

BolivianExpress

Gratis Magazine



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50
SPECIAL EDITION



Directors: Amaru Villanueva Rance and Ivan Rodríguez Petkovic. **Partners:** Jack Kinsella, Xenia Elsaesser, Sharoll Fernandez.
Editorial Team: Matthew Grace, Juan Víctor Fajardo. **Web and Legal:** Jack Kinsella.
Printing and Advertising Manager: Ivan Rodríguez Petkovic. **Commercial Manager:** Rodrigo Barrenechea
General Coordinator: Wilmer Machaca. **Head of Production:** Valeria Wilde. **Production Assistant:** Adriana Murillo
Editorial Coordinator: Sophia Vahdati. **Domestic Coordinator:** Virginia Tito Gutierrez. **Head of Design and Photography:**
 Michael Dunn Caceres. **Journalists:** Phoebe Roth, Emily Cashen, Emily Gray, Eliza Wood, Sophia Vahdati, Sharoll Fernandez,
 Adriana Murillo. **Translators:** Sophia Vahdati, Phoebe Roth. **Our Cover:** Michael Dunn Caceres. **Marketing:** Xenia Elsaesser
Advertise With Us: ivan.rp@bolivianexpress.org. **Address:** Calle Prolongación Armaza # 2957, Sapocachi, La Paz.
Phone: 78862061- 79658778 - 70672031 **Contact:** info@bolivianexpress.org

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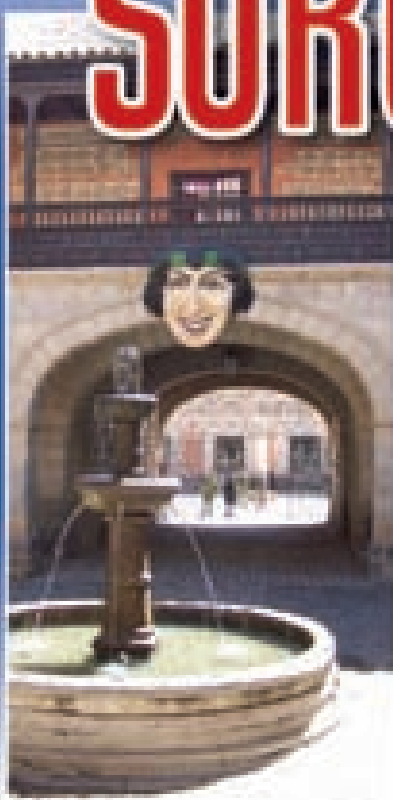
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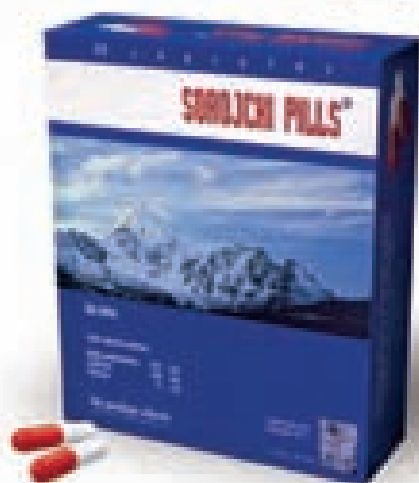
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Five years ago Bolivian Express was born in a lift on Avenida 20 de Octubre in La Paz. During the clunky journey from the 17th floor to the ground level, two of the project's founders lamented the absence of an English-language publication in the country; two notable predecessors -the Bolivian Times and Llama Express- were sadly no longer in circulation. And so the name of the magazine was born as an admittedly uninspired (yet effective) portmanteau.

We were determined to find a viable way of printing a free quality publication given the erratic nature of local advertising revenues and shortage of local journalists able to write in English. Two further founders were enlisted from the UK and six university friends were boarded on a plane and hijacked as guinea pigs. And so it became clear to the founding team that an ideal way of sustaining the project as a whole would be to combine it with a journalism training programme.

Since the project began we have worked with over 120 people from 20+ countries worldwide who have come to volunteer as part of the project. They live and sleep in a shared house and explore the country, its stories and cultures with the help of a local team. By looking beyond the salt-flats and ancient ruins, their mission is to bring new eyes to this infinite land. If they leave as cultural ambassadors, rather than just tourists, the project has achieved one of its aims. And, of course, by flicking through these pages you are closing the circle and helping to complete this project's mission.

What started off as a magazine for tourists quickly turned into something else. After the first 10 issues we had already covered all the well-trodden festivities and attractions the country is probably best known for. The continuous challenge has been to find new stories from which everyone can learn something new, including the local audience. Indeed, over half of our readers are native Spanish speakers so we are as committed to writing for them as we are for the uninitiated in Bolivia. This work has brought us close to people we would perhaps never have had an excuse to get to know: from former presidents, ministers and local sporting heroes, to Michael Jackson impersonators, prisoners serving life sentences and private investigators.

Over the years we have also worked with a large number of people across the world: editors scattered across San Francisco, New York and Caracas, a web developer in Berlin, a public relations manager somewhere in the Swiss Alps, and even a virtual assistant in Bulgaria (hey, Pavlin). As old founders and team members have taken on new challenges, others have appeared and made the project their own. On our 50th issue, we are incredibly proud to say that Bolivian Express has a life of its own; it exists as something greater and wiser than the people who have made it possible so far. Thank you for being a part of this journey. ✕

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

By Amaru Villanueva Rance



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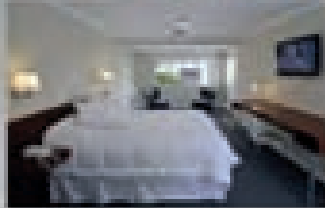
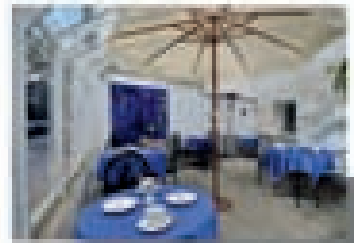
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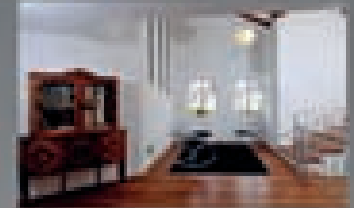
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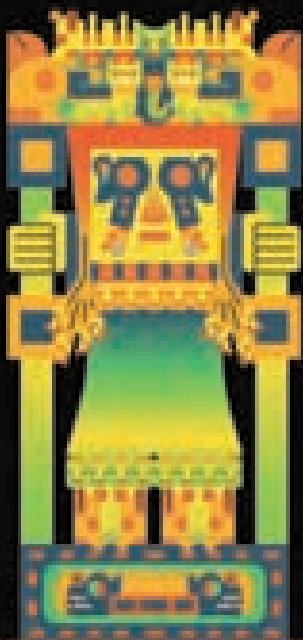
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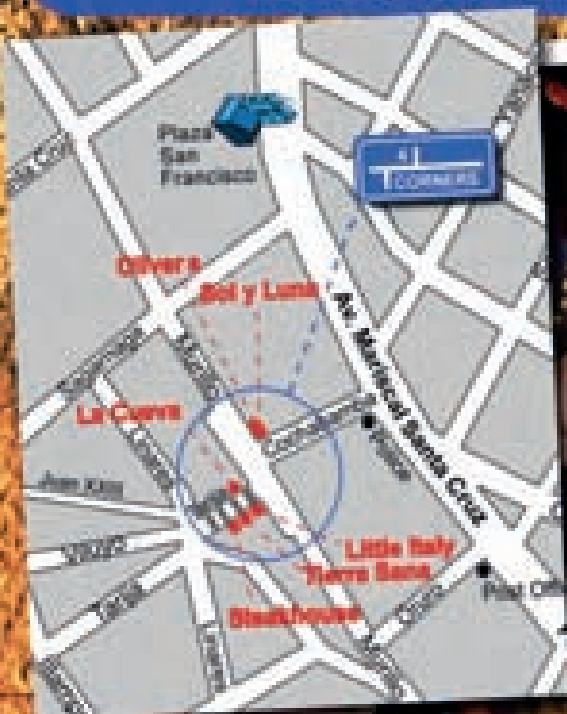
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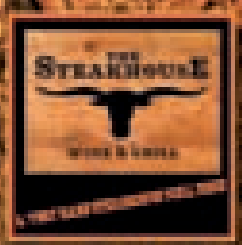
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FAMILIA GALÁN

TEXT: EMILY CASHEN
PHOTO: K-OS GALÁN

With the twirling skirts of the Kulluwada dancers, the booming backdrop of constant live music and the mile-long water fights along El Prado, Carnival in La Paz is always a vibrant affair. From this traditional celebration of indigeneity, a surprising new Carnival feature has emerged: La Familia Galán.

Dwarfing the crowds in their towering heels, their multicoloured wigs swaying as they throw their heads back in laughter, this family of drag queens is a bona fide Carnival superstar. While each year they wow the crowds with their extravagant drag performances, the family's activity extends far beyond the world of entertainment. La Familia Galán is Bolivia's undisputed pioneer in LGBTQ activism.



Formed in 2001, this cross-dressing collective has spent the past decade challenging the unabashed machismo that still dominates Bolivia's political and public spheres. In a country where discussion of sexual diversity remains largely taboo, La Familia Galán refuses to be silenced. Its members abandon the fringes of mainstream society and penetrate pop culture. The family has its very own television show called "Transformando". And although it's not exactly Bolivia's answer to RuPaul's Drag Race, the show provides a platform for open and frank discussion on LGBTQ issues. Their small screen debut took the trans community out of the closet and into the spotlight. ✕



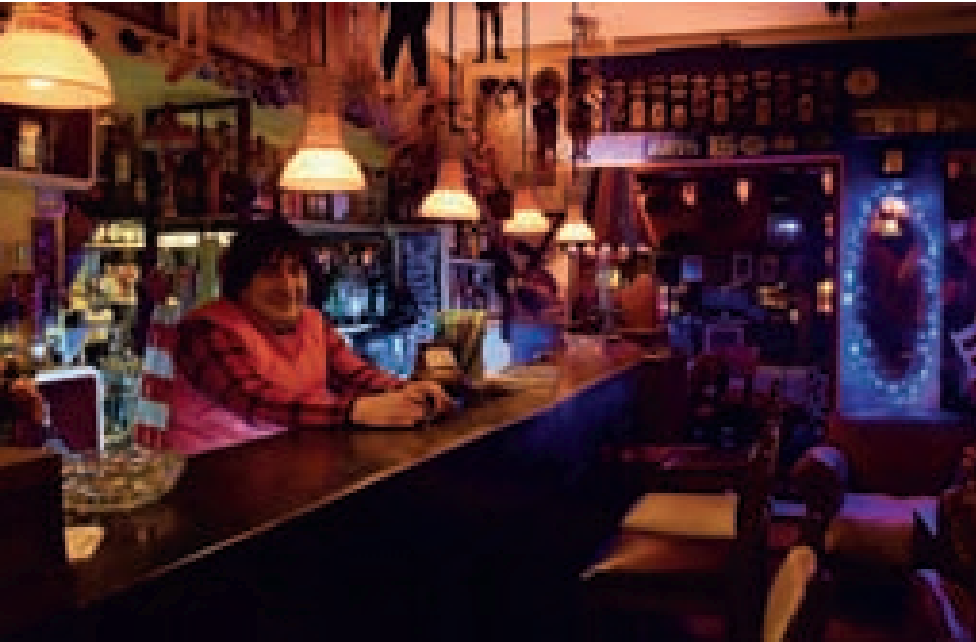
EL CHINO RENEGÓN

TEXT: SOPHIA VAHDATI
PHOTO: NICK SOMERS

Behind a nameless, unimposing, wooden door on Avenida Ecuador is the shabby and famous restaurant, 'El Chino Renegón'. The name of the place is unofficial, gifted to this delicious Taiwanese kitchen due to the comical level of brusque service provided by the front of house. No one knows why 'el chino' is grumpy and terse all of the time. It could be because his wife is busy cooking for customers and cannot give him the time of day. Maybe it's because his clients insist on calling him chino despite the copious copies of 'Taiwán Hoy' on display in his establishment. ✕

