel pillow
- Electrical converter(s)/adapter(s)
- Camera/video equipment with plenty of memory cards/extra film/spare batteries. Label camera/camcorder and film bags with your name and vacation code; should you lose them, there's a better chance of their being returned
- Cellular phone with international calling plan or international phone cards

## PASSPORTS, VISAS AND OTHER ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

A valid passport is required for international travel. There are very few Central & South American countries that require visas for U.S. citizens, however if traveling to a country that does require a visa, ensure you secure the required visas before leaving home.

We know maneuvering through the world of visa applications and requirements can be a confusing one. We can help. Cosmos is pleased to offer its customers the expertise and experience of Generations Visa, with fast and easy ways to obtain visas, passports, and/or other documents required for travel. We recommend contacting Generations Visa Services (GenVisa), our preferred partner for visa and passport services, at least 90 days prior to departure. GenVisa has a special Web site and toll-free number for Cosmos. You can call (800) 845-8968, email at [info@genvisa.com](mailto:info@genvisa.com), or visit their Web site at [www.genvisa.com/Cosmos](http://www.genvisa.com/Cosmos) for additional information. Cosmos travelers receive discounted prices and other special services.

Please check your itinerary carefully and make sure that multi-entry visas have the correct entry dates and destinations before you leave on your vacation. If your nationality (passport) differs from the country in which you reside, you must consult with the appropriate consulates to determine if any visas are needed. GenVisa may be able to assist you with this process.

Please see the country specific guides for visa requirements.

## PHOTOGRAPHY



Taking photographs is no doubt top of your list while on vacation. Capturing those special moments on film and being able to share them with family and friends—and retain them for your memories—is as important to us as it is to you. Throughout your tour, your motorcoach will stop at various photo stops to allow you to see the scenery and capture it on film. Your Tour Director will know the best places to stop and take pictures and will ensure you have the opportunity to do such. If your camera uses film, we recommend you bring extra while on vacation. Film is not always compatible in different countries. The same holds true for digital camera memory cards, so we recommend a few extras just in case you can't help yourself and take more pictures than originally intended.

Photography and video filming may not always be allowed inside churches, museums or shows, or there may be a fee to take pictures or videos. Always ask your Tour Director or Local Guide if it is acceptable to take pictures before pulling out your camera. Please respect the privacy of others, including the Tour Director, Driver, Local Host, Local Guides, ship's crew, and other traveling companions by asking permission before filming or taking their photo.

## PRE-REGISTRATION

Pre-registration for your Cosmos tour is available at [Cosmos.com/MyCosmos](http://Cosmos.com/MyCosmos). Save time upon arrival and complete the registration information online prior to departure. Then you can start enjoying your vacation the moment you arrive rather than completing paperwork. When registering, you will also be asked to provide emergency contact details. The world of travel can bring along unexpected surprises. Having your emergency

contact details and registration details allows us to easily contact you should anything about your vacation experience a change. Rest assured, though, that these details are only used in the event we need to contact you or an emergency contact, or provide your registration details to local agencies for travel purposes.

In addition to pre-registering with Cosmos, we also recommend you enroll in the *Smart Traveler Enrollment Program* (S.T.E.P.) with the United States Government. When you sign up, you will receive the most current travel information and updates for the country(s) where you are traveling. In addition, the S.T.E.P. registration allows the U.S. government to assist U.S. citizens in other emergencies, such as natural disasters. To learn more about this program, please visit the U.S. Department of State Website at [http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration\\_4789.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration_4789.html)

## SAFETY HINTS

### General Hints

- Carry all documents, money, passport, tickets, travelers' checks, driver's license, photocopy of your contact information, cash, and credit cards on your person, but not all in the same place to limit the inconvenience in case of loss.
- Never keep money, jewelry, or medicines in your luggage where you cannot get to them if stored under the motorcoach or checked on airplanes.
- Never leave your carry-on luggage unattended or out of sight in public areas.
- Be observant at all times, especially in crowded places.
- Avoid excessive displays of wealth (only carry sufficient cash for daily needs).
- Be wary of strangers approaching you in the street asking for directions or wanting to lend assistance. Tricksters also pose as policemen—either plainclothes or in uniform. Do not hand over your wallet containing money unless you are sure of the person's credentials.
- Use hotel safes or leave items with the front desk manager. Be sure to check them before checking out of your hotel.
- In Central & South America, please pay particular attention to bicycle lanes, which are often on the sidewalk.
- Be wary of anyone approaching or offering unofficial taxi services. Always use official taxi desk or taxi lines and choose only those vehicles with a meter and taxi sign.

