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*Table of Contents*

#99  
**Conservation**

<p><b>07</b> LESS PLASTIC, PLEASE!</p>	<p><b>18</b> FIGHTING FOR OUR FUTURE</p>
<p><b>08</b> FOREST FIRES IN CHIQUITANÍA AND THE AFTERMATH</p>	<p><b>21</b> A CALL TO NATURE</p>
<p><b>11</b> WATCHING THE WORLD BREATHE</p>	<p><b>24</b> SAVING BOLIVIA'S BIG CATS</p>
<p><b>14</b> BOLIVIA'S MAGNIFICENT AMAZONIAN NATURE RESERVE</p>	<p><b>28</b> SINGANI CASA REAL RECEIVES A SUPERIOR TASTE AWARD</p>

**BX-99**

**32** RECOMMENDATIONS

**35** GLOSSARY

**38** CULTURAL AGENDA



## Editorial #99: Conservation

By: Caroline Risacher

**O**n 7 October, the Reuters news agency reported that heavy rains helped extinguish fires in the Bolivian Amazon after two months of unrelentless burning. Fires in the Amazon are a yearly recurrence that don't usually cause much concern, but this year they grew out of control: 5.3 million hectares burned this year in Bolivia – 4 million hectares in the Santa Cruz department alone – an area roughly the size of Costa Rica. Reasons for this year's catastrophic fire season include dry atmospheric conditions exacerbated by rising temperatures, policies that encourage farmers and landowners to employ slash-and-burn land-clearing methods, and the lack of regulation and monitoring.

A 2009 report from Oxfam International alerted us that 'Bolivia can expect five main impacts as a result of climate change: less food security; glacial retreat affecting water availability; more frequent and more intense 'natural' disasters; an increase in mosquito-borne diseases; and more forest fires.' Ten years later and that prophecy has come to pass. Glaciers are melting faster than ever, forests the size of small countries are burning, ecosystems are being displaced and whole species are in danger of becoming extinct.

The Amazon fires may have receded, for now. Our indignation will undoubtedly be piqued again when the next climate-change-related tragedy pops in our feed. It is very easy to get distracted and forget what has just happened with all this going on. We feel a sense of helplessness, anger and despair when seeing the news, we look for someone to blame and we replace plastic straws with metal ones. At the 2019 UN General Assembly, Bolivian President Evo Morales blamed capitalism for our sorry state of affairs. 'The underlying problem lies in the model of production and consumerism, in the ownership of natural resources and in the unequal distribution of wealth,' he said. 'Let's say it very clearly: the root of the problem is in the capitalist system.'

As true as this may be, this critique doesn't offer any solutions. Recently, *The New Yorker* published an essay titled 'What If We Stopped Pretending?' 'The climate apocalypse is coming,' it argued. 'To prepare for it, we need to admit that we can't prevent it.' So let's not pretend: It is too late – we will never get back the glaciers that are melting in our lifetimes, and we won't be reviving extinct species any time soon – but we can still do something about it. We may not know how to do it yet, but we can't stop trying.

**N.B.**

Several Spanish and Aymara words are marked in **bold** throughout this issue. Their meanings can be found in our glossary.



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## LESS PLASTIC, PLEASE!

AIMING TO REDUCE SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

TEXT & PHOTO: RENATA LAZCANO SILVA

**T**he plastic bag is ubiquitous in Bolivia and around the world. On average, a plastic bag is used once for no more than 15 minutes before it is thrown away. It then takes at least 150 to 500 years (or more) for that bag to degrade. The United Nations estimates that 10 million plastic bags are used globally every minute. In Bolivia, about 4 billion plastic bags are used each year, without considering other types of single-use plastics. So what are we doing about it?

The Union of Environmental Journalists of Bolivia (Unión de Periodistas Ambientales de Bolivia, or UPAB), a civil association founded in December 2008, has sponsored a bill to reduce and replace plastic bags. The bill's objective is to 'minimise the impact on the environment and ensure the sustainability of the life systems of Mother Earth through the gradual and progressive reduction and replacement of the use and production of plastic bags throughout the national territory.' This bill, which was approved by the Bolivian Senate's Environmental Commission in May 2019, was a collaborative effort that enlisted the input of government ministries, business leaders and other organisations to avoid any obstacles in its implementation after being turned into law.

While waiting for the full legislature to vote on the bill, an environmental education campaign, #DesembolsateBolivia

(#UnbagBolivia), is rolling out across the country to unite schools, universities, businesses, markets, neighbourhoods and other entities under the common objective of raising public awareness about the impact of the use of single-use plastic bags, reducing their use and proposing ecological alternatives to plastic. Education is essential to motivate people to change their habits for more sustainable practices. The campaign has the support of the Bolivian Ministry of Education to involve the country's education system. Furthermore, mass media and social networks are helping this initiative reach the public at large.

'It is important that the country assumes clear environmental strategies,' Carlos Lara, the president of the UPAB, says. 'It has to prioritise the issue of the environment now and in the following years, because the environment is very sick and in serious danger.' All the nations of this earth have to apply policies and regulations to protect the environment and protect their inhabitants, but we here in Bolivia must make our own first steps, change our habits and show by example the message of nature conservation to more people. Let's make a difference, day by day, decision after decision. Our planet is the only home we have. We are now facing the extremely serious global problems of pollution, deforestation and loss of biodiversity, among others. The good news is that we know what needs to be done. Now is the time to act.





# FOREST FIRES IN CHIQUITANÍA AND THE AFTERMATH

A LOOK INTO THE CONSEQUENCES OF EXTREME FOREST FIRES CAUSED BY *CHAQUEOS*

TEXT: SILVIA SACCARDI  
PHOTOS: COURTESY OF INTI WARÁ YASSI



**B**olivia has this year witnessed an astonishing number of forest fires, with over four million hectares of woodland having been burnt across the country, 2.9 million of which were concentrated in the Chiquitanía region. Starting in May and escalating at an alarming rate from the beginning of August, the fires in Chiquitanía have ceased for the time being, owing to torrential rain. Despite the welcome downpours, one thing they cannot do is wash away the impact of deforestation on the rapidly expanding agribusiness in eastern Bolivia.

Various volunteer organisations offered to help bring the fires under control, thereby providing a short-term solution to this human-made disaster. One such example is a student-run volunteer firefighter group called 'Los Mirmidones.' Mainly comprised of biology students from Universidad Mayor de San Andrés in La Paz, the group set about tackling the fires first-hand, with few resources at their disposal. At an event that sought to recruit new volunteers, the students were made fully aware of the potential risks involved, and it was made clear that individuals had previously lost their lives, highlighting the very real dangers of the situation. Most, however, returned with a sense of pride in the knowledge that they had fought for the rights of **Pachamama**.

When asked what *Pachamama* means to him, Bruno Parada, a student from the Biology faculty and volunteer in the Bolognia forest, said, '*Pachamama* is Mother Earth, the creator of life. It's a way of conserving nature and culture.' He goes on to say that this is a belief shared among many Bolivians, but that attitudes can vary across urban and rural areas. 'Bolivia lacks environmental awareness. It's a topic that is not very well known or understood. People are more interested in other things. They don't really understand what it means to look after trees or wildlife or why you shouldn't hunt animals, because they don't understand how they could be affected. In urban areas, there is a greater awareness, but that's because there is more information available.'