ROBERTO AND LA COSTILLA

TEXT: EMILY CASHEN
PHOTO: ELIZA WOOD



La Costilla: a 5am refuge, a kaleidoscopic trip down the rabbit-hole, a time vortex where night magically morphs into day. Like Sopocachi's own Room of Requirement, this bar of wonders and delights appears only to those who have need of it. The nondescript exterior blends in seamlessly with the surrounding residential neighbourhood, but those who know where to look can tell from the presence of a singular light in the window if the bar is open for business. While the exclusivity of La Costilla is certainly a part of the bar's charm, perhaps its greatest selling point is its endlessly entertaining owner, Roberto. As many Bolivian Express interns can confirm, it's easy to be seduced into listening to Roberto's stories of his past lives and adventures across the globe until the early hours of the morning. His eccentric personality is well reflected in the bar's decor: over 5000 bizarre trinkets adorn every available wall space. So don't be alarmed if the next time you pop by you wind up face to face with a stuffed snake, china doll, dog, or one of Roberto's seven cats. ✕



GENERAL GINA

TEXT: EMILY GRAY

While Bolivia's military remains a highly male-dominated institution, there is no question that Gina Reque Teran, the country's first woman to assume the rank of General of the Armed Forces, is breaking stereotypes. Reque Teran, who comes from a military family and has risen through the ranks as a respected officer since the 1980s, urged all women to "continue working and to dedicate [themselves] to [their] professions one hundred percent" at her inauguration in March 2015. Bolivia's recently elected Legislative Assembly is

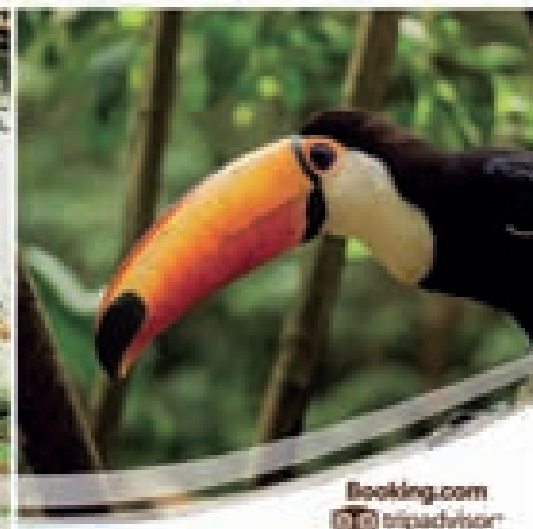
48% female, but women only make up a meager 0.4% of the military and are still barred from holding power in the Bolivian Navy, according to a 2008 study by RESDAL, an Argentina-based think tank that focuses on military research. In a country and region often characterized by machismo and gender roles that define women as child-rearers and discourage their participation in the workforce, Gina Reque Teran's accomplishments and empowering words not only make her a role model for Bolivian women but a symbol of the country's slowly changing attitudes towards gender. ✕



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CHICKEN JUGGLERS

TEXT: RODRIGO BARRENECHEA
 PHOTO: IVAN RODRIGUEZ PETKOVIC

The family that has stolen the hearts of every **paceño** (especially those who live in the Zona Sur) can still be seen performing its arduous juggling act on Avenida Costanera and its surroundings. Over time, this unique family has gained recognition from

city dwellers, who understand that the only thing the family seeks with its trade is to make a living.

Paceños tend to empathize more with the family than with foreign jugglers or other street artists, the majority of whom are Co-

lombian or Argentinian. When the initial 'Chicken Jugglers' article was published in BX, it tried to raise awareness of this family's story among our middle and upper class readers and emphasize how they represent a clear example of the precarious work situation faced by many Bolivians. ✖

THE BX PETS

TEXT: VALERIA WILDE
 ILLUSTRATION: MAURICIO WILDE

Kandinsky the cat was the first of them all. He lived in the BX penthouse on the 19th floor, warming the hearts of the interns who passed by. His death was unexpected. It seems the interns left a window open at night, and Kandinsky decided to cross it and travel all the way down to the ground floor.

Bruce Wayne arrived next and, since being a single mum is often challenging, I tend to bring him to the BX office. The BX team loves Bruce and his fashionable outfits. He was accepted at the house until he started to misbehave in

unusual ways, including rolling on his back in his own excrement and eating 4 kg. of raw chicken skin.

Last but not least is Chappie Steve, a lovely hummingbird who shares his colours, magic and unwavering willpower with the world around him. We adopted him 3 weeks ago. Since he was becoming weak, I had to be creative about replacing his protein diet, which is why I placed earthworms in my blender without hesitation. Thankfully this formula is working and Chappie Steve is getting closer to the day in which he can fly. ✖



24

DÍA NACIONAL CONTRA EL RACISMO Y TODA FORMADE DISCRIMINACIÓN

DE MAYO

Dale vida a tus
derechos



Somos **UN PAÍS**
que reconoce
y celebra
la **DIVERSIDAD**





BOLIVIA

AND BARBIE

TEXT: ELIZA WOOD

Klaus Barbie, a man who described himself as a 'superman' for being a member of the SS during the height of the Nazi occupation of France, was also described as a 'savage' by one of his torture victims. Lise Lesevre was tortured by Barbie for nine days, during which she was stripped, tied down, and almost drowned in a freezing bath, as well as being struck with a spiked ball that broke a vertebra in her back. She suffered from the injury right up until her death, nearly 50 years later. In a separate case, 44 children, aged between 5 and 17, seeking refuge in an orphanage in Izieu, in eastern France, were snatched by the Gestapo and sent to Auschwitz, where they all died in a gas chamber. The raid was carried out by Barbie personally.

How then did a man so barbaric come to

lead a life of power and influence in Bolivia? In 1947, Barbie was recruited by US intelligence for counterintelligence work to track down communists. With the aid of the United States, he fled prosecution in France and in 1950 came to Bolivia with his family and changed his name to Klaus Altmann. At this time, Bolivia was suffering from a string of unsuccessful leaders. The United States wanted to keep a 'subtle' control over many Latin American countries, and the CIA managed to do this in Bolivia via Barbie, as he held an important role in the country's security services. Meanwhile, the French were continuing to search for Barbie, but the United States protected him, and itself, by denying his whereabouts. Additionally, Barbie was pocketing millions of dollars from an illegal arms enterprise and drugs business. In La Paz, he created a campaign

and started a coup d'état to put Luis García Meza in control of Bolivia. Despite García Meza's regime lasting only 13 months, it has been described as one of Latin America's most errant violations of human rights, with up to 1,000 people being assassinated by the army in which Barbie held the title of honorary Colonel. After the fall of the dictatorship, Barbie was left exposed and unprotected, and after it was discovered who he really was, he was expatriated to France to face trial for the crimes committed while he directed the Gestapo. Following Barbie's initial expatriation from Bolivia, the United States offered a formal apology to France as it officially recognised its involvement with the 'Butcher of Lyon'. In 1987, Barbie was arrested, tried, and sentenced to life imprisonment for 341 separate charges and four years later he died of leukaemia alone in prison. ✕



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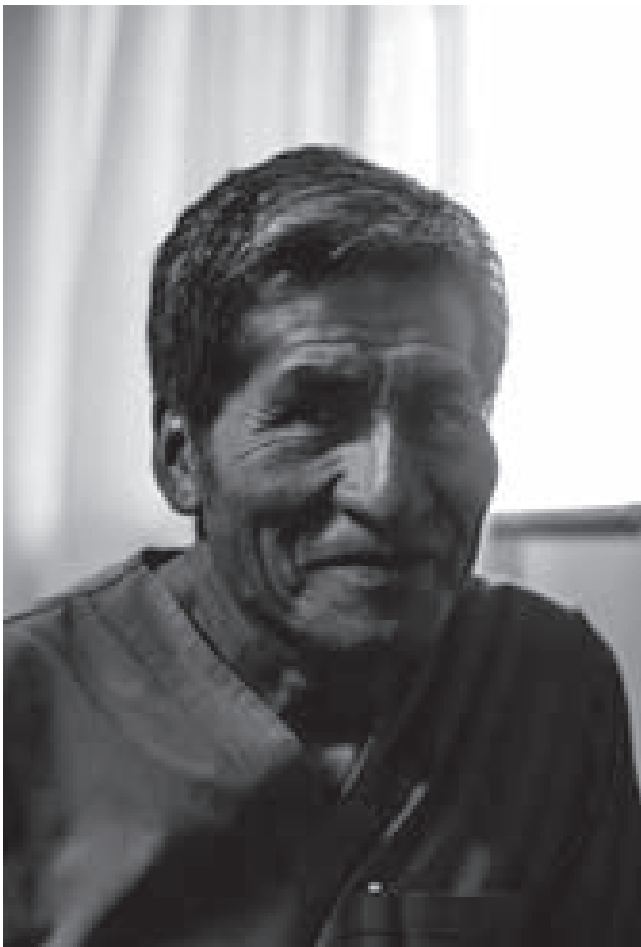
TAXI TRIVIA

TEXT: PHOEBE ROTH
PHOTO: AMARU VILLANUEVA

Somewhere amongst the abundance of radio taxis and the rather suspect missing-a-headlight cabs, you can find a driver named Mario Durán, who famously challenges his passengers to an unusual game of trivia en route to their destination. They can ask him any question from his Alma-

naque, but every answer he gets right, the taxi fare increases by one boliviano; every one he gets wrong, it decreases respectively. He claims he even challenged Evo Morales (in the days long before his presidency) and got every question right, after which Morales congratulated him. Mario explains that he works mainly at night and

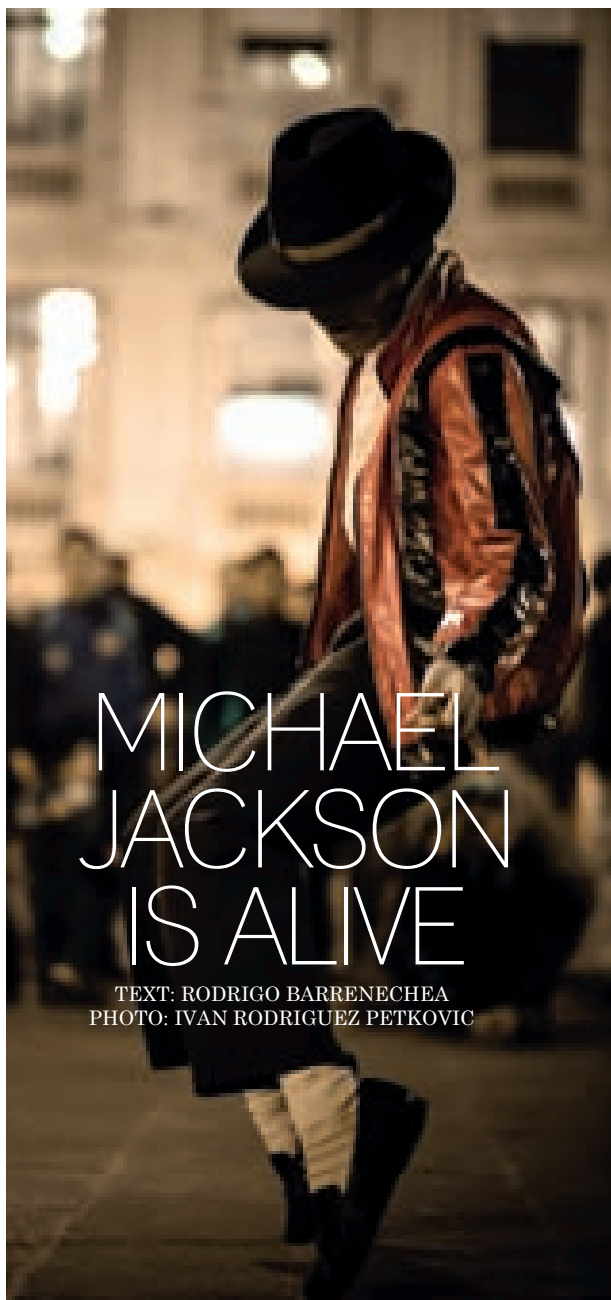
can often be found roaming the streets of Sopocachi. 'I work the night shift because I'm too old to put up with the traffic and social protests of the day time.' And why this strange ritual? He says he wants to encourage people to want to learn more about the world. And, of course, it makes the boring taxi rides more interesting. ✖



DON TEO

TEXT: SHAROLL FERNANDEZ
PHOTO: ALEXANDRA MELEÁN A.