### Hotels

Bathtubs may be higher or of a different design than back home. Pay careful attention when entering or exiting a bathtub as the floor may be lower than the tub, which is different than in America. Ask at Reception if you require a non-slip bathmat which most hotels can deliver to your room. Showers and shower equipment may also be unusual (no shower curtains, half screens), and floors may be more wet than you expect. Please be careful when stepping out of the shower or bathtub.

Check fire exits at each hotel and familiarize yourself with the hotel layout upon arrival. Use door locks in your hotel and verify credentials before opening the door to strangers.

### Motorcoach

Watch stairs and overhead entrances when getting on and off the motorcoach. The doorway may be lower than you think. Always check for traffic when exiting and walking away from the motorcoach and when re-entering. Heavy items, bottles, and odd-sized objects, should not be stored overhead, as contents may shift while traveling and removing heavy items can be tricky. Hand luggage should be placed safely under your seat. Please keep aisles clear of bags to prevent tripping hazards.

### Photocopies

Due to government or country regulations and laws, some hotels are required to keep your passport at reception throughout your stay. Therefore, we recommend you bring a photocopy of your passport and visas with you, which you can carry on you at all times. We also suggest you photocopy your airline tickets, credit cards, medical cards (front and back), and perhaps bring a copy of your driver's license and/or birth certificates. These document copies can help speed up replacements in the event that the originals are lost. Keep the copies in a place separate

from your originals. Another suggestion is to scan your passport, airline tickets, and credit card numbers and send them to yourself as attachments to your e-mail. In case of loss, you can access copies to assist in replacement.

Please remember to fill out the “Emergency Next of Kin” section in your passport. Make sure your passport does not expire within six months of your date of travel, since a majority of countries insist that your passport be valid for at least a 6-month time period.

### **Road Safety**

Please be careful when crossing roads. In Central & South America, motorists drive on the right. Therefore, look left, look right, look left again!

Central & South America is a myriad of old buildings, pathways, and winding streets with split-levels, steps, and uneven surfaces. Due to the structure of some old buildings, wheelchair access may not be possible, and facilities for the disabled in general may be limited. Many areas are pedestrian only, with steep inclines and cobblestones. At times, the motorcoach may not be permitted to drop you off at sightseeing entrances, and thus a small walk to the starting point may be necessary. Rubber-soled walking shoes are recommended for daily sightseeing as they generally provide better traction on uneven or wet surfaces and can prevent slipping.

### **Transportation - Train, Ferry & Air**

Pay attention to onboard attendants and review safety information prior to departure or take-off. Take particular note of the location of emergency exits. Use special care when embarking/disembarking boats, as walkways may be wet or slippery.

## **SIGHTSEEING & TIMINGS**

Local sightseeing is included as per your itinerary description. In each instance this has been arranged in such a way as to show you the most important sights of each destination with the most amount of free time available, dependent on the tour schedule. Sightseeing generally involves walking. If you lead a sedentary life, enjoy walks to improve your physical condition before leaving home. Participation in the included sightseeing tours is not obligatory. It is, however, your responsibility to be back at the motorcoach or hotel in time for departure for the next activity. You will always be clearly informed of the departure time by your Tour Director or Local Host.

Many streets in Central & South America are narrow, and buses may not be allowed to drop travelers off “at the front door.” In these instances we will get as close as we can, but please be prepared to walk.

## **SURVEYS & QUESTIONNAIRES**

We are sincerely interested in your detailed comments about your vacation. We strive to further improve our product in response to such comments. Near the end of your vacation, a Questionnaire & Customer Survey will be distributed to you. Please take a few minutes to complete and return to your Tour Director. Your point of view is essential to us and, by advising us of your travel tastes and interests, you can help us develop trips and customer programs that meet your desires. Responses are not given to service inquiries made on questionnaires. Please refer to the section of the Terms & Conditions on our web site for service inquiries.