That sentiment is shared by Milli Spence, Director of Communications for the Bolivian organisation Inti Wará Yassi, which has three wildlife sanctuaries across Bolivia. 'There's still a huge amount of education that still needs to happen, not just in Bolivia but around the world, but it takes a long time. When there is a multitude of other issues going on, environmental concerns can fall down on the list, even though they should be given a lot more priority, when other needs aren't being met or there are other issues going on in society.'

One of the organisation's wildlife sanctuaries, Ambue Ari, located in Santa Cruz department, was one of the many areas affected by this year's fires, causing thousands of animal and plant species to be lost. The park was affected by several fires in mid-September, resulting in a 10-day stint to combat them. Staff and volunteers were pushed to their limits, taking it in turns to stay up during the night and keep a watchful eye on burning logs for fear of the fire spreading. 'One particular member of staff was out there for two and a half days straight. I could not believe his stamina, and we reached a point where everyone was so physically drained that we desperately needed sleep to regain energy to then continue fighting.' Workers at the park teamed up with firefighters from the local municipality and volunteers from Cochabamba and the neighbouring town of San Pedro to combat the ferocious flames. Spence confirmed that Ambue Ari used to be connected to the surrounding forest, but the park now resembles an island of protected species, gradually

decreasing in size. The fires are almost always caused by unmonitored *chaqueos* spiralling out of control, having been started by neighbouring landowners seeking to clear their land. While it cannot be denied that *chaqueo* is an efficient means of clearing land, much more needs to be done to control how and when it is carried out. Spence says, 'Ideally, people would refrain from burning land when it's 38 degrees Celsius and there are 20 kilometre per hour winds, or even when there are lower wind speeds but very high temperatures. If the conditions weren't so severe, the fires could be controlled more easily. But if you light a match on exceptionally dry land on a hot day with high wind speeds, it's going to burn very quickly.' She adds, 'At the moment it's being allowed, and there are no real restrictions as to how and when or if every farm wants to burn on exactly the same day there is no rule saying you can't or you need to coordinate. Having more guidance, more awareness and more education about when you should and shouldn't be burning should help reduce the risk.'

*Chaqueo* is a technique that has been used for centuries by farmers across the world. It is naturally carbon-neutral when used in moderation. But international influence, the increased pressures of fast-paced production and the adoption of a new law allowing slash-and-burn practices have all contributed to the method being overused. Sadly, Bolivia's deforestation rate more than doubled between 2002-2017. Despite the country tackling illegal deforestation, the legalisation of slash-and-burn agriculture has meant that the overall rate of deforestation continues to rise.

The biggest driver of deforestation in Bolivia is agribusiness, particularly the development of soya and sugar cane plantations. Between 40 and 50 percent of Bolivian forests are owned by foreign powers, who burn large areas of land in the production of biofuels. Pablo Solón, Executive Director of Fundación Solón, comments that there are currently three main drivers behind the use of *chaqueo*: the increased development of biofuels, Bolivia's desire to export meat to China and legislation that facilitates the burning of forestland. For example, if a company illegally burns one hectare of land, it must pay a fine of US\$46, which is negligible enough to incentivise investment in the Bolivian dry forests. According to Solón, 'Chaqueo is not traditionally practiced until the arrival of the rainy season.' But now, forests are being burnt on a mass scale during the dry season, which some are calling 'el mal-*chaqueo*'.

Measures have been put in place to control the fires, and parks such as



Ambue Ari are becoming better equipped to tackle the flames thanks to donations of equipment, improved fire training and the development of water systems to make it easier to extinguish the fires. One of the most effective ways of combating the fires is to improve communication among local farmers, making it easier to pre-empt potential fires and thereby manage the risk. Climate change is aggravating the scale of the fires year on year, and if attitudes and methods do not change soon, the incidence of uncontrollable forest fires will continue to rise, ultimately destroying the habitat of species endemic to Bolivia.

Solón believes there are alternatives. 'Bolivia needs to move towards an Amazon free from forest fires. There are other methods we could opt for. Instead of burning, we could cut down trees and clear the forest floor. That would require more work and greater effort, but it runs less of a long-term risk. Not all countries use slash-and-burn to clear land.' He also stresses that a human kind without nature would be condemning itself and that in order to resolve the issue, we should move away from the anthropocentric society we currently live in and replace agribusiness with agroforestry, a form of farming that complements rather than exploits nature.

Society is only now coming to terms with the damage caused by slash-and-burn techniques and the unsustainable growth of agribusiness. By threatening biodiversity and several plant and animal species found only in the region, the burning of the dry forest is a human-made disaster with drastic consequences for human life. Using nature for our economic gain is having an effect on the number of wildfires in Bolivia. It is now time for the country to find alternatives to *chaqueo*, or learn how to manage and prevent the risks associated with wildfires through adopting adequate laws and regulations.



## WATCHING THE WORLD BREATHE: CLIMATE CHANGE FROM CHACALTAYA

TEXT: GEORGE FEARNLEY AND ANNELI ALIAGA / PHOTOS: MANUEL ROCA



**D**r. Marcos Andrade recalls a satirical television show he once watched whereby viewers were humorously reassured, 'Don't worry about the environment; scientists will solve the problem.' Jokes aside, Andrade, Director of the Laboratory for Atmospheric Physics at the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés (UMSA) in La Paz, coordinates a group of climate scientists that have gathered at a unique Bolivian observatory, precisely with the aim of better understanding climate change.

Chacaltaya mountain is located 28 kilometres north of La Paz. It was once the site of Bolivia's only ski resort, which was – and would still be today – the highest ski resort in the world. As of 2009, the Chacaltaya glacier had almost entirely melted, forcing the resort to close. Although the mountain's ski-lift is now inactive, life in Chacaltaya goes on. Scientists travel up and down the mountain on a weekly basis to work at a laboratory that began its life as a weather station in 1942. At the end of the decade, the first experimental evidence of a subatomic particle known as a pion was uncovered at the Chacaltaya observatory. Two Nobel Prizes for Physics were subsequently awarded for the discovery. 'Thanks to Chacaltaya,' Andrade explains, 'the physics department [at UMSA] was founded.' The site is now home to a cosmic ray research facility and one of the stations in the Global Atmosphere Watch (GAW) network, which monitors the chemical composition and selected physical characteristics of the atmosphere. It seems appropriate that one of the observatory's prime functions is to demystify the forces behind the mountain's dramatic make-over.



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The Chacaltaya Observatory is unique for two principal reasons.

Firstly, its location at altitude has proven to be a great advantage for monitoring atmospheric composition. It is the highest atmospheric observatory in the world, at 5,240 metres above sea level. At this altitude, the air surrounding the observatory typically belongs to an atmospheric strata called the free troposphere, which lies five to six kilometres above the Earth's surface. Tropospheric measurements are particularly useful because certain elements live longer at this height than at sea level. Therefore, the Chacaltaya observatory is able to paint a more accurate global picture of atmospheric composition. No other observatory anywhere in the world can boast the ability to monitor our atmosphere at such an altitude. The second highest observatory in the world is the Nepal Climate Observatory (5,079 metres above sea-level). Inconveniently, the site is particularly difficult to access, and scientists have to hike for four to five days to get to the observatory from the closest airport. Yet, Chacaltaya is an hour drive away from the El Alto airport, making it the highest, most accessible atmospheric observatory in the world.