Don Teo has worked for the URME clinic before it even was an actual clinic. He was first hired to take care of the building while the last construction details were being made and equipment was being bought. Since then, he became the one who everyone goes to for help—he cleans every corner, he assists the doctors, and whenever they need a rare medicine or just something from close by, he gets it for them. Don Teo has seen many people come and go, but he is not willing to leave. He says he would never work in any other health institution. All the time he's worked at URME, he says what he values most are the friendships he has built. He says that we are all a family—we may not have chosen to be together but we are there for the other. He is not the chatty kind, so he closes our conversation with 'Here I learned to be a friend.' ✖



MICHAEL JACKSON IS ALIVE

TEXT: RODRIGO BARRENECHEA
PHOTO: IVAN RODRIGUEZ PETKOVIC

One of the most striking characteristics of La Paz, emerging from the depths of informal labour, is the artistic display of informal shows that take place in the centre of town, around the San Francisco Church. This area of the city is crucial and strategic for the daily commute of thousands of people and tourists who swarm this part of town.

Due to the affluence of commuters, many **paceño** characters gather here to perform and entertain the passing public every night during rush hour (between 6pm and 10pm). Among these characters is the 16-year-old Gonzalo Mamani, who brings the legendary Michael Jackson back to life, with his faultless impersonation of the deceased singer. Gonzalo never falters to dazzle the crowd with each of his dance moves, both on an artistic level and on a personal one, given that he is just a young boy trying to make a living.*

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MAY 1ST

TEXT: ADRIANA MURILLO
ILLUSTRATIONS: FREEPIK.COM

In Bolivia, the origins of unionism lie in the revolution of 1952, a moment in time that was a determining factor in consolidating the start of the representation of the working class and the social struggles of the people. Thanks to the fights of May 1, 1886, Bolivians managed to win basic rights such as a maximum eight-hour workday, 15 days of vacation per year, and a monthly minimum wage (which had variations depending on the political and economic model).

The first trade union organizations, particularly mining workers dating back decades from 1910 to 1920, began to raise demands against the business owners Patiño, Hoschild and Aramayo.

The socio-historical meaning tells us that May is a time of reflection, representing the demands of workers but also raising awareness of work as a source of life and advancement for society. ✕



TEXT: ELIZA WOOD
PHOTO: CATEY STAHL

Each May, crowds of indigenous Bolivians flood the streets of the small town of Macha, in southern Bolivia, to take part in a fiesta lasting several days. Despite initial appearances of being a traditional Bolivian festival with colourful clothing and musicians hustling amongst the busy streets, Tinku is not a typical celebration. Competitors travel down from

their rival communities to take part in brutal one-on-one fist fights.

After days of strenuous combat, the streets are littered with bodies. However, despite their bloody faces and torn clothes, most of the comatose figures sprawled across the alleys have been overcome not solely by their opposition but by alcohol—specifically, **chicha**. The cheap beverage is made from

maize and can be brewed at home. Trails of men can be seen struggling beneath 200-litre jars of *chicha* whilst scores of women sell the drink in large cans throughout the blood-stained streets. Although the tradition of Tinku has changed slightly over the last decade thanks to an increase in tourist attention and subsequently more attention from the authorities, it is clear that *chicha* still holds the same importance as ever. ✕



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THE MANY COLOURS OF CARNAVAL

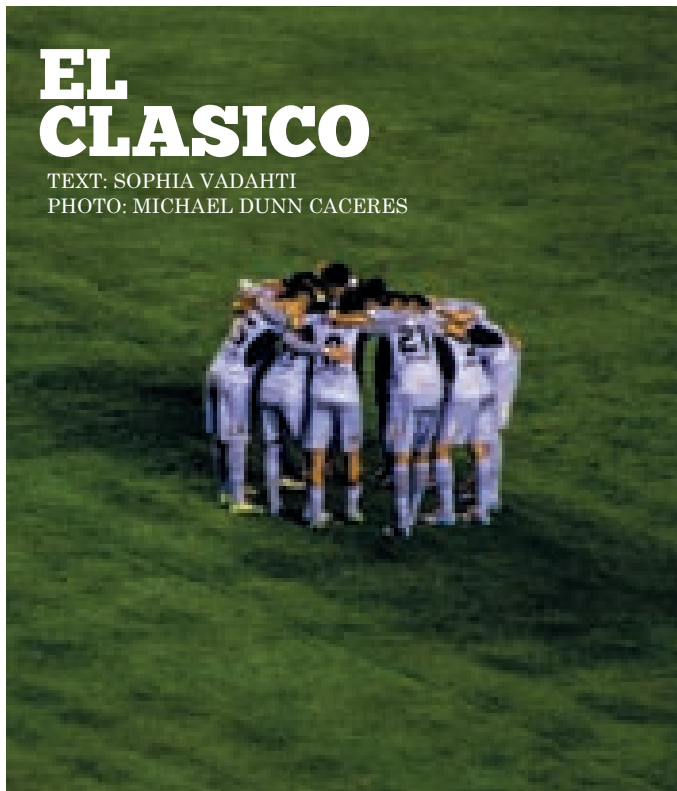
TEXT: SOPHIA VAHDATI
PHOTO: SZYMON KOCHAŃSKI
(www.mywayaround.com)



Over 200 years old and officially one of UNESCO's Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, the Carnaval de Oruro, a tradition of hedonism and spectacle, remains vibrant and debauchorous to this day. The water fights (i.e., water balloons and water guns wielded by small children and insecure **changos** as they terrorise the young female population), the elaborate outfits, the well-rehearsed and unworldly parades and dances, and the differing carnival experiences across Bolivia have fascinated and wowed previous BX reporters. What unites this cluster of colours and diversity? I'll give you a hint—it's not the honour of having Jude Law present at this year's celebrations (although he was). For four days, Bolivia is racked by an overwhelming solidarity as the country throws itself into hedonism, decadence, and vibrant colours. Tarija, Santa Cruz, La Paz, Copacabana, Coroico—wherever you travel in mid-February, *carnaval* pursues you, closely followed by a well-aimed water balloon. ✕

EL CLASICO

TEXT: SOPHIA VADAHTI
PHOTO: MICHAEL DUNN CACERES



El Papá Bolívar in our hearts and celestial blue passion running through our veins. The age-old rivalry fuels an ever unpredictable outcome. Win or lose, triumph or defeat—we are *bolívaristas hasta la muerte!*

EL CLASICO

TEXT: VALERIA WILDE
PHOTO: JUAN MANUEL LOBATÓN
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Awacry, the gold and black, one passion, unyielding fans and one big heart that never goes cold, that never stops beating. This is what makes us different from them all. We are the strongest, we are The Strongest. *Huarikasaya Kalatakaya... Hurra Hurra!* ✕



PSALMS AND SKULLS

TEXT: EMILY GRAY

PHOTO: AMARU VILLANUEVA RANCE

If you happen to be in La Paz in November, you'll find yourself immersed in two Bolivian festivities for the dead: Todos Santos and Las Ñatitas. On the first of the month, Bolivians celebrate Todos Santos by spending the day at the graves of their deceased loved ones, saying their

making offerings of special bread called **t'antawawas**. This traditional Roman Catholic holiday is a solemn event, unlike Las Ñatitas, which is celebrated 7 days later and stems from indigenous tradition. This second celebration features a lively party at the cemetery with real-life skulls. Families return to the graveyard

with the craniums, or "ñatitas", which are dressed up in festive clothing and offered flowers, cigarettes, coca leaves, and serenades of cheerful music. These two holidays peacefully coexist on the Bolivian calendar and represent the country's uniquely intertwined Catholic and indigenous heritage. **x**

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ALASITA

TEXT: EMILY CASHEN
PHOTO: MICHAEL DUNN CACERES

What is it you seek? Be it love, money, or even a new car, you are free to pursue your desires at the annual Alasita festival in La Paz. Each January, the chaotic city streets are transformed to an expansive marketplace. The produce on offer? Desires, but in miniature form.

Stalls on the streets are piled high with tiny

toy cars, tiny houses, tiny bottles of alcohol and monopoly-sized money. A Yatiri, or traditional Aymaran healer, blessed your chosen miniatures. This blessing will hopefully make your miniature manifest itself as a tangible life-size possession in the coming year.

Presiding over the festival is a jolly and rosy-cheeked Tiwanakan God of abun-

dance, Ekeko. Clad in traditional Aymaran garb, the Ekeko figurines take centre stage at the festival. After the miniatures have been blessed, they are hung upon the figurines as an offering.

Cholitas, school children and business professionals flock in the hundreds to snatch up the tiny objects. This folkloric event is alive at the heart of a rapidly modernising city. ✕



MARATON DE LA PAZ

TEXT AND PHOTO: VALERIA WILDE

Christian Conitzer is a scientist, a cyclist and a dreamer who never lost sight of his goal: keeping the Marathon of La Paz alive. In 2012 and 2013, the first and second marathons of La Paz were organised by a cement manufacturer, Soboce, bringing together around 2000 runners each year. Running at 3600 meters above sea level on La Paz's varied terrain, was a true privilege to those who were lucky enough to take part of the first two races. In 2014, the Marathon of La Paz was cancelled, mainly due to two reasons; Soboce was sold to Peruvian businessmen, who decided not to endorse the event; and local authorities did not grant permission for the most important race of the country to take place.

Faced with this situation, Conitzer was courageous enough to organise the marathon himself. He gained the support

of several sponsors and advertised via Facebook and other means. In contrast to previous years, where the number of runners was in the thousands, in 2014, 157 people signed up and only 72 actually participated. Conitzer ended paying for the unused t-shirts and medals out of his own pocket.

With the help of some friends, Conitzer managed to mark every kilometre of the route, ensure that participants were kept hydrated, and even offer prizes to those finishing first.

The runners that took part in this third edition of the La Paz Marathon gave testament to the fact that it was an unforgettable experience and were very grateful to the organiser who, in spite of all the obstacles, accepted the challenge and gave rise to a true family of marathon-runners. ✕

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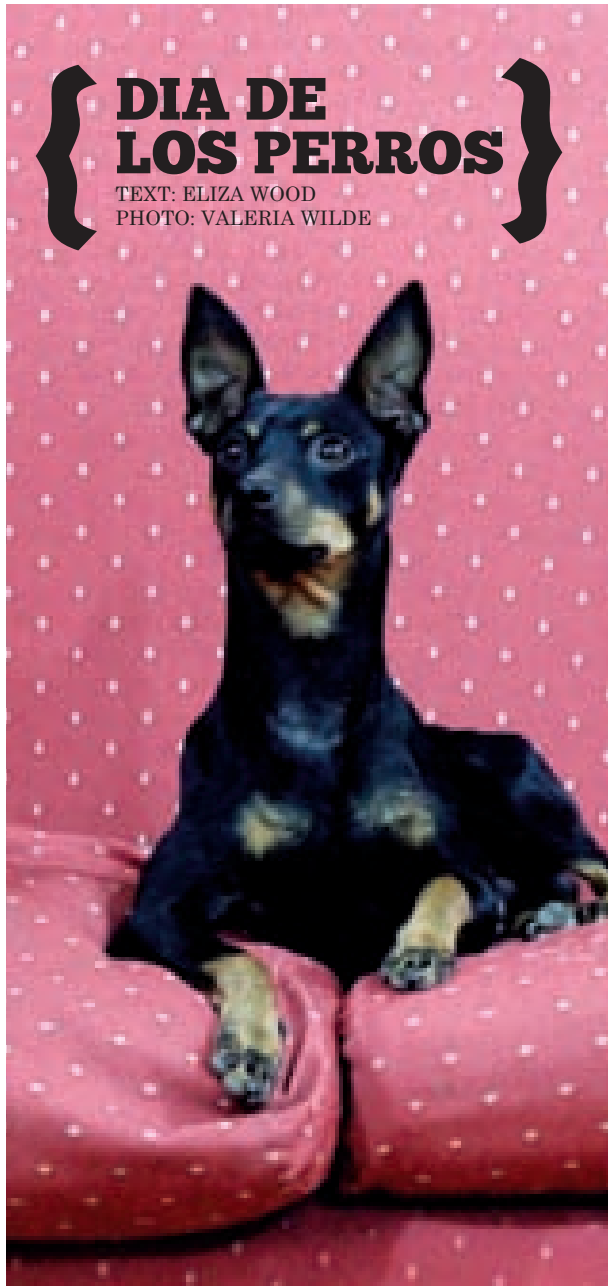
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{ DIA DE LOS PERROS }

TEXT: ELIZA WOOD
PHOTO: VALERIA WILDE

Día de los Perros is celebrated on August 16—the feast day of St. Roque, the 14th-century Majorcan patron saint of dogs, who was nursed back to health by a canine whilst suffering from the plague. Traditionally, man's best friend is showered with treats and affection by loving families as well as receiving extra pampering in some of the country's fanciest **peluquerías caninas**.