### **Compliments and Complaints**

In the unlikely event you have a complaint on tour, please address it with your Tour Director. He or she will work to resolve your complaint while you are on vacation. Once you are back home, you may contact our Traveler Services department with any inquiries. Please do so within 30 days of your return so we may expedite a response. Inquiries longer than 30 days after you return home hinder our ability to settle issues. Traveler Services can be reached at:

Group Voyagers Inc.  
Attention Traveler Services  
5301 South Federal Circle  
Littleton, CO 80123.

## TOUR DIRECTORS

Experienced. Knowledgeable. Friendly. Efficient. These words describe our outstanding group of travel professionals, whose mission is to make your vacation the best ever.

We set very high standards and dedicate a lot of time and effort to selecting just the right Tour Directors for your tour. We eagerly use their first-hand experience to refine our product. Our tours are updated for each new season and, if necessary, even during the season to make your travel more rewarding. Tour Directors have a major say in the process—and you benefit!

Your Tour Director will help you make the most of each day and deliver interesting commentary. We receive numerous letters from our travelers praising their Tour Directors for the skills, energy, and special personalities they bring to the table—testimony that these professionals are the best in the business!

Your Tour Director or a Local Host will be available from the very first day of your tour with information about your daily itineraries and suggestions for your free time on day one. Posted in the lobby of your hotel will be information on meeting times and locations, so you are always informed and prepared.

Tour Directors generally are not available for pre or post night stays prior to or after your vacation.

## TOUR DRIVER

Our Tour Drivers are the finest professionals in the business. Cosmos tour drivers take pride in driving and in their vehicles, keeping them in great working order and spotlessly clean. Your driver will help you on and off the motorcoach and load your luggage with care. Our travelers consistently lavish the highest praise on the person behind the wheel! Cosmos drivers are certified, licensed, and experienced professionals whose expertise is motorcoach handling. They are skilled in maneuvering through the tight allies and highly complex highways systems, getting you to your destination on time and safely. Often the drivers speak English, but in some cities they may not.

## TRAVELERS WHO NEED ASSISTANCE

Any disability requiring special attention should be reported to Cosmos prior to traveling. We will make reasonable attempts to accommodate the special needs of disabled travelers, but may not always be able to do so. Access to some establishments may not be convenient for wheelchairs, and other facilities for disabled travelers may be limited. Most transportation services, including the touring motorcoach, are not equipped with wheelchair ramps. We regret that we cannot provide individual assistance to a vacation participant for walking, dining, getting on and off motorcoaches and other vehicles, or other personal needs. Please do not rely on the Tour Director or Driver to assist with walking or maneuvering through the sites, as he/she has responsibilities to all the travelers within the group. A qualified and physically able companion should always accompany travelers who need such assistance.

Please see the booking Terms & Conditions regarding travelers who need special assistance while on tour.

## WALKING INFORMATION

For maximum enjoyment of your trip, be prepared for daily walking (up to two hours) involving stairs, cobblestones, and uneven surfaces. Historic city centers are usually more accessible by foot than vehicle. Sometimes, it is not possible for your motorcoach to drop you off right at entrances to hotels and sights. Comfortable, sturdy, tried-and-tested walking shoes with rubber soles that help grip slippery/uneven surfaces are recommended for daily sightseeing. You may want to consider bringing a collapsible walking stick if you have mobility difficulties.

## WEATHER

Weather in Central & South America is generally like weather in North America – it varies by region, proximity to water and time of year. Within the country-specific information you will find average temperatures for each country. Central & South America uses the centigrade temperature scale (also known as the Celsius temperature scale). In the Conversion Tables section of this *Know Before You Go* guide you will information on how to convert



Celsius temperatures to Fahrenheit. Rainfall is measured in centimeters (one inch equals 2.54 cm) and wind speed is measured in kilometers per hour (one mile equals 1.62 kilometers.)