Secondly, Chacaltaya is unique for its surrounding geography. A quick glance at any world map reveals that there is more land mass in the northern hemisphere than in the southern hemisphere. For this reason, observatories in the southern hemisphere are rarer and more valuable. The various landscapes around Chacaltaya are also a cause for celebration: from the observatory's location on the **altiplano**, the Pacific Ocean is approximately 300 kilometres away and the Amazon rainforest is 100 kilometres in the opposite direction. Andrade explains that this topographical diversity is extremely useful for studying the climate, as it enables researchers 'to sample air masses coming from all directions.' Again, this helps scientists develop a fuller picture of what climate change entails. Being so close to La Paz also means that researchers can easily detect the city's emissions, from transport pollution to the fumes from biomass burning. 'It's as if you can 'see how the city is breathing,' says Andrade.



For the reasons stated above, Chacaltaya plays an integral role in the GAW network. Andrade leads a team of 13 local researchers at the observatory, and they are supported by a group of experts from countries such as Germany, Sweden and France. Monitoring climate change across the world would be impossible without this level of international collaboration. In order to better understand our planet's climate and the effects of human activity, scientists must work together to share the data they are collecting. Climate threats and climate trends can only be determined through maintaining consistent, long-term and global records. Andrade emphasises the importance that everybody involved in the process 'follow the same protocols.' Only in this way will all of the stations be able to compare their data over time. Chacaltaya has been collecting data for the past eight years, making it the longest-running climate record of any South American observatory at altitude.

The findings at Chacaltaya confirm that the Andean region is just as vulnerable to global warming as any other corner of the world. In the study *Bolivia en un mundo 4 grados más caliente* ('Bolivia in a world 4 degrees hotter'), authors Hoffmann and Requena provide an alarming outlook on the impact of a gradual temperature increase across the country. The study claims that higher altitude regions such as the Andes are more likely to suffer from a rise in temperature. Mathias Vuille, a climate specialist from Switzerland, believes that the northern *altiplano* is likely to witness a temperature increase almost 1.5 times the global average. From an aesthetic standpoint, the retreating of the glaciers will irreversibly alter the classic postcard image of La Paz, and the city will eventually be shadowed by a naked Illimani. More importantly, the glaciers serve as a crucial source of water, acting as reservoirs for a country that has a longstanding history of droughts and water wars. Many researchers, Andrade included, are curious and fearful about what will happen when this vital source of water runs dry.

Yet, Andrade still has hope for the future. He recognises that atmospheric science and meteorology are undersubscribed fields of study in Bolivia, but he has a dream that one day the country will establish an interdisciplinary school or specialised university department in those areas. A stronger body of climate scientists would inevitably lead to a greater understanding of environmental issues, which would better equip Bolivia with the knowledge and expertise to face any forthcoming dangers caused by climate change. From a practical point of view, Andrade is aware that Bolivia 'cannot convince everyone to cycle to work or be greener but [we] can reach a consensus about policies.' It would seem that the power to spark an interest in the environment and to put a stop to harmful practices, such as deforestation and the burning of biomass, lies in the hands of policy-makers. Should any evidence be needed to justify the urgent and immediate need for global action against climate change, it can be found at the Chacaltaya observatory.





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# BOLIVIA'S MAGNIFICENT AMAZONIAN NATURE RESERVE

THE BIODIVERSITY OF THE MADIDI NATIONAL PARK AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO BOLIVIA

TEXT: LAUREN MINION

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF ALFREDO F. FUENTES CLAROS FROM THE NATIONAL HERBARIUM OF BOLIVIA



Vegetación altoandina húmeda - "Shepherding Llamas across the higher Andean regions within Madidi National Park"

**T**he Madidi National Park, established in 1995, is one of the most biodiverse regions on the planet. The park itself covers nearly two million hectares and is home to 60 percent of Bolivia's rich plant life and 66 percent of the country's extensive wildlife. It used to be a relatively unsung beauty, until it was popularised by Yhoseph Ghinsberg's novel *Jungle*, which was later turned into a film starring Daniel Radcliffe. This brought many more tourists to the area to appreciate its unique habitats and breathtaking wildlife.

However, the park was seriously damaged by forest fires earlier this year, which destroyed 300 hectares of dry woodland habitat in the area. Additionally, some areas of the park near the Beni River are threatened by mass industrialisation following government proposals for the construction of a hydroelectric power station. With these looming threats in mind, *BX* spoke with biologist Alfredo F. Fuentes Claros, a researcher with the National Herbarium of Bolivia and the Missouri Botanical Garden. He has long worked at conservation projects in the region, and recognises how vitally important it is to protect this incredible part of the world.

The Madidi National Park encompasses a wide range of habitats, including Andean high grounds, low-lying tropical Amazonian rainforest, the aforementioned rare dry forest, and both mountain and swamp savannas. These sweeping habitats collectively result in the rich biodiversity of the region. According to Fuentes, the park's varying altitudes make way for disparate temperatures and levels of rainfall, which contribute to the abundant wildlife and plant species that are present, some of them quite rare. Fuentes said that there are two categories of these rare species. The first category comprises endemic species that require a very specific habitat to survive, and which are therefore only present in the park's specific environment. The second category comprises species that can live in a number of habitats, but due to external factors, including human activity and climate change, their populations are no longer stable. Madidi is home to a large number of rare plants and animals from both categories.

Collaborative projects have been established throughout the park to monitor climate change in the region, track rare species and keep scientific records of recently discovered species. These projects were established principally between education institutions in the United States, including the Botanical Garden of Missouri, and the National Herbarium of Bolivia. Specimens are collected regularly from previously defined allotments in the park. Fuentes said that 'the main change, seen as a result of climate change, is that as the temperatures heat up, the species that are used to the original colder temperatures are ascending up into the Andes.' In the past, Fuentes said, there were considerable delays in the collection and identification of these specimens, due to the Bolivian government's inaction in renewing permissions for the continuation of the projects. There were also other delays in granting permission to send many species off to the Botanical Gardens of Missouri to be identified. Ultimately, these issues were resolved, and the Bolivian government now provides some financial support.

Recent news headlines show that the Madidi National Park has been affected by natural disasters and the consequences of human activity. The park not only suffered a considerable loss of land earlier this year to forest fires, it's also under threat from the Bolivian government's industrial development planning. Although proposals for the construction of a major hydroelectric plant along the Beni River have been approved, its construction was postponed after a nationwide outcry at the potentially damaging project.

The importance of Madidi National Park is not only limited to the animal and plant species that it boasts; it also hosts a sizable indigenous population. The park houses and provides invaluable resources to 31 family communities living in the area, from four main historical indigenous groups, including the Tacana, San José de Uchupiamonas, the Lecos de Apolo and the Lecos de Lareceja. The principal objective of the conservation projects is to ensure the sustainability of resources so that these communities can continue to flourish in this region. Fuentes said that there were some initial conflicts with the local indigenous populations back when the projects began; however, he said, they were 'more for the political situation than the work of the scientists... In the beginning, [the indigenous] didn't allow us to enter their territory, but after explaining ourselves and our work well, they let us in.' These indigenous groups now receive an annual scientific report, and they keep track of plant species in their own regions. Now, Fuentes said, 'there is always a very good collaboration.'