However it is not just the coddled dogs of La Paz who receive a treat on **Día de los Perros**. Charities such as Animales SOS Bolivia are dedicated to the welfare of street dogs, whose numbers are particularly high in La Paz: 60 percent of the 14,000-strong pacaña canine population inhabit the streets. The charity started delivering breakfast to dogs at landfill sites 15 years ago on Día de los Perros and last year it distributed 10,000 meals, including meat-filled sandwiches prepared by volunteers, to dogs all over the districts of La Paz and El Alto. ✕



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HAPPY AYMARA NEW YEAR

TEXT: EMILY GRAY
PHOTO: ALEXANDRA MELEÁN

This June 21st marks the 5,523rd Aymara New Year, an annual celebration that attracts 50,000 attendees and is held at the Tiwanaku ruins. The event begins in the evening and continues into the early hours of the following morning. Traditionally, the Aymara people offer coca, alcohol and a llama sacrifice to Pachamama, in exchange

for a successful harvest in the upcoming year. While these rituals are a large part of the celebration, nowadays many young attendees come for a night of dancing, drinking and fireworks. In 2009, President Evo Morales declared the Aymara New Year a national holiday – a move that was met with two extreme responses: controversy among non-Aymara indigenous

groups, who saw it as government favoritism towards Aymara traditions; and a sudden explosion in the event's popularity, resulting in four times the number of attendees in following years. There is no question that every part of this celebration – from its controversy to its festive atmosphere – represents the diversity and occasional clash of modernity and tradition in Bolivia. ✕

DIA DEL MAR

TEXT: EMILY GRAY
PHOTO: MICHAEL DUNN CACERES

Bolivia is one of two landlocked countries in South America, with a long, painful history regarding the sea. On March 23, 1879, Bolivia lost the War of the Pacific to Chile and, as a consequence, it lost its Pacific coast. Each year on this day, El Día del Mar serves to remember and mourn this historic blow to Bolivia's pride and resources.

But Bolivians don't only express their grievance for their former coastline on March 23rd. In fact, 136 years later, this loss is still characteristic of Bolivian identity. The fiery-red jackets of Los Color-

dos, a distinguished military unit in Bolivia, represent the blood shed in the War of the Pacific. A political poster above Plaza Avaroa defends Bolivia's "sovereign access to the sea." Young artists in the country still find inspiration in this story of national loss. And during football games between Bolivia and Chile, Chilean fans taunt their opponents by singing "Vamos a la Playa".

El Día del Mar is not just about water -- it's about pride. It represents the pain of a country that has always stood in the economic shadow of its neighbour, and it's hard to say when or if this wound will ever heal. ✕



TEXT AND PHOTO: ELIZA WOOD

MISCELLANEOUS

When Martha Cajías' mural entitled "The Kallawga" was vandalised in February several people took to social media to publicise their outrage. The mural located on La Avenida Sánchez Lima, was covered by a sheath of garish blue paint and a political slogan by members of the Satucos—a political action group run by ex-as-

sembly member Gustavo Torrico. One user tweeted that they couldn't destroy the mural 'without suffering the consequences'. However, when days later a modern interpretation of the traditional Three Wise Monkeys was also added, the reception was surprisingly positive. A photo was posted on the Sopocachi Facebook page with the caption 'Si al arte urbano no a la política' (Yes to art

no to politics) and received almost 150 likes as well as comments continuing to criticise the political propagandists. However, one group of inspired artists wasted no time to start the restoration. The project, led by Neddy Pacheco, was completed in 5 days despite the painstakingly slow process of scraping off the under-layer of paint that caused the worst of the damage. ✕

THE CHURCH OF AYAHUASCA

TEXT: VALERIA WILDE
ILLUSTRATION: MARCO TÓXICO

For Andean and Amazonian indigenous cultures in Bolivia, hallucinogenic plants are synonymous to medicine, spirituality and even religion. Ever since ancestral times, ayahuasca (which grows in the Amazon) and San Pedro (which grows in the altiplano between 2000 and 3000 meters above sea level) have been used as medicinal plants that heal the soul. To this day, people partake in different ceremonies in the country to expand their consciousness. One of the most famous destinations in Bolivia for these rituals is the Valle de las Animas, where the Sacha Runa organisation welcomes people from all over the world to take part in medicinal plant ceremonies that can cost up to \$100. The clientele varies from young alteños, to upper-class Bolivian housewives, to foreigners who come to Bolivia exclusively for this experience.

The city of Cobija is another well-known destination for medicinal plant rituals in Bolivia. In that part of the country, some people practice the doctrine of Santo Daime, founded in Brazil by Master Irineo, who allegedly received the sacred plant of ayahuasca from the Virgin Mary herself. Worshipping Catholic icons and singing hymns unique to their doctrine, these people pray to God, to life and to the forces of nature. The name 'Daime' comes from the Portuguese word Daimé, which means 'give me'. Practitioners of this doctrine implore the plant to give them strength, give them light, give them love. Among Bolivia's many attractive features, the country is also becoming a destination where you can experience these "journeys" that in some way or another are a fundamental part of its ancestral cultures. ✕



MENNONITE COMMUNITY

TEXT: EMILY CASHEN

PHOTO: CREATIVE COMMONS, THIS IS NATHANIEL, TREY RATCLIFF

MISCELLANEOUS



<https://www.flickr.com/photos/stuckincustoms/198735974/in/photolist->

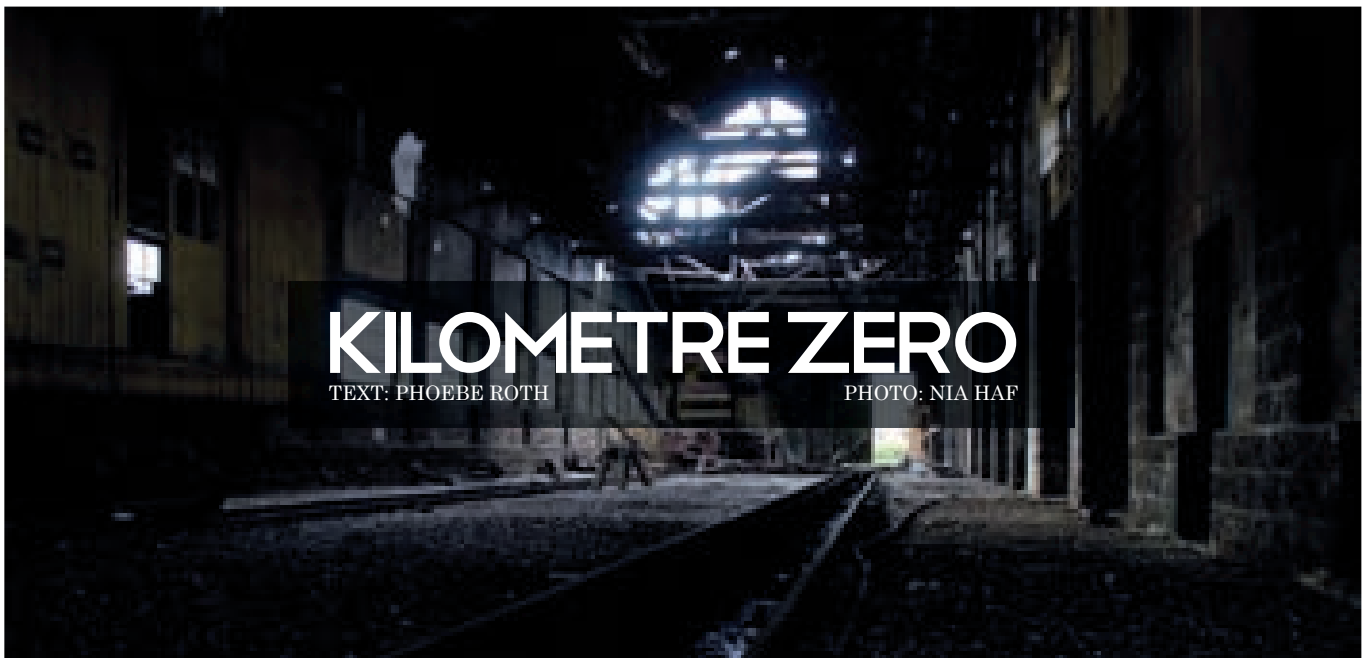
Religion is a topic that has often graced the pages of the Bolivian Express, be it from examining the country's dwindling Jewish population to exploring traditional Aymaran rituals. Yet little has been written about Santa Cruz' thriving Mennonite community, a curious offshoot of conservative Anabaptism that boasts around 70,000 Bolivian members.

The majority of Bolivian mennonites live in tight-knit isolated colonies. Despite their ever-increasing numbers, relatively little is known about this secluded community. They are descendants of German and Dutch Mennonites, who established the first Bolivian colonies the 1950's. But how have their communities grown so quickly? Through the years, some native Bolivians have joined the mennonite church and moved to a local colony. How does someone from the non-mennonite world make that decision? Why has no one ever written about this? What can a convert find in that community that is not available elsewhere? *

KILOMETRE ZERO

TEXT: PHOEBE ROTH

PHOTO: NIA HAF



The central station of the red **teleférico** line is situated next to what used to be La Paz's only train station. It shut down in 1996 as the tracks had been deteriorating for years, along with the popularity of the train as a form of public transport. This station was the starting point of the Andean rail network that ran from La Paz to Arica in Chile. However, it never was a huge success due to the historically poor relationship between the two countries.

During the 1990s, there was talk of restoring the line, but the planned maintenance would cost an extortionate \$40 billion, so over time the tracks were forgotten. Today, the station building stands empty, without permission to be demolished. Coupled with the contemporary *teleférico* station, this area acts as a symbol of Bolivia's past and promising future of transport. *



FORTUNE TELLERS

TEXT: EMILY CASHEN
PHOTO: NICK SOMERS

Here in La Paz, fortune telling is big business. Steeped in the city's history and rich in Aymara culture, this practice is revered by superstitious locals, many of whom would choose a consultation with a Shaman over a trip to the doctor. But to find the spiritual spots frequented by native **paceños**, you have to look much further than the tourist traps of the Mercado de Brujas.

My desire to take a small glimpse into my future first leads me deep into the depths of El Alto. After a nerve-racking hour of hurtling through the satellite city's narrow streets in a cramped rush-hour minibus, I arrive at my destination.

Sitting a mere 10 meters from the side of a busy road lies a strip of makeshift stalls. A chaotic tapestry of tarpaulin and floral fabric covers this mystical market. Behind the blue plastic entrance of the first stall, I meet a smiling Aymara woman who agrees to read my fortune through the medium of coca leaves. I am surrounded

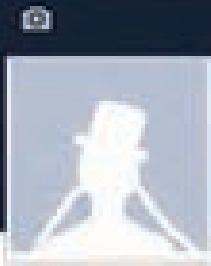
by an atmosphere of unspoken secrets and potential futures that infiltrate the muggy mid-morning air as I sit on a wooden stall in front of my chosen fortune teller. Then, the ritual begins.

Murmuring Aymara mantras, the woman splashes pure alcohol onto the table that separates us, followed by a handful of coca leaves. The fortune teller then asks me what aspect of my future is concerning me most, with another bunch of leaves in her hand. Unsure of whether to fully unleash my quarter-life crisis on this unsuspecting woman, I play it safe with some quintessential twenty-something woes. For each of my questions, a coca leaf is thrown onto the table and its position is carefully studied before my fortune is delivered with great sincerity and solemnity. Half an hour later, I emerge from the tarpaulin shelter 40 bolivianos poorer, but supposedly spiritually richer.

For my next venture into the fortune-telling realm, I find myself a little closer

to home. Tucked away in a quiet corner of Sopocachi, lives Doña Juana, a flame-haired Argentinian woman whose gift lies in reading Tarot cards. The air is heavily fragranced with incense and a family of identical Siamese cats slink nonchalantly around the room as my fortune reading is carefully prepared. Two evenly divided stacks of cards sit in front of me. One pile contains cards displaying images of multicoloured crystals and gems. The other, simple designs infused with Christian imagery. My first task is to choose the cards that appeal to me the most, which I take my time in doing, trying not to feel self-conscious about my subconscious.

Examining my chosen cards, Juana begins my reading and leaves no stone unturned. From finance to fertility, the cards seem to be especially talkative today. Throughout this stream of tarot-fuelled inspiration, Juana pauses only to write a mantra for me to alleviate worry and anxiety. Perhaps this is her way of telling me that I'm not French enough to pull off this many existential crises. ✖



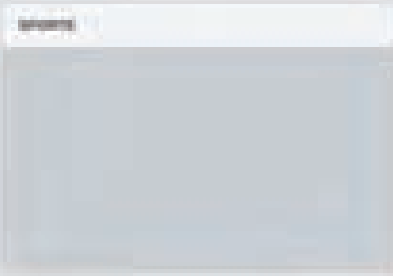
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(Text: Emily Gashon)

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28 years old



News Photo Video Life Event

'Uswa), that's Aymara for 'like', Ruben Hilar tells me, as he excitedly scrolls down the Facebook homepage - on his phone. Contained in these iPhone pixels is Ruben's latest labour of love, Aymara Facebook.

For the past four years, Ruben and his team of linguists and programmers have been translating Facebook into Aymara. Now in its final stages, with around 85% of the site successfully translated, the project will hopefully go public within the next year. As Ruben proudly shows me his Aymaran homepage, it's clear that his dedication and passion is what keeps this project alive.

Since the team was unsuccessful in securing government funding, Ruben and his colleagues are essentially working voluntarily. But perhaps an even greater obstacle to the project's development is the scarce availability of the internet in Bolivian homes.

"We do most of our work offline", Ruben tells me. "We download the Spanish words and then sit down together to discuss how to translate them into Aymara." But how do you go about translating such specific technological vocabulary into a language that has remained relatively unchanged for over 1000 years? With much deliberation. Each word is discussed among the group and a short list of translations is created, from which the final Aymara word is chosen after a round of votes. After hearing all of this, it's not hard to tell why the project has taken four years.

But Ruben's vision goes far beyond translation. By offering access to Facebook in the Aymara language, Ruben hopes that many more of the 2 million Aymara people in the Andes will establish a social media presence. The idea is that by growing an indigenous online community, Aymara people will begin to present their identities for the world to see.

"Western interpretations of Aymara people always show us to be sad and impoverished," Ruben tells me, "as though we are incapable even of smiling. We are always presented as being victims. But with this project we can show that we are complete human beings. We can present how we really are."

While the project is rooted in technology, its impact will surely be felt far beyond the computer screen. As Ruben's Aymara Facebook approaches completion, social networks can begin to provide a medium for reclaiming indigenous identity.

Facebook post interaction bar with icons for Like, Comment, and Share, and buttons for Public and Post.

BORN IN BOLIVIA

TEXT: EMILY GRAY
PHOTO: NICK SOMERS

The topic of adoption in Bolivia holds a special place in the lives of two former BX interns: Catey and Christof. Both of them were adopted as infants from Bolivian orphanages and raised by non-Bolivian parents in foreign countries. Catey spent her childhood in the United States, and Christof, in Belgium. While both came to Bolivia to write for BX, they also came in search of answers about their birth parents and the country they lived in for the first few months of their lives. I read each intern's powerful personal article that was published in BX and was intrigued by the issue. What is the adoption process like in Bolivia today?

In La Paz, there are several orphanages, including Hogar Carlos de Villegas, where Christof was adopted. Most of the one hundred children who live there arrived for similar reasons. They were either left by parents who had lost legal custody over them due to an unstable home life, or, more commonly, they were abandoned by desperate mothers who were unable to properly feed and raise them.

When adoptees like Catey and Christof return to Bolivia in search for answers about their birth parents, they are often unable to gather clues about them. Children generally enter orphanages without any personal documentation, making it almost impossible to

track down their birth families.

That said, Catey and Christof are unique nowadays in that both of them were adopted by foreign couples. As of 2008, international adoptions have been effectively banned by the Bolivian government. This controversial decision is intended to ensure that Bolivian children will grow up within

number of adoptions overall, he also knows what it's like to feel and look out of place among his Belgian-born friends. In Belgium, he connected with a group of young adults who were also adopted from Bolivia, and says that while some of them feel completely comfortable in the country, many find themselves caught between their Belgian and Bolivian identities.



their own country, and to change Bolivia's image as a poor country that needs to be saved by the international community. While the sentiments behind this decision are understandable, one can only assume the obvious: with a smaller pool of parent applicants, more children will spend their childhood in underfunded, overcrowded orphanages.

Christof has mixed feelings about the foreign adoption ban. While he acknowledges that it likely limits the

The number of abandoned children in Bolivia is unlikely to decrease until the country's poverty rates decrease and methods of contraception become generally accepted. This would certainly limit the number of mothers choosing between abandoning their children or getting an illegal abortion (which are generally very unsafe for the women). While the government has made it easier for middle class Bolivian families to adopt, many simply don't have the means to do this. ✕

ENTERING: LITTLE BOLIVIA, USA

TEXT: EMILY GRAY

PHOTO: CREATIVE COMMONS, BOLIVIAN DANCERS AT ROCKVILLE MEMORIAL DAY PARADE, DAVID CLOW

For nearly my whole life, I've lived in Boston, a city that captures the US's image as a melting pot of religions, languages and cultures. Growing up, I didn't have to leave my hometown to encounter people from all over the world. I had neighbours, teachers and classmates from Brazil to Ethiopia to Uzbekistan to New Zealand. But since coming to Bolivia, it struck me that in 19 years I've never met a Bolivian in the US. Given the large population of Latin Americans in the country, I found this odd. Where are all the Bolivians?

It turns out the Bolivian immigrant population in the US is small, but existent. The actual number of Bolivians in the country is disputed. According to a recent census, around 20,000 live in the Greater Washington area, making it one of the largest Bolivian expat communities in the US. However, local communi-

ty leaders suggest that the population is actually much larger.

"Arlington is like a little Bolivia," Patricia Zamora tells me, from her desk at the Instituto Exclusivo language school in La Paz. "You can find **salteñas**, typical Bolivian restaurants, stores, and businesses. The McDonald employees even prefer to speak Spanish," she says.

As a native Bolivian who raised her family just outside of Arlington, Patricia explains that Bolivian immigrants have made a strong effort to keep their culture alive in Virginia. They have established folklore groups, football leagues and a weekend school for Bolivian-American children. "They celebrate all Bolivian holidays," Patricia tells me, "like Carnival and **Fiesta de Urkupña**."

This "Little Bolivia" began in 1980s as a result of a suffering Bolivian economy. People

uprooted their lives and moved to Arlington in search of a "better life." Most of the early immigrants came from Cochabamba and established construction, carpeting, roofing, and restaurant businesses. "Cochabambinos are hard workers," Patricia tells me, "After a few went to Virginia, their family members followed, and the population grew."

Like many other immigrant communities, Bolivians in the US tend to keep to themselves in order to preserve their culture and values. Though admirable, this impulse can also isolate an immigrant community. According to Patricia, many adult Bolivians in Arlington never manage to learn English, even after as many as 14 years of residence.

Perhaps this is why I've never met a Bolivian in Boston. But, as fate would have it, next year I'll be attending university right outside of Arlington, Virginia. And now I know where to find my **salteñas**.





URBAN CEMETERY

TEXT: PHOEBE ROTH
PHOTO: MICHAEL DUNN

Walking through the general cemetery of La Paz, I was astounded at how strange and different it looked to anywhere I had seen before, with various blocks of what looked like greenhouses, each with row upon row of glass-fronted cabinet doors. The family of the deceased pay for a cabinet where the body is buried, and prices vary depending on whereabouts, and how high up, in the cemetery they are placed.

There are also people employed by the families to pray for their deceased relatives buried there. Recently, one of these employees, Ricardo Quispe, was struck by lightning after having taken shelter under a tree during a vicious electrical storm. The 66-year-old was left with burns over 90 percent of his body but, somehow, he's still alive. ✕

MISCELLANEOUS

CLIMATE CHANGE HITS BOLIVIA

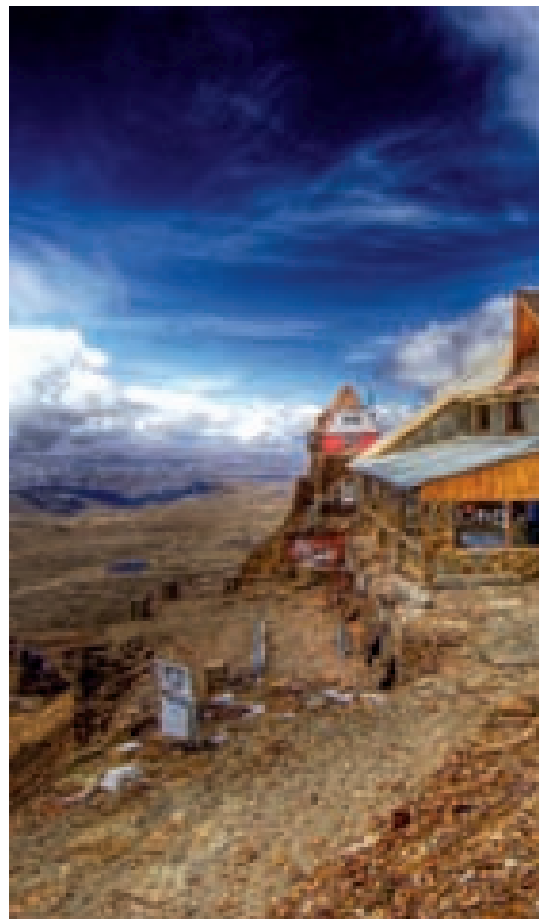
TEXT: PHOEBE ROTH
PHOTO: CREATIVE COMMONS, CHACALTAYA, VILLE MIETTINEN

Today, climate change presents itself in many ways: photos of polar bears clinging to floating ice caps and cities being encroached upon by the desert are abundant on the web. But why are some places being affected more seriously and rapidly than others? Andean glaciers are receding at speeds much more quickly than the rest of the world, due to their high altitude and proximity to the equator.

The glacier of Huayna Potosi is receding at an exceptional rate. Where there is now simply a glimmering lake, not long ago the glacier was 20 metres high. On the Chacaltaya glacier, a wooden building stands surrounded by rocks—once the highest ski resort

in the world. It shut down a few years ago because it simply became too warm for skiing to be viable.

La Paz relies on glacial water for 15 to 30 percent of its drinking water supply, depending on the time of year. Other Latin American cities, like Quito and Bogotá, have also been affected, as well as small rural communities high up in the Andes—on the slopes of Illimani, for example, where the watershed is the surrounding communities' main source of water. According to the BBC, Andean glaciers have lost 30 to 50 percent of their original size since the 1970s. If they continue to melt at this rate, in 30 years time, many will have disappeared. What will this mean for the countries who depend so heavily on them? ✕



<http://tinyurl.com/k2qzzk6>

FLAVIADAS

TEXT: EMILY CASHEN
PHOTO: ALEX AYALA



PLACES

Strolling down Avenida Ecuador early on a Saturday evening, you may very well be greeted by the sound of a Bach melody floating on the breeze. Following this symphony will lead you through a black metal gate, across a paved garden and into the home of Don Eduardo Machicado Saravia. Stepping across the salon's polished wooden floors and settling down on a plush sofa, you join the enthralled atten-

dees of this intimate listening session. A stained glass window casts a muted glow over the proceedings, while the soft cracking of the fire complements each soaring melody. This Saturday night ritual has a name: las Flaviadas.