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**Conservación Turismo (left)**- "Locals navigating the river, surrounded by diverse tropical rainforest"

**Nativos Tanan Tejiendo (right)**- "Some indigenous Tacana people building baskets out of palm leaves"

Many of these indigenous people are also involved in the park's vibrant tourism industry, having set up numerous ecolodges with tours aimed at increasing awareness without damaging or unsettling the region's wide variety of flora and fauna. Contrary to what one might think, Fuentes also encourages tourism in the region. 'You won't learn anything until you experience it first hand,' he said. The industry itself is well established and sustainable, with three-day tours that include cooking locally sourced ingredients every day and minimalist accommodations within the forest and savanna. Fuentes encourages people who are interested in visiting to research different tourism companies to ensure that their excursions won't be detrimental to the park's exquisite wildlife.

There's an indisputable vitality of Madidi National Park that can be witnessed through the flora, fauna, indigenous people, sustainable industry and invaluable resources it contains. Fuentes said that it is the incredible array of plants that are responsible for this. 'Plants give us practically everything that we need in life,' he said. 'They give us fresh air, they give us water, they facilitate our infrastructural needs, they prevent climatic disasters. They provide us with wood for construction, they give us fruit, medicine, and they are vital for the continuous development of indigenous nations.' The Madidi National Park presents us with a positive and beautiful example of a successful ecosystem with a stable conservation project surrounding it. It is vital that this biodiverse region remains respected and protected, and the relationship with nature within the park remains harmonious. The continuous collaboration of scientists, indigenous people and the tourism industry can ensure that Madidi National Park remains one of the most biodiverse areas on the planet.



**Passiflora Madidiana Especie Nueva** - "The Madidi Passionflower is an endemic species (one that can only be found in this region)"



**Bosque Húmedo**- "The humid tropical rainforest in Madidi National Park"

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COCHABAMBA - BOLIVIA



"An Environmental Crisis is a Government Policy, Chiquitania in Flames is a National Disaster"

## FIGHTING FOR OUR FUTURE

STUDENTS TAKE TO THE STREETS TO DEMAND CLIMATE JUSTICE

TEXT: NINA PY BROZOVICH  
PHOTOS: LAUREN MINION AND SILVIA SACCARDI



"We are the species in danger of extinguishing it all!!!!"

**F**ridays for Future is a climate-justice movement created in August 2018 by Greta Thunberg, a Swedish activist who was then 15 years old. She decided to protest every Friday outside her country's Parliament, demanding that authorities take action against climate change. Over the past year, Fridays for Future has grown, with up to 7 million young people taking to the streets across the globe to demand climate justice. La Paz, too, took part in the first-ever world strike for the planet on 15 March 2019.

The Bolivian Fridays for Future chapter has already organised four strikes, one information fair, one street clean-up and various conferences to tackle the issue of climate change. Starting with 150 attendees at its first protest, Fridays for Future now sees upwards of 600 people at its events in La Paz, mostly students who are demanding

that authorities react to this climate crisis. When I began to understand the seriousness of the problems that we are facing, I felt a profound sadness and disgust. I couldn't believe that we are living through the most serious crisis in history, and that those who should be finding solutions aren't interested in this important task. Bolivia is among the countries most threatened by the climate crisis, and one of the 15 most biodiverse nations in the world; it is therefore vitally important that it be involved in this fight. As time passes, we come ever closer to the point of no return – that is, a global temperature rise of 1.5 degrees celsius. If this were to happen, life on earth as we know it would be in danger, including ourselves. This is a problem that concerns all of us, and, therefore, we all have to work together to resolve it.

*Nina Py Brozovich is the founder and spokesperson for the Fridays for Future movement in Bolivia.*

CONTINUES ON PAGE 20



"Police forces prevent unrest by blocking connecting streets"

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"Let's look after the lungs of our planet"



"This sign refers to the fire's threat to animal species, including the Giant Armadillo"



# A CALL TO NATURE

THE BOLIVIAN AMAZON'S AMBUE ARI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

TEXT & PHOTOS: NICOLE MARQUEZ AGUIRRE

**M**y arrival at the Ambue Ari wildlife sanctuary, or 'the park' as the volunteers call it, began as a journey in search of a place where I could disconnect from city life and help others. It became a place that changed my life, where I connected with other volunteers, the animals and the nature surrounding us.

Comunidad Inti Wara Yassi (CIWY) has three centres in Bolivia that work for the protection of wildlife, rescue animals from illegal trafficking and educate the public about the importance of respecting the ecosystem.

The first thing one notices when arriving at the park is the dedication, respect and affection the centre and its staff have for each of the animals. Even deceased animals are commemorated with the 'tree of memory'. The facilities are basic, but volunteers quickly find that with a mosquito net, some tape and food, they have everything they need.

At first, like many others, I didn't find it easy. I made mistakes and I felt out of place. It took about two weeks, with the constant support and help from the experienced staff and volunteers, for me to feel completely immersed and connected with my surroundings.

Up here, we recognize and value the nature that surrounds us.

**Nature Destination**



CONTINUES ON PAGE 22

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The work was hard but the reward was enormous. We worked six days a week, from six in the morning till six at night, taking breaks only to eat. We worked with vulnerable animals, many rescued from dire situations, and rehabilitated them physically and psychologically to a better and fuller life. This also entailed endless hours of fun for them, and for us. The daily routine is established according to each animal's needs, so despite following a strict schedule, every day turned out different for us. After all, this is the Bolivian Amazon, and the jungle is constantly changing. There were wild animals inside the park, and the behaviour of the rescued animals varied depending on the surroundings and the volunteers present.

The work of the Inti Wara Yassi community is essential for the conservation of endangered species in Bolivia. This work couldn't be done without the help from the volunteers who give their best in each situation with effort and good will, whether they are building new enclosures to provide better comfort to the animals, keeping the shelter clean or even putting out fires in the dry season.

My time at Ambue Ari was by far one of the greatest experiences of my life – and one of the hardest. During these two months I ended up connecting with the animals and nature, and with the other volunteers who came from around the world. I miss the Amazon rainforest, and I fondly remember how magnificent it is with its torrential rains, nocturnal sounds, and the wildlife and the people who live in complete sync with their surroundings.

*Nicole Marquez Aguirre, a La Paz-based photographer, volunteered for two months at the the Ambue Ari Park, a wildlife sanctuary owned and managed by Inti Wara Yassi. Learn more at [intiwarayassi.org](http://intiwarayassi.org)*



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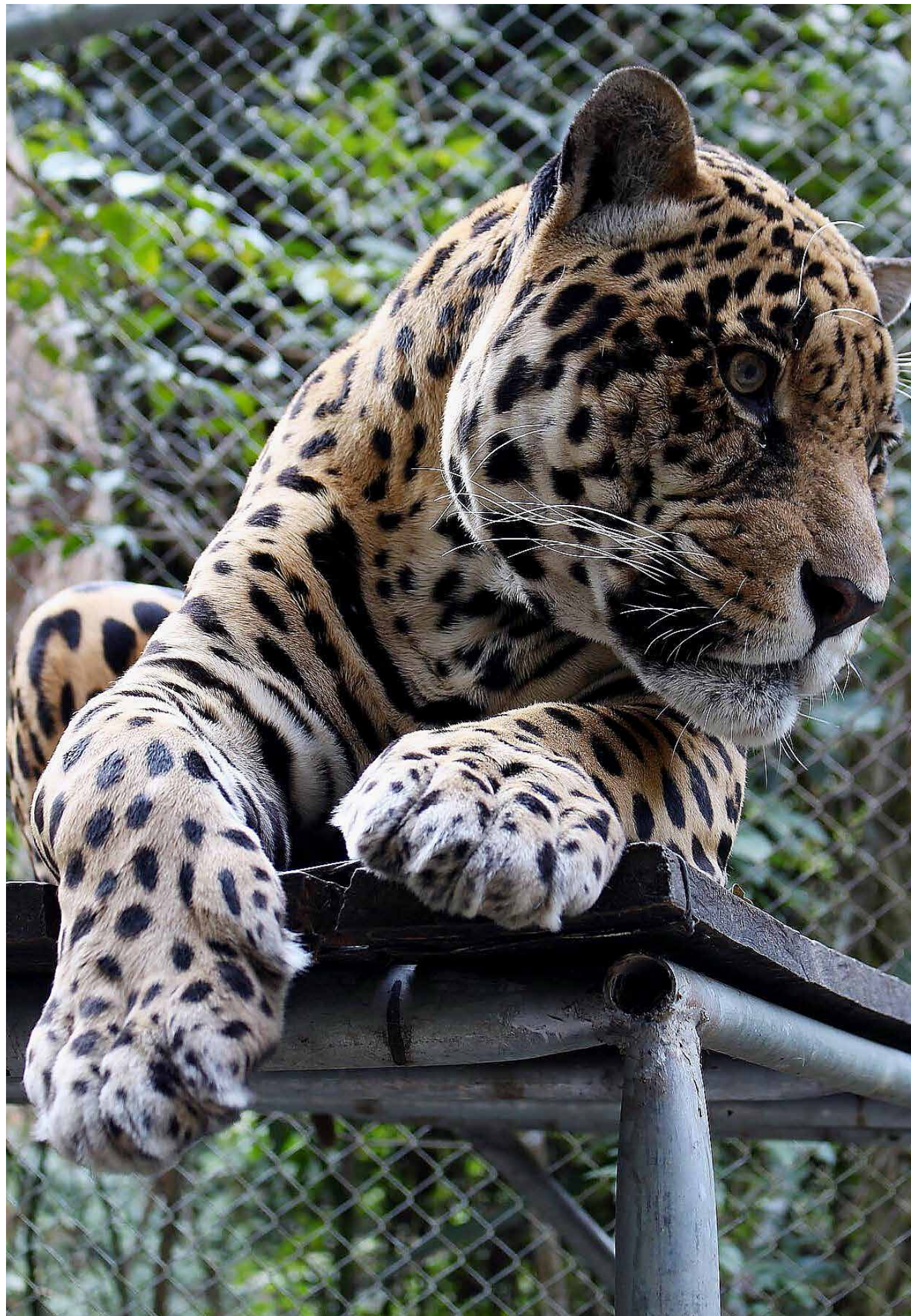


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# SAVING BOLIVIA'S BIG CATS

WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING THREATENS THE ICONIC JAGUAR

TEXT & PHOTOS: AMELIA SWABY

International illegal wildlife trafficking now threatens the extinction of many species native to Bolivia. Birds are the most commonly trafficked animal, with approximately 4,000 different species being traded worldwide. The Santa Cruz-based newspaper *El Deber* reported that the illicit trade has annual revenues of more than US\$20,000 million, making it the fourth-most-lucrative illegal industry in the country (only trailing the trafficking of drugs, weapons and human beings). One of the major victims of Bolivia's wildlife trafficking is the jaguar.

Poachers – who often work to supply to Chinese market, where there's great demand for these feline beasts – kill and remove their prey's fangs, which are then smuggled into the Asian market, where they are as valuable as gold or cocaine. There are merely 64,000 jaguars in the wild now, a number that has been dramatically decreasing, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Where before only the bones of jaguars were used for traditional Chinese medicine, the whole of the big cat's body is now more lucrative, with smugglers boasting of the additional supposed health benefits of the jaguar's tongue, penis and other organs. There are even luxury restaurants in China that sell jaguar meat as a delicacy. Some people display necklaces made jaguar as a symbol of status, sexual prowess and power. The Chinese mafia is even getting into the game and fuelling wildlife trafficking in Bolivia by expanding into the taxidermy, medicinal-products and pet-trade industries.

Bolivia's park rangers try to defend Bolivia's 22 protected areas of national interest, but they are not enough. La Paz's *Página Siete* revealed that the guards are overworked – often working for 24 consecutive days, followed by only six rest days – and exhausted, with insufficient equipment, resources and personnel, facing daily threats of hunters, drug traffickers and nature itself. Many only have temporary contracts with low salaries yet must protect 77,985 hectares. Since 1995, 16 have lost their lives whilst guarding the land and two remain missing. In 2015 the authorities promised to increase the number of personnel, but the situation has not yet changed.

Virginia Ossio, together with her husband Marcelo Levy, has devoted her life to care for animals rescued from the illegal trade, and now is an official voice in Bolivia regarding environmental conservation and the illegal trafficking of America's big cat. The director and founder of La Senda Verde, a wildlife refuge in Coroico in Bolivia's Yungas region, Ossio said that the trafficking epidemic of jaguar cubs first came to her attention in 2014, after the Bolivian postal service seized over 190 jaguar teeth bound for China (with many more believed to have been trafficked undetected). Jaguar mothers had been slaughtered for their fangs and body parts, and their cubs became a valuable 'by-product' destined to be sold as pets. Further alarm bells sounded when buyers were overheard on the radio by the World Conservation Society boasting about the prices they had been paid for jaguar fangs and body parts.





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According to Bolivian journalist Roberto Navia Gabriel, this dire situation has only grown worse since 2014. In the tropical municipality of Sena, in the Pando department that borders Brazil, traffickers pay US\$150 to US\$400 for each jaguar fang, depending on its size. By the time the fang reaches China, it can sell for as much as US\$2,500, a tenfold increase. Between 2013 and 2016, 380 jaguar teeth were seized by Bolivian authorities, and the trade has only grown since then. From April to September in 2016, the Bolivian Forestry and Environmental Police seized a total of 181 jaguar fangs destined for China.

Many hunters refer to these cats as tigers. When approached by Chinese buyers, they are often shocked by the prices offered; one hunter revealed to *Página Siete* that he was surprised that someone would pay him for fangs that were worth nothing to him.

**'HOPEFULLY WE WILL DISAPPEAR  
AND GIVE THE ANIMALS A CHANCE.'  
—LA SENDA VERDE'S VIRGINIA  
OSSIO DIRECTOR AND FOUNDER**

the risks for hunters and traffickers are relatively low. To tackle this, Ossio says, 'We need to pressure, ask for more [jail] time' and make the consequences more severe. 'We are making it too easy for [traffickers],' Ossio adds. 'We are handing our ecosystem over to them.'

Ossio said that, despite her and her colleagues' best efforts, sanctuaries like La Senda Verde are not the solution to the problem. Only one out of every ten animals taken out of the jungle survive. Prevention is the only way to solve the trafficking problem.