The name is derived from the event's founder, Don Flavio Machicado Viscarra, who first had the idea of inviting fellow classical music lovers into his home

to share his extensive record collection. Over the years, the Flaviadas has not only attracted a loyal crowd of listeners but a host of international performers and composers, all while maintaining its intimate charm. Now, some seventy years after the dawn of this tradition, music lovers devotedly flock to this cosy haven and let Don Eduardo and his distinguished colleagues (Beethoven and Brahms) transport them to a harmonious realm. ✕

DRUNK AND WISHING FOR DEATH

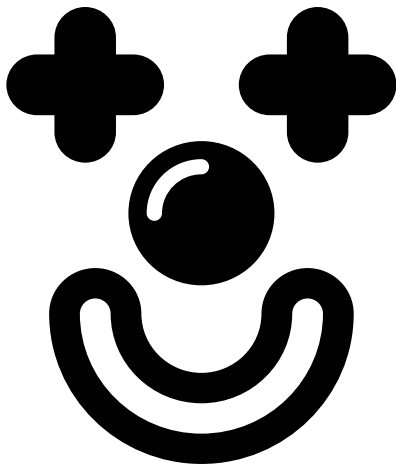
TEXT: ELIZA WOOD
ILLUSTRATION: OSCAR ZALLES

El *Cementerio de Elefantes* is a graveyard in Africa filled with the corpses and bones of elephants who go to die there when they know their life is about to end. 'Elephant graveyards' also exist in La Paz with a not so different significance. Hardened, inveterate alcoholics drown their sorrows in gallons of alcohol to forget, or perhaps relive, their memories and take their last breaths alone surrounded by nothing except the one thing that destroyed their humani-

ty. You won't find bars advertising this service as it is illegal, but if you know who to go to, they will be willing facilitate such needs for a shockingly cheap price. The Bolivian film of the same title tells the sombre story of a remorseful man who wishes to officially die by the same means which ended his life aged 14 when he first began to drink. Juvenal is taken to a bleak



room and given some newspaper for warmth and a bucket of alcohol to 'do the job'. This sad and dark film is a chilling representation of the hardships faced by those living on the margins of society who turn to alcohol as their way out. ✕



CLOWN BAR

TEXT: AMARU VILLANUEVA
ICON: FREEPIK.COM

The bar El Acuario is hidden deep amongst the busy, traffic-filled streets in the commercial district of Max Paredes. Behind three women selling **chicharrón** lie some steep steps leading down to the 'El Sotano', a popular nickname for the bar. The playground-like coloured rocks on the wall guide visitors down the stairs towards a small lamp hanging above a wooden door. There is no other sign to indicate that this is a popular bar for clowns.

The peeling walls and sticky smell of beer and cigarettes could mistakenly make you believe you are entering a typical **boliche**. At the front, where various liquors are on display, two signs catch my eye; 'if you drink to forget, pay before you forget', and the second one, written in blue biro on a piece of lined paper, says 'we sell soft toys'.

Mila Araoz visited this bar in May 2014 to discover that clowns don't come to

this bar to drink beer, but to get ready for their afternoon performances around the city. Once their faces are painted white, cheeks red, and noses on, our new friends undergo the final step in their transformation, suddenly breaking into an incredibly high-pitched voice.

One clown, known as Tibilín, told BX: 'the AMI association [Artistas del Mundo Infantil] says we can't be drunken clowns. Its also the rule here in the bar. We can't drink or smoke -- what would happen if a child saw us? We would break the fantasy'. Indeed, the only clowns we encountered at the bar were drinking Coca-Cola.

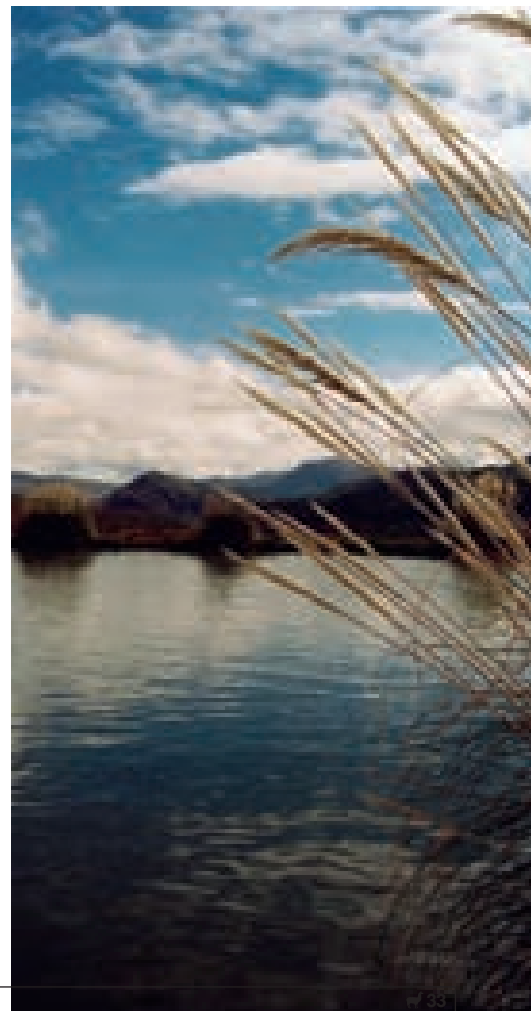
Its hard to leave the bar, even after having spent the past two hours here. We leave this hectic little world just to enter another one. As we walk up the steps onto the street, the fresh air awakens us from the surrealist dream we've just left behind. We emerge into a labyrinth of multicoloured street stalls. The pervasive smell of fried food hanging in the air signalling our entry back into the strange and manic reality of La Paz above ground. ✕

EL OJO DEL INCA

TEXT: ADRIANA MURILLO
PHOTO: THELMA FANOLA

Twenty-five kilometers from the city of Potosí, in Tarapaya and across a rocky canyon that arrives at 'the Devil's Cave' (according to locals, a place where the Devil resides) and 'Soldier's Rock' (named for its anthropomorphous shape), is a hill with a huge lagoon on its crest. Called *El Ojo del Inca* (the Eye of the Inca), this

thermal and sulphurous body of water has a legend behind it that says that the Inca Huyna Kapac used to bathe in it in order to alleviate health problems from which he was suffering. It is from this that the name was derived. The lagoon is of volcanic origin and is very popular with visitors, who still believe that it has healing properties. ✕



YEARS IN PRISON

TEXT: ELIZA WOOD

PHOTO: IVAN RODRIGUEZ PETKOVIC



Over the past five years, a string of gutsy interns from *Bolivian Express* has ventured inside some of Bolivia's most notorious prisons. In 2011, Matthew Grace, an editor for *BX*, traveled to Cochabamba's women's prison to meet two young Norwegians who were arrested for attempting to smuggle 22.5 kilograms of cocaine out of Bolivia. Four years ago, Stina Brendemo Hagan and Madelaine Rodriguez, then 20 and 23 years old and still denying the crime, were both well settled into life at the San Sebastian prison. Stina had a son of five months, and their sentences had been reduced to ten years.

However, when I arrived in May this year I was greeted by Madelaine alone. Stina followed the footsteps of Christina—a third girl arrested in 2008 who escaped to Norway in 2009—and fled home whilst on bail in 2011. Up until then, Stina and Madelaine acted as rocks to one another during their solitude behind bars. Not only were the

young women close friends, but Stina is also the aunt to Madelaine's first daughter, Alicia, now nine years old. In spite of their family ties, Stina absconded without saying goodbye, and Madelaine was left completely alone. But luckily for her, she was fully independent and had made a name for herself as an inmate not to mess with, due to her confident and somewhat intimidating air. She also has an appearance full of juxtapositions, with half-shaven hair and a nose ring alongside her youthful, flawless skin and callow eyes. Madelaine claimed not to have any close confidants back in 2011, and this clearly hasn't changed as the main advice she gives is to 'not trust anyone'. But she doesn't need close friends to pass time, as she has her hands full with two beautiful, inquisitive children. Damien, who is two years old, sports the same hair style as his mother and wears an American baseball top that Madelaine says his grandmother sent from the United States along with various other clothes. Although she hasn't had a vi-

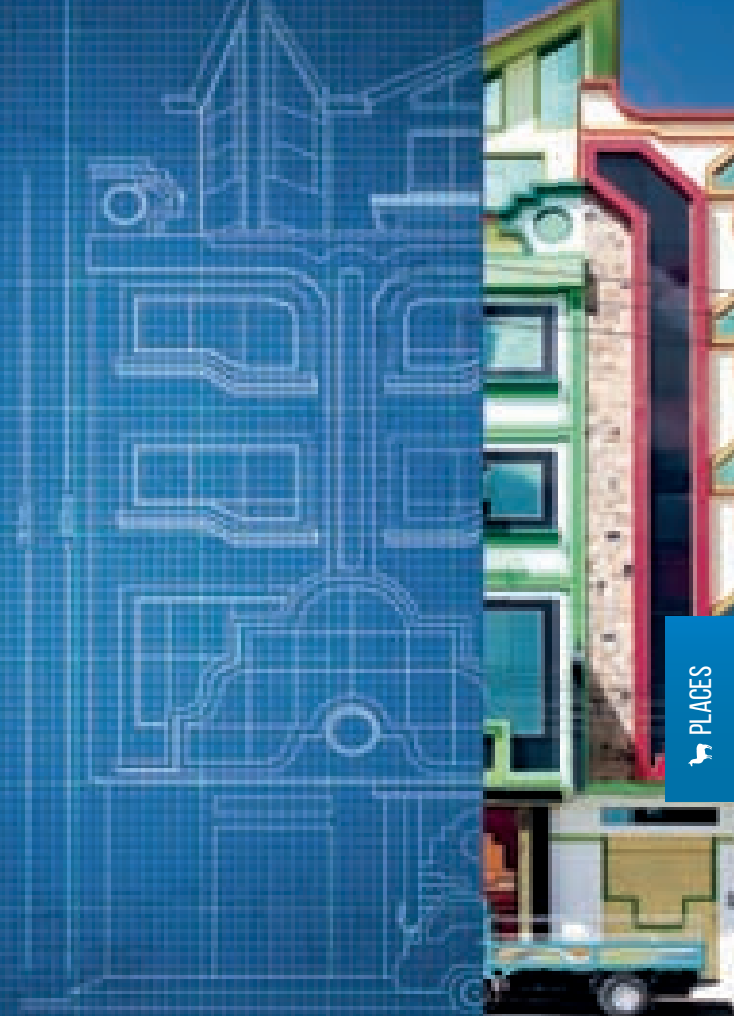
sit from her own family members since the first year of her incarceration, she and her children often speak to her mother and eldest daughter over the phone despite communication difficulties and language differences amongst all her children.

Life in the prison is dull and at times can be very hard as inmates have to pay for everything themselves. Madelaine has worked in the prison laundry for many years to earn money; some days, though, she still struggles to buy enough food for her family, let alone medical and dental services. I was surprised how comfortable she was around a complete stranger like me, but also how hopeful she was about her release after seven years in prison. She couldn't deny there had been multiple mess-ups and so many delays that she had lost count—her first parole was supposed to be in 2012. Although she may not return to Norway for some time due to legal reasons, she truly believes this is the year she is getting out. ✘

EL ALTO CHOLETS

TEXT: EMILY CASHEN
ILLUSTRATION: MARCELO VILLEGAS

Against a backdrop of half-finished houses and buildings fashioned from exposed red brick, El Alto's Neo-Andean Cholets are almost impossible to ignore. From their blindingly bright exteriors to their experimental proportions, these vibrant constructions are the architectural antithesis to the surrounding cityscape. While each creation has a unique identity, the buildings are stylistically linked through their use of Andean motifs - be it a Chakana cross above a doorway or a mural of a condor. This nod to indigenous heritage and the cholets' impressive price-tags make these mini-mansions especially appealing to El Alto's emerging Aymara bourgeoisie. ✕



PLACES



GAY BAR

TEXT AND PHOTO: ELIZA WOOD

Having accidentally stumbled upon a gay bar on my first night in La Paz, I presumed they were a common feature throughout the city. However, having found nothing after looking further into gay bars, I realised how underground the gay scene is. This was emphasised when I questioned the owner of one gay bar about the existence of any others, and he was unaware of there being any. Ronal Llanos the owner of Privilegio for nine years, proudly told me how well the bar has been doing recently. This could be due to the bar's change of location to Avenida Montes in central La Paz or perhaps because the city's LGB-TQ community is growing—or at least those who have been

hiding their sexuality have finally come out of the closet. On a usual Saturday, Ronal expects to see some 400 punters packing out the large space complete with gay pride flags hanging on each wall. The bar is truly welcoming and is filled with a number of flamboyant characters who, unusually for La Paz, can't wait to have their photo taken. ✕