Jaguar cubs that come into Ossio's care are extremely vulnerable and

'We need to change the system and way of living,' said Ossio. 'Greed is harming the planet. People just don't understand their impact.' She suggested that the Bolivian government has had very little effect as environmental conversation is not currently a priority and poaching is a crime which warrants little to no punishment. Despite being clearly illegal,

face numerous health problems. They are reliant on mother's milk for the first three months of their lives, and without it they suffer bone, joint, digestive and immune problems. This makes them extremely hard to raise in captivity, and many die despite all efforts to save them.

As a result of the recent dramatic increase in animal trafficking, La Senda Verde's animal population has more than quadrupled in the past five years. It now houses more than 800 rescued animals, from howler monkeys and macaw parrots to Andean spectacled bears and a vast array of reptiles.

Whilst Ossio says that 'we are opening the door to traffickers... We are offering them a buffet of options,' she thinks it will be organised social movements that will drive the necessary change. Local people working against trafficking is the only way to stop it. Her vision is educational, with prevention being a key focus. The Bolivian government has passed some legislation that has formalised certain protections for the jaguars and criminalises the trade. Those who incite, promote, capture or commercialise wild animals categorised as vulnerable face up to six years in jail. However, Ossio's perspective is more radical and focuses on education to raise awareness of the wildlife-trafficking trade and its impact. As part of this, La Senda Verde offers free entrance to teachers and students from Coroico and charges a reduced entrance fee to Coroico's 3,000 families to promote safe interactions and mutual understanding with the animals. Ossio strongly believes that the country's youth are driving Bolivia's consciousness, so the country must invest in them to ensure a future for its jaguars.

But the scale of the wildlife-trafficking in Bolivia makes it hard for Ossio to be an optimist. 'Hopefully we will disappear and give the animals a chance,' she says. Bolivia's jaguars need to be left in peace.



# SINGANI CASA REAL RECEIVES A SUPERIOR TASTE AWARD

THIS AWARD BY THE INTERNATIONAL TASTE INSTITUTE, A WORLD LEADER IN FOOD AND BEVERAGE EVALUATION, IS THE HIGHEST RECOGNITION THIS BOLIVIAN NATIONAL PRODUCT HAS ACHIEVED.

**S**ingani Casa Real celebrates a new international certification. The national drink of Bolivia has been accredited with a Superior Taste Award that acknowledges quality and recognises the best products annually. Singani Casa Real was evaluated by a panel of experts from the International Taste Institute, a world leader in food and drinks evaluation and accreditation based in Brussels, Belgium.

'Each recognition fills us with pride and motivates us to continue working for Bolivia,' said Casa Real's general manager, Luis Pablo Granier. 'This achievement certifies the quality of our singani at home and abroad. Our task as leaders in the category is to continue promoting singani in Bolivia and in the rest of the world.'

'The per capita consumption of singani as the national drink of Bolivia still has to grow when compared to other regional national drinks such as pisco in Peru

and Chile, cachaca in Brazil and tequila in Mexico,' Granier added. 'That is our mission.'

Since 2005, the International Taste Institute has conferred its Superior Taste Awards. The institute's more than 200 food and beverage experts are members of the most prestigious chef and sommelier associations in the world. To receive accreditation, each product takes part in a strict evaluation process. To achieve this international certification, Singani Casa Real was subjected to a blind test by a jury that didn't know the name or the origin of the brand and product and only received a brief description of the product category.

The singani was evaluated for its organoleptic qualities based on five criteria: first impression, vision, smell, taste and final sensation. Each expert analysed and qualified the singani in private without communicating with the other tasters.

## ABOUT CASA REAL

Casa Real is the preferred brand in the singani market, a drink recognised internationally as a national symbol of Bolivia. In 2009 it won the award for Best Distillate in the World. The Granier family has preserved a winemaking tradition for more than four generations, producing singani with the highest levels of innovation and technology in the Tarija region since 1925. The winery, located at more than 1,850 metres above sea level, benefits from a warm climate, pure air and intense light, resulting in ideal conditions to grow the grapes and obtain a product of high quality. Singani Casa Real is now conquering the North American market through an exclusive brand, Singani63.