LA PLAYA EN LA SELVA

TEXT: PHOEBE ROTH
PHOTO: FINN JUBAK

PLACES



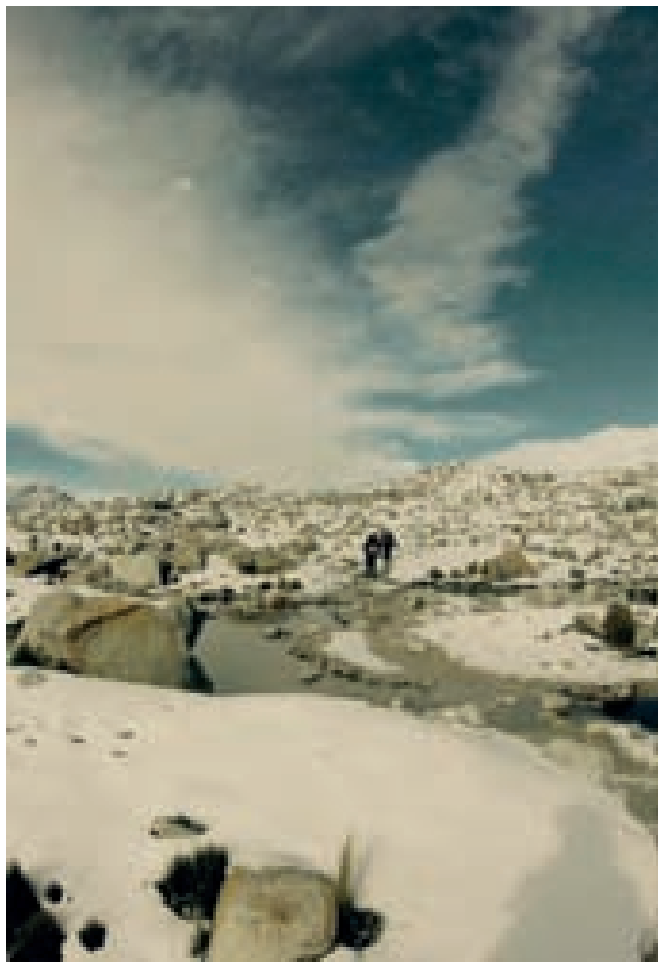
The Playa Turquesa website shows a slim, bikini-clad blonde lady, reclining on white sand with clear water and sailingboats in the background—what looks like a fancy Mediterranean package holiday. This, however, is an advert for one of the three beach resorts under development in the Santa Cruz department of eastern Bolivia, thanks to its low-lying geography and tropical climate. Francisco Cirbián, the general manager of Puerto Esmeralda, one of the other two resorts in development, explained that the project is to be completed by 2016.

These resorts are home to man-made lagoons, the biggest of which will encompass 120,000 square metres, and apartments of

varying prices that are available for purchase or to rent for a holiday. Cirbián explains that in the near future there are plans to build a hospital and a school in the vicinity of Puerto Esmeralda. Somewhat ironic, however, is the fact that the company constructing the other two resorts—Playa Turquesa and Mar Adentro—is Chilean, given that the only reason Bolivia has a need to construct an artificial, landlocked beach is due to its loss of the sea to Chile during the War of the Pacific in 1879–83. Yet people are seemingly on board with this project, which has so far been a huge success, despite not being officially open yet.

At the start of 2014, 30 percent of Puerto Esmeralda and an astounding 70 percent

of Playa Turquesa had been pre-sold—an essential investment to even begin the construction of such large-scale projects. But in a country with the lowest GDP per capita in South America, in which the average yearly salary is less than \$5,000, these pre-sale figures are even more surprising, given that the cheapest lots start at \$30,000 and apartments at \$60,000. So where are these buyers coming from? It would seem that a small percentage of the Bolivian upper-middle class are managing to sustain such developments. This Dubai-esque utopia seems to be a trend that, after completion in the next year, looks set to take the country by storm. Whether it will continue to grow or not, only time will tell. *



DESOLATE AND DANGEROUS BEAUTY

TEXT AND PHOTOS: PHOEBE ROTH

From the lights of El Alto city at night—a starry sky that, to a London-born city girl, looks like a theatre backdrop—to the sun rising above the clouds, the views climbing Huayna Potosí can only be described as surreal. You'd be forgiven for forgetting that you are only a 45-minute drive away from La Paz. Although civilisation is a mere stone's throw away, here, at over 6,000 metres above sea level, you are cut off from the world.

As we ascended from 5,000 metres to the summit in the middle of the night, the only sound heard for miles was the crunching of snow underfoot and the rhythmic breathing of our small group of mountaineers. However, no matter how peaceful and serene it may have seemed

at the time, what I realised more than anything on this expedition is just how vulnerable you are in the mountains.

We were halfway up climbing the steep final ascent when I began to feel the snow slide away from underneath me, and every step I took felt less and less secure. The sun had started to rise and the snow had started to melt, sending small snowballs tumbling down the steep cliff face. About 80 metres from the summit, we decided as a group to turn around and not attempt the summit, as the avalanche risk was too high.

As we began our descent, Eduardo, our guide, explained the dangers of mountaineering. He once ran from the base camp, at 4,700 metres, to the summit, at 6,088

metres, in an hour and a half, to rescue his colleague and a fellow climber who were trapped in an avalanche—a journey that would take the average person about six hours. It was on that same slope that we made the decision to turn around. Avalanches occur often there, given its steep, smooth surface and the buildup of layers of old and new snow.

When he told me this story, I realised two things: just how much experience and local knowledge is needed to be a mountain guide, and how isolated and dangerous the mountains can be, especially here in Bolivia. The route is inaccessible by car and, unlike Europe, there are no emergency services, except rescuers on foot. This makes one realise that, as Eduardo explained, 'No one is safe in the mountains'. ✕



A SERIES OF UNIMAGINABLE PURCHASES

TEXT: EMILY GRAY
PHOTO: VALERIA WILDE



Welcome to El Alto Market, the famous open-air marketplace of La Paz's looming sister city, where you can find just about everything you never knew you wanted. Like nearly everyone who sets foot into its colorful hustle and bustle, we BX-ers have had our fair share of odd experiences at the market. We've discovered (and found ourselves oddly drawn to) promised medicinal remedies such as bottled snake butter, snail slime and cat nails. We've caved in

to buying a DVD about extraterrestrial "Reptilianos en Bolivia", and a live llama, which, to our disappointment, we later discovered was just a sheep. We've come close to finding all the parts we'd need to construct our own functioning car, and have spent hours picking through piles of used clothing, aka El Alto's own Urban Outfitters. As a place where bartering is expected, just about the only rule is that you leave with something you didn't come for in the first place. ✕



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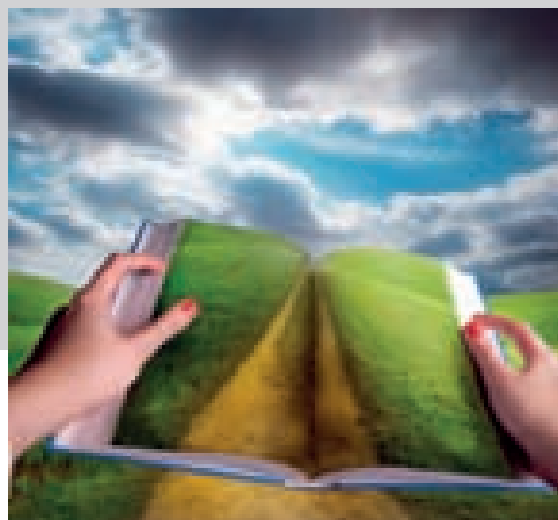
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It can be said that a large percentage of Bolivians have eaten agachaditos. The word 'agachadito' means 'crouch', but in reality, it is more than its literal meaning. It means to crouch in the street, eating good, cheap food in the fresh air.

Señora Hilda has been selling agachaditos since she was a girl: 'It was my mother's business, and I learned it in order to sell and to cook for her. It is not easy to get this business,

you know—you need to get permission from the mayor.'

The peak time for sales is from 11 am until 2 pm. 'All the people like what we serve because it is available during the day and the dishes are rich Bolivian dishes: ajicitos, soups, something warm when it is cold, and something quick when you are hungry', says Señora Hilda. ✕

CROUCH DOWN AND EAT

TEXT: ADRIANA MURILLO
ILLUSTRATION: OSCAR ZALLES



SUSPECT DRINKS

TEXT: RODRIGO BARRENECHEA
ILLUSTRATION: FREEPIK.COM

It remains clear in my mind: the memory of the day I first entered Layka Restaurant on Linares street. More clear yet rests the mental image, burnt into my retina, of the first thing that you see upon entering this picturesque establishment: an antithetical mural of the Last Supper, representing the devil and his minions having a feast in hell. Without a doubt, this left me a bit unnerved at first and shaken.

It was precisely at Layka where I had the chance to drink one of the most exotic and eccentric drinks I have ever tried: singani distilled with the body of a real-life viper. According to Mauricio, the producer of this drink (who also happens to be the owner of the restaurant) he placed the live animal into the drink himself in order for the snake to absorb and distill the singani. It was one of the best singanis I have drunk in my entire life. The tale of how it was produced, made the taste transcendental. ✕

348

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HOW MANY SALCHIPAPAS?

TEXT: PHOEBE ROTH

PHOTO: NICK SOMERS



Legend has it that the man selling **salchipapas** on the edge of Plaza España has been around for decades. Jackie, who works in the bar Diesel on Avenida 20 de Octubre, claims that when she was a child, the same man owned the same stall, some 30 years ago. So how many *salchipapas* is that in a lifetime of street food? He opens the stall at around 6 pm and closes at midnight. At an estimate of 40 an hour—that makes 240 a day, 1,680 a week, and 87,000 a year (giving him a few days off for the many Bolivian bank holidays). A ballpark figure of just over two and a half million *salchipapas*. No wonder he's grumpy. ✖



FOOTBALL AND FOOD

TEXT AND PHOTO: SOPHIA VAHDATI

What the stadium lacks in booze it makes up for in food. The spectacle of colours and fans sweating with passion would not be complete without the array of children, women, and men scrambling around the stadium trying to sell **sandwiches de chola**, popcorn, **salchipapas**, coffee, and fizzy drinks to help supporters maintain their Duracell-bunny energy. If the match doesn't satiate the hungry fans, on leaving the stadium they encounter the flames and cackles of anticucho vendors. Food and football here go hand in hand. ✖



DANISH INVASION

TEXT : SOPHIA VAHDATI
PHOTO: JULES TUSSEAU

Denmark and Bolivia are worlds apart, both geographically and culturally. Yet a Danish community is emerging in La Paz, made up of more than typical expats who have come to 'find themselves' in the Andes. These Danes have brought with them a culture of organic coffee beans, gourmet fine-dining and cafés that unite socialite seniors, book-lovers and vegans.

Magick, Roaster Boutique and Gustu have all become some of my favourite hideouts in La Paz. What do they have in common? Excellent food, delicious coffee and Danish involvement. Magick is a vegetarian bubble by day and a hive of debauchery and delectable cocktails at night. It boasts a vast selection of organic and vegan dishes and healthy fruity drinks. Here the sugar is brown and the

salt is pink. Cholita hats have been fashioned into lampshades and the oriental-style lounge upstairs complements the circus-themed café downstairs that looks like an Old-Curiosity-Shop to form the original dream-like vision that Stephan Gamillescheg has for the place.

Stephan, the owner of Magick, says citizens of Denmark mainly come to Bolivia through charity projects led by Danish NGOs. According to him, some Danes shirk Copenhagen for La Paz in order to set up their own businesses, form a new growing community or, in his case, start a family.

Claus Meyer, on the other hand, the owner of Gustu, was drawn to Bolivia not by a woman, but by the potential and quality of raw ingredients in the country. A three-ti-

me winner of the World's 50 Best Restaurants, Claus opened what The Guardian's Ed Stocker has called 'a surprise restaurant venture' in the capital. Gustu's modern and colorful decoration, faultless service and lively atmosphere are only outshone by the journey of experimental flavours that comes hand in hand with entering this Dane's restaurant. Coca butter, **llajwa** cocktails, chocolate mousse cake with sultana gelée and coffee fruit ice cream. Gustu transports **paceños** and tourists alike to culinary finery; just as the impeccable coffee from Roaster Boutique offers up an oasis of earthy, rich and aromatic coffee in a desert of Nescafé and caster sugar.