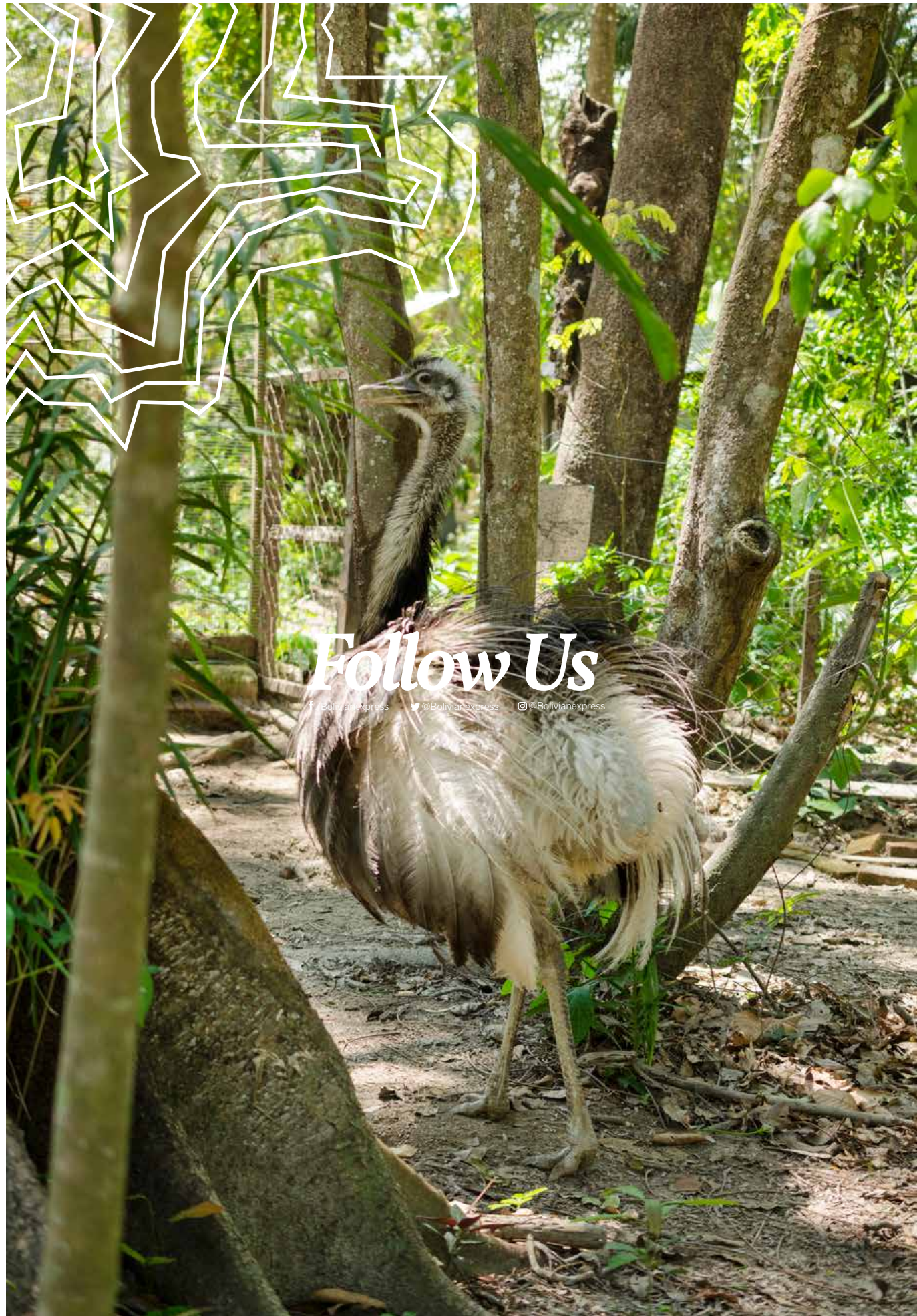
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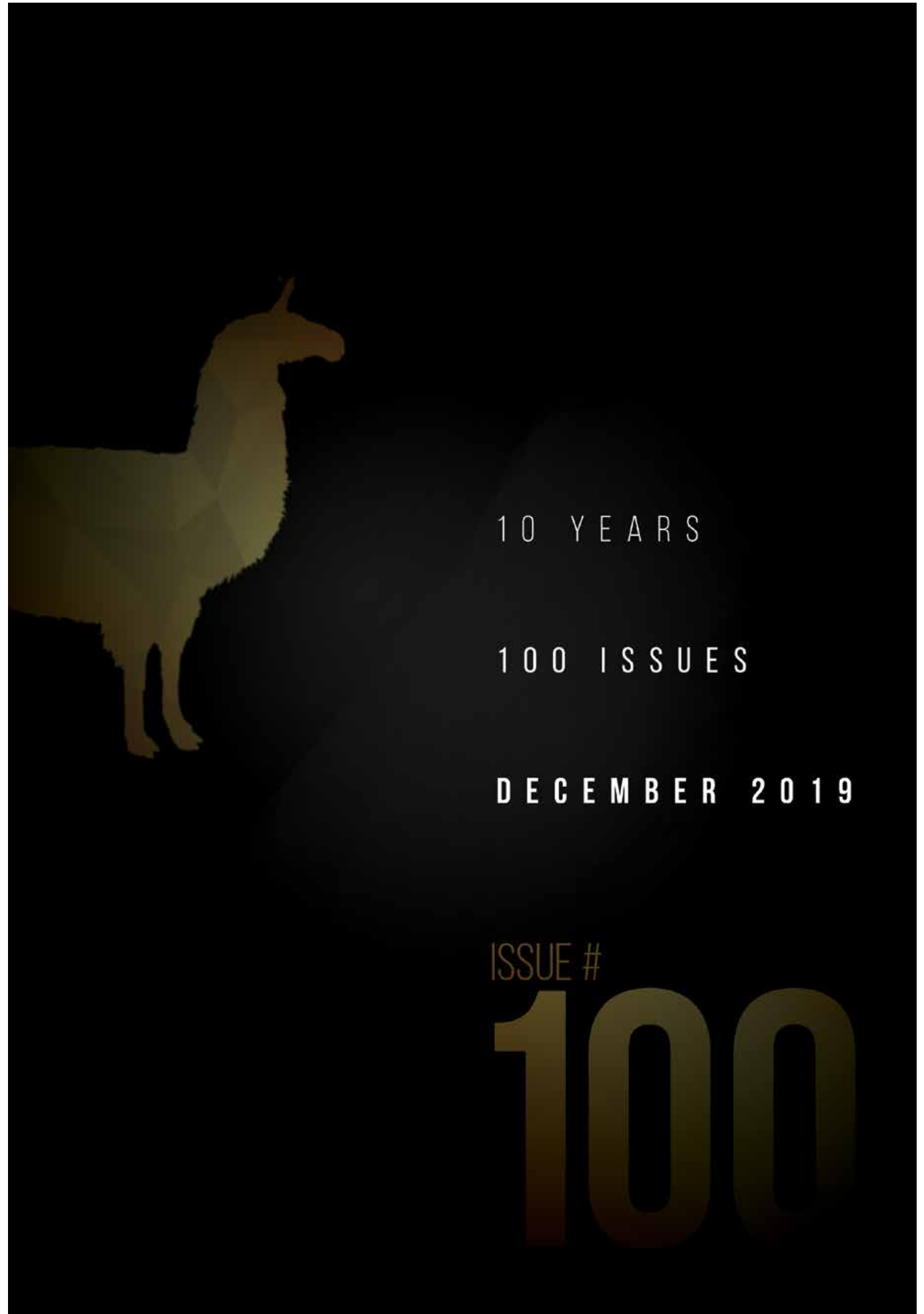
EL CONSUMO EXCESIVO DE ALCOHOL ES DAÑINO PARA LA SALUD.  
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Photo: Nicole Marquez-Agruirre



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# BX-99 RECOMMENDATIONS

## SHOPPING

### RECICLANDO CON LA NEGRA

**DESCRIPTION:** Under the concept of upcycling La Negra offers infinite possibilities of designs engraved in glass. The project gives a new life to this fantastic material, contributes to recycling become a habit and at the same time creates some art!

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**PHOTO:** Jean Carlo Salinas @jeanco666



## SKIN CARE

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**ADDRESS:** Guachalla street #452  
**OPENING HOURS:** 9:00 - 13:00  
**CONTACT:** +591 740 21034  
**PHOTO:** Byo Cosmética Natural



## BUSINESS

### INNOVAPLAST

**DESCRIPTION:** Innovaplast is a company dedicated to reduce pollution levels through plastic recycling and to create awareness and ecological culture. In 4 years they won 12 awards thanks to their commitment to the environment. Among its eco-friendly products, they offer oxo-biodegradable bags made with 100% recycled plastic that degrade in 5 years.

**CONTACT:** +591 71521721  
**WEBSITE:** www.innovaplast.org  
**PHOTO:** Innovaplast



## ECO HOTEL

### THE BIOTOPE BOUTIQUE HOUSE

**DESCRIPTION:** Located in the milder weather of La Paz city's southern district, this prototype for sustainable living provides a comfortable and cozy place to stay. The house features a unique vertical greenhouse, it has four shared areas, seven comfortable en-suite double rooms and one self-contained flat with its own kitchenette. Adjoining the house is the Bolivian Box cafe, which is open to the public Monday-Saturday 8 am-7 pm.

**ADDRESS:** Calacoto, 24th street #184  
**CONTACT:** +591 67180533  
**PHOTO:** The Biotope Boutique House



## RESTAURANTS

### CHALET FLOR DE LECHE

**DESCRIPTION:** The best place for cheese lovers! It is a rustic and ecological restaurant that delights your palate with European-style cheeses made by themselves with the best highland milk. You can choose between fondue, raclette, cheese board and pizza in addition to its delicious variety of desserts, wines and craft beers.

**ADDRESS:** Achocalla, Sojsana #8  
**OPENING HOURS:** Saturdays and Sundays 12:30 - 16:30  
**PHOTO:** Flor de Leche  
**WEBSITE:** www.flordeleche.com



## ECOTOURISM

### MADIDI JUNGLE ECOLOGE

**DESCRIPTION:** This is a low-impact rainforest eco-venture created and sustained 100% by indigenous people from the heart of Bolivia's Madidi National Park, they are committed to sustainable ecotourism that is carried out in a manner which is respectful to the flora and fauna. Their staff incredibly knowledgeable and passionate about the Amazon, offering highly personalized tours in order to create a memorable experience for all their visitors.

**WEBSITE:** www.madidijungle.com  
**CONTACT:** +591 71282697 (Eng) +591 73530973 (Esp)  
**PHOTO:** Madidi Jungle Ecologue



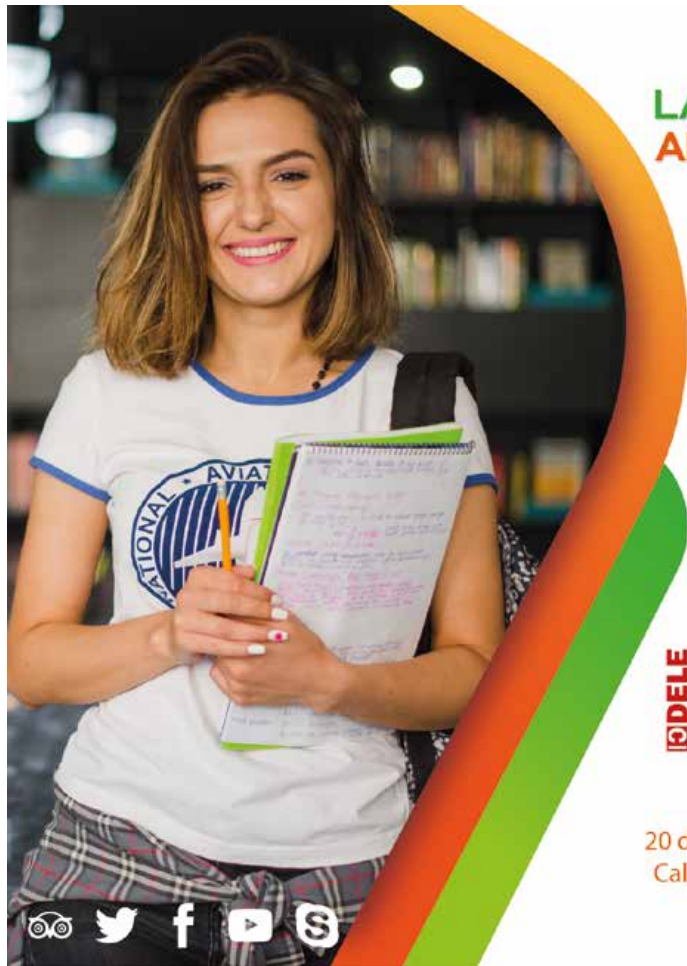
## WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

### COMUNIDAD INTIWARA YASSI

**DESCRIPTION:** CIWY is a Bolivian non-governmental organisation dedicated to rescuing, caring for and rehabilitating sick, mistreated and abandoned wildlife since 1992. Nowadays they run three Wildlife Sanctuaries in Bolivia where they care for over 400 rescued animals with a team made up of professionals and the support of Bolivian and international volunteers.

**WEBSITE:** www.intiwarayassi.org  
**PHOTO:** Nicole Marquez Aguirre





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# GLOSSARY BX99

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ALTIPLANO	High plateau
CHAQUEO	Slash and burn farming
PACHAMAMA	Mother Earth



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# CULTURAL AGENDA

## OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2019

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### LA PAZ

#### CHARITY DINNER

Dinner in support of the San Calixto Popular Dining Room that gives lunches to more than 180 seniors and people in vulnerable situations who cannot access food for different reasons.  
19:30-23:30  
Bs. 120  
Friday, October 25  
More info: +591 63224741

#### LA FIERECITA

Illustration and comic miniferia  
11:00-19:00  
Saturday, October 26  
La Viñeteca - 6 de agosto avenue,  
"V centenario" gallery

#### ACHOCALLA VIVA

Ecotourism, agronomic, gastronomic and cultural festival  
10:00-17:00  
Saturday, October 26  
More info: +591 61151967  
Achocalla

#### MEGAFEST 2019

Megafestival of Urban Art 2019  
5 stages: alternative rock, metal rock, hip hop, electronic music and digital arts, miscellaneous, fashion show and art  
3 spaces: living communitarian culture, related arts, urban kiosko  
15:00-23:00  
Saturday, October 26  
Parque Urbano Central La Paz

#### TODOS SANTOS 2019 EN TORO TORO

3 day tour, all included  
October 31 - November 03  
Bs. 1050  
More info: Mahalo Tours Bolivia (FB) +591 69940455

### THRASH METAL

Azotador, Incidence, Return of Violence and Deformación Máxima will be sharing the stage with Subversion from Colombia  
17:00 - 00:00  
Friday, November 01  
Live Buzz - Miraflores #1168

### BLOQUEANDO (EXPRESS) 2019

Climbing clinics, bouldering competition, party and movies  
9:00-18:00  
Saturday, November 02  
More info: BLOQUEando (FB), +591 76205172

### SKYMARATHON SORATA 2019

15K, 25K, 46K  
3:00-15:00  
Saturday, November 09  
More info: Skyrunning Bolivia (FB) +591 77208646  
Sorata, La Paz

### COCHABAMBA

#### AJAYU

Cinema debate  
A short film that shows how the funerary rites of the highlands intermingle with the Catholic symbologies assimilated by the Andean people as a way of preserving ancestral traditions.  
19:00-21:00  
Friday, October 25  
Centro Misionero Maryknoll - Kollasuyo street #0-0527

#### GRILLO VILLEGAS CONCERT

19:30  
October 25, 26  
Bs. 60, 80  
Teatro Achá

### CROSS COUNTRY COMPETITION

First mountain biking competition under the Cross Country modality by teams and with relays.  
8:00-12:00  
Saturday, November 16  
More info: Biciosos MTB Club (FB)

### RETROSPECTIVA DE EMILIO TORREZ

Emilio Torrez's retrospective exhibition will summarise, through 43 works, his 60 years as a painter.  
15:00 - 20:00  
November 5 - 28  
Casa Toscana Art Gallery - Santivañez street #0134

### SANTA CRUZ

#### 'TRUMAN' DIR. CESC GAY (2015)

Cinema Debate  
18:00  
Tuesday, October 29  
Centro de la Cultura Plurinacional Santa Cruz - René Moreno street #369

#### TODOS SANTOS HANDCRAFTS FAIR

Local crafts  
10:00 - 19:00  
October 31 - November 02  
Paseo Artesanal Santa Cruz

#### PLOGGING 5K

7:00 - 10:00  
Sunday, October 27  
More info: Chaskis Runners (FB) +591 77741010

#### EMOVERE

Painting, photography and performance  
09:00 - 12:00, 15:00 - 20:00  
Free  
Until November 23  
Centro Cultural Simón I. Patiño Santa Cruz



-  Linares #880 entre Sagarnaga y el pasaje Melchor Jimenez
-  Calle Linares #956 entre calle Sagarnaga y Viluyo
-  Munay outfit design
-  Munay (outfit design)

# BONO JUANCITO PINTO

ESCUCHAR  
para Comunicar



✓ **Más de 2,2 millones de estudiantes** beneficiados, tanto de primaria y secundaria, como de centros de educación especial.

✓ El Bono estudiantil se paga entre el **23 de octubre al 22 de noviembre** en todo el territorio nacional.

 **Línea gratuita**  
**800-10-3223**

## Requisitos:

- Registro de calificaciones (promedio de los últimos tres bimestres)
- Presencia física del estudiante, con la madre o el padre/tutor
- Cédula de Identidad o Certificado de Nacimiento
- Cédula de Identidad de la madre o del padre/tutor

*¡Más educación, menos deserción!*