One thing's for sure: we may not know exactly why these Danes decided to settle in La Paz, but I'm glad they did and I hope they keep on coming. ✖



In Bolivia, fifteen is the age that a girl enters into womanhood, and the **quinceañera** tradition dictates that an extravagant party is thrown to celebrate this rite of passage. It can be as small as a family gathering in the girl's house or as opulent as a 1920s themed ball. Traditionally, it starts with a small Mass, then continues into an all-day party, with the girl's father presenting her to the attendees in her first pair of heels, a symbol of her transition.

Perhaps one of the most important parts of these luxurious occasions is the *quinceañera* cake, a multi-tiered **dulce de leche** masterpiece, adorned with flowers, biscuits, fruit, and multi-coloured jelly. In the Max Paredes district of La Paz, cake shops line the street, displaying their most flamboyant designs, some of which cost an extortionate 3,500 bolivianos. They can be made to order in any shape or size, from basic circular cakes to designs mimicking the favourite hobby of the **reina** de la *quinceañera*. ✕

TEXT: PHOEBE ROTH

PHOTO: CREATIVE COMMONS, PURPLE OMBRE CAKE, LINDA MARKLUND

LOLITA

THE KOSHER CHEF

TEXT: SHAROLL FERNANDEZ
PHOTO: NICK SOMERS

Every morning, Lolita leaves her house at 8 am so she can be on time to make the bread. She has been part of the Chabad Lubavitch for four years, working for the rabbi's family as a nanny, as an assistant in the kitchen, and, now, as the manager of the restaurant. 'I am happy here', she says. 'I have friends.' Her customers mainly consist of young Israelis who are traveling around South America and come to the Chabad to eat kosher food. Lolita knows every single detail of the meticulous kosher food preparation, and she is very respectful of it. Whenever she has to cook something, she calls one of the Jewish assistants of the rabbi by shouting: *esh!!!!* ('fire' in hebrew), and



soon one will come to turn it on for her. She does this because the food, in order to be kosher, has to be prepared with fire that is provided by someone who keeps all the *misvot* (command-

ments) since birth. Lolita enjoys this peculiarity of kosher food preparation, especially when Moshe or Yossi, the rabbi's assistants, run to the kitchen just to turn on the fire for her. ✕



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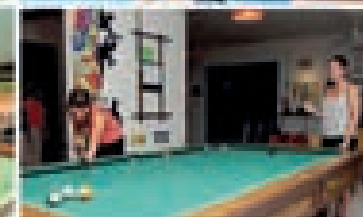
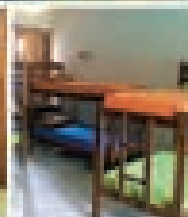
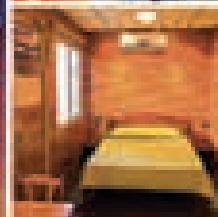
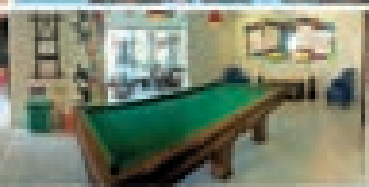
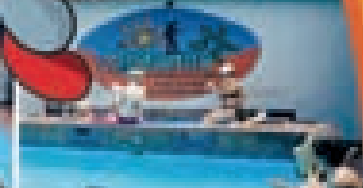
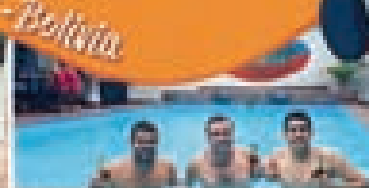
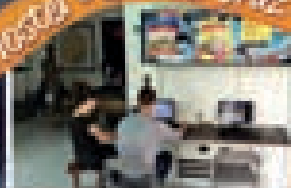
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TESTOSTO

QUINCEAÑERA	The celebration of turning 15		
DULCE DE LECHE	Caramel sauce traditional of South America	SALTEÑA	Typical Bolivian mid-morning snack food
REINA	Queen		
SALCHIPAPAS	Traditional Bolivian fast-food dish of sausage and chips	FIESTA DE URKUPIÑA	A Bolivian holiday celebrated in Cochabamba in mid-August to honor the Virgin Mary
TELEFÉRICO	Cable car system of La Paz	ALTEÑO	A native inhabitant of El Alto
DÍA DE LOS PERROS	"Day of the Dog" celebrated on August 16th in Bolivia	T'ANTAWAWAS	A type of bread offered to the deceased during the celebration of Todos Santos
PELUQUERÍAS CANINAS	Dog salon		
CHUFLAY	A traditional Bolivian mixer made from Singani and sprite or lemonade and topped off with a slice of lime	LLAJWA	a spicy tomato dip made with locoto
TÉ CON TÉ	A warming drink famous for curing colds made from two ounces of singani added to a pot of hot cinnamon tea with sugar and lemon	HUARIKASAYA KALATAKAYA... HURRA HURRA!	Aymara chant that translates as :Break the stone, shake the vicuña
CACHO	Popular dice game throughout Bolivia	CHICHA	Fermented beverage derived from maize
PACEÑO	A native inhabitant of La Paz	CHICHARRÓN	A dish made from fried pork rinds
CHANGOS	Slang word for young people	BOLICHE	Club or venue
CHINO RENEGÓN	Angry chinese man	SANDWICHES DE CHOLA	Sandwiches traditionally made by cholos (indigenous women) full of pork, spices and sauces, most famously sold in the park called Las Cholas.



SALTEÑAS

TEXT: WILMER MACHACA
PHOTO: ALEXANDRA MELEÁN

The Queen of Street Food, in spite of the grand variety of street-bought snacks available in Bolivia, the salteña remains both a popular mid-morning snack and a food of celebrations. Whilst it originated in Tarija, created by a Salta-born woman moved to Bolivia, it is now the test of a true paceño. If you can eat one of these without the juices spilling everywhere, then this is where you truly belong. ✕



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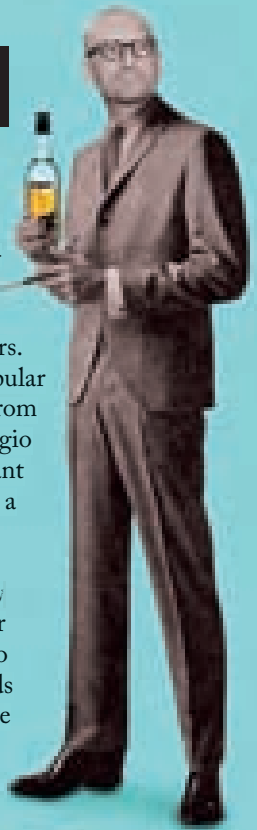
SINGANI :

BOLIVIA'S NATIONAL LIQUOR

TEXT: ELIZA WOOD

It is clear, just by the number of different singani-based drinks—such as the **chuflay** and **té con té**—along with the plethora of bottles lining the shelves of any Bolivian supermarket, that singani is popular amongst Bolivians. Perhaps it is due to the strict law dictating that it can only be produced in particular areas (around Tarija, and above an altitude of 5,250 feet). Or perhaps thanks to its unique aromatic and clear taste which has been awarded seven international gold awards in the last six years. To Bolivians, singani isn't just a drink—it is a way of life present in many traditions, including the popular game of **cacho**. For most paceñas, the best—and often only—way to drink singani is in a small bar away from the hustle of the city. This creates the 'melancholic spirit' of the alcohol that passionate singani drinker Sergio Ergueta ardently describes. However, the cabalistic quality of the beverage present in La Paz is very distant from the 'free spirit' enjoyed in Tarija. Regardless of the different feelings drawn from singani, it holds a significance throughout Bolivia.

However, singani has recently taken a new direction on the global market. Singani 63 is the stylish new brand which has been privately invested in by Hollywood director and producer Steven Soderbergh. After trying and loving singani whilst filming *Che* in 2008, Soderbergh declared he would import the drink to the US 'Tomorrow, if not sooner.' His initial goal was to import a quantity sufficient for him and his friends to enjoy. However, since a bottle of Soderbergh's Singani 63 featured for several minutes in the box office hit movie *Gone Girl* alongside Ben Affleck, Soderbergh has started importing more of the one-of-a-kind liquor to keep up with US demand. Despite already having 500 years of heritage in Bolivia, the global journey of singani is just beginning. ✕



FOOD



KEEN ON QUINOA

TEXT: EMILY GRAY
PHOTO: PABLO PANIAGUA
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For thousands of years, quinoa was a cheap, common, staple food grain for the people of the Andes. However, in recent years, the demand for quinoa in western cultures has sky-rocketed as more people recognise it as an incomparably healthy carbohydrate packed with vitamins, minerals and protein. Essentially, American and European foodies love it, and its growing worldwide popularity prompted the UN to declare 2013 the International Year of Quinoa. This trend poses both positive and negative impacts for Bolivia, where the crop is abundant. On one hand, Bolivia's quinoa companies have grown immensely, now able to sell one packet of quinoa in the US market for four times as much as in Bolivia. That said, the effect is the opposite within the local economy: the rising price of quinoa in Bolivia has put this staple food item out of reach for many locals.

As the grain becomes more popular worldwide, its future impacts on the Bolivian economy have yet to be seen. One thing is for sure: whether you're an American raw food blogger seeking fancy new products like lactose-free quinoa milk, muffins or beer, or an **Alteño** snacking on a bagged hot apple-quinoa puree bought from a street-vendor, quinoa is the power food of the people. ✕

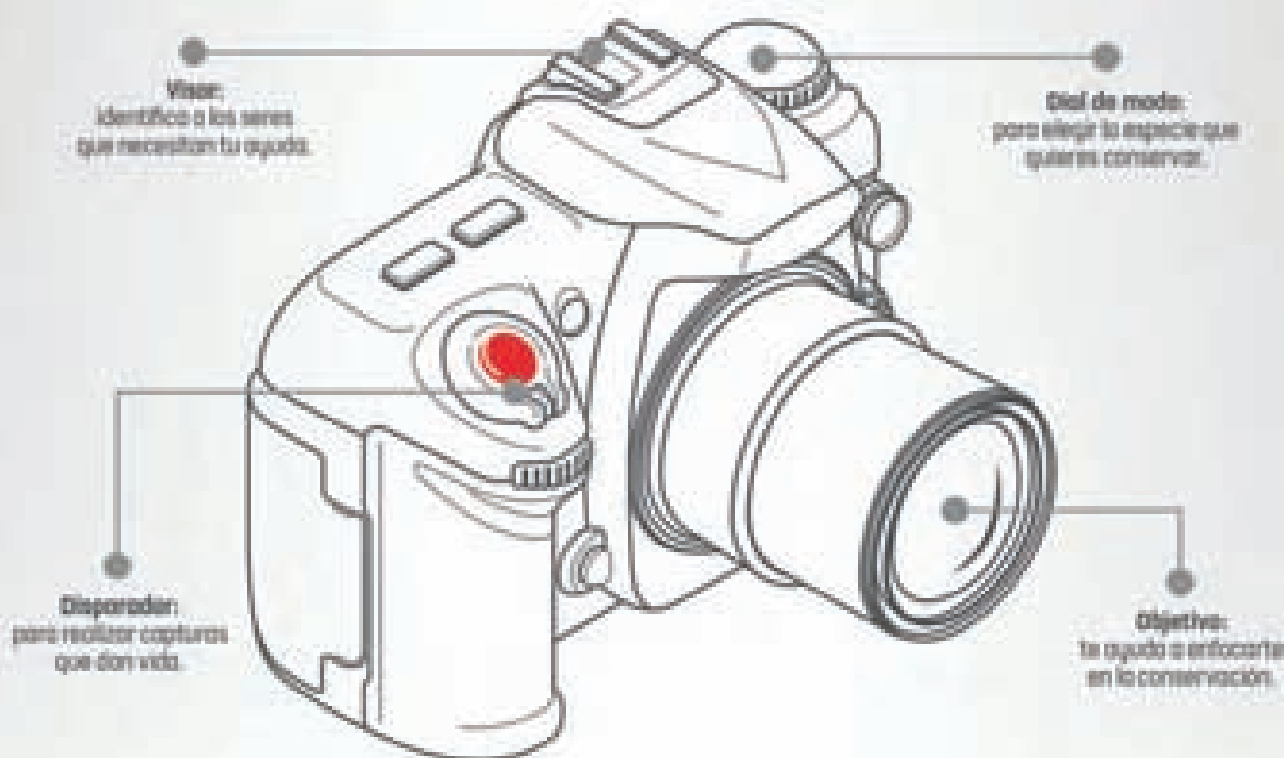
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