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Table of Contents  
**#93 Challenges**

Sponsored By:

08	LIVING AMONGST MOUNTAINS	24	THE HEARTBEAT OF THE CITY
12	IT'S A WHISKEY BUSINESS	27	FUNDACIÓN CASARI
14	THE MAN IN THE MIRROR	30	THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE CHOLA PACEÑA
20	ALL EYES ON OCTOBER		

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# Editorial #93: Challenges

By: Caroline Risacher

## A typical Monday morning in La Paz

**6:23am:** I push the snooze button to make the alarm stop as it keeps reminding me that I need to get up. I hold my breath as I get out of bed and jump in the shower, trying to ignore the cold.

**6:42am:** *In the shower:*

Scenario 1: No water.

Scenario 2: I electrocute myself.

Scenario 3: I wash myself with a capricious drizzle of water which alternates between boiling and freezing.

**7:31am:** I want to buy a **marraqueta**/juice for sustenance but I don't have any change, which leads to me getting yelled at by the **caserita**. (But it's better to be in that situation than to find yourself in the minibus with a 100-boliviano bill and not enough change.)

**8:04am:** I am trying to cross a road near the city centre.

**8:08am:** I am still trying to cross that road. I am reminded of the game with the frog crossing the road and reflect on my own mortality.

**11:30am:** Someone brought **salteñas**. As much as I love them, they fill me with dread as I know that I will be silently judged by all if I spill any of the soupy stew inside its crust.

Usually by this point, the day of a **paceño** gets easier, and the only challenge left is to make it to the next day. But it is not uncommon at all for people who live in small communities in the **altiplano** to commute eight hours per day (four hours each way), every day, to El Alto or La Paz in order to work or sell their merchandise before returning home and repeating the same routine the next day. This is just one example of the harshness of life on the *altiplano*. What seems challenging for one person is just how life is for others.

For Bolivia, 2019 is an election year, and this comes with its own series of tests. Bolivians will have to deal with protests and roadblocks that affect their daily routine and travel plans. The current government will need to prove that it deserves to be reelected, while the opposition needs to convince the nation that they are a better option. On the world stage, Bolivia is challenging the world with its interpretation of socialism, and the country will have to show that it is holding transparent elections and that democracy is being respected.

There are all sorts of challenges, from seemingly small ones like making rice at 3,600 metres above sea level to vital ones like fighting against the deforestation of the Amazon rainforest, and everyone faces obstacles at some point to varying degrees of difficulty. Ultimately, these are part of what makes Bolivia such a unique and special place. After all, isn't it true that 'the greater the effort, the greater the glory?'

**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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Photo: Michael Dunn Cáceres

# LIVING AMONGST MOUNTAINS

THE GIFTS AND CHALLENGES OF THE CITY IN THE SKY

TEXT: RENATA LAZZANO SILVA

*'Lindas montañas te vieron nacer, el Illimani tu cuna meció, y la kantuta su alma te dio, collita tenías que ser...'*

*(“Beautiful mountains saw you being born, the Illimani cradled you, and the kantuta gave you its soul, collita you had to be...”)*

These lines mark the start of ‘Collita’, one of the most famous songs of the bolivian folkloric group **Wara**, in honour of the women of La Paz. They are not wrong when they say that **paceños** are born and live amongst mountains. That is what the city of La Paz is famous for: the Bolivian seat of government is the highest in the world, at 3,640 metres above sea level. *Paceños* grow up and live surrounded by snow-capped mountains, among them the Illimani as the most iconic peak of all.

The **apus** or **achachilas**, gods of the mountains, have been venerated by indigenous societies that inhabited the valley of Chuquiago Marka, long before the Spaniards baptised it ‘Nuestra Señora de La Paz’ in October of 1548. Next to the Illimani is another snowy mountain top, the Mururata, which means ‘cut head’ in Aymara. According to the legend written by the renowned Bolivian writer Antonio Paredes Candia, both rocky titans were sons of the god Wiracocha. Mururata, however, was arrogant and envied the majesty of his brother Illimani, so he challenged him to a fight. During the brawl, Illimani used a sling with which he injured his brother’s head. Mururata’s body remained motionless and his head came to form the lonely mountain of Sajama.

**EVEN LOCALS CAN BE AFFECTED BY HIGH ALTITUDE SICKNESS WHEN THEY EXPERIENCE SUDDEN CHANGES IN ALTITUDE. COCA LEAVES ARE AN ANCESTRAL REMEDY FOR THIS AILMENT.**

The routine of a **paceño** is full of ups and downs. The city expands at a dizzying pace among varied topography and landscapes, shaping a daily race that could be considered extreme in other parts of the world. The International Skyrunning Federation says ‘skyrunning’ mountain races are those with a high technical level and an inclination of more than 30 degrees at more than 2,000 metres above sea level. This peculiar sport is practiced by more than 50,000 athletes from at least 65 countries. But what would be the equivalent of that race in a city where its inhabitants are constantly skyrunning?

CAFFÉ VIDA, DELICIOSA COMIDA VEGANA, ORGÁNICA, FRESCA Y NATURAL. ALMUERZO INCREÍBLE CON VARIEDAD DE PLATOS VEGANOS, BOWLS Y SMOOTHIES. PASTELERÍA VEGANA Y CRUDIVEGANA. TAMBIÉN TENEMOS OPCIONES SIN GLUTEN. TE INVITAMOS A PASAR, ¡Y RELAJARTE POR UN MOMENTO!

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**Paceño people knows,  
we can always get  
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Skyrunning Bolivia organises such races at more than 5,000 metres above the sea , gathering runners from all over South America. The organisation emerged as an initiative of the Bolivian Ski and Mountaineering Federation with the aim of promoting mountain sports. It has three races scheduled for this year: Skyrace Illimani (on 15 June, 2019), Vertical Kilometer Pico Austria (on 24 August, 2019) and Skymarathon Sorata (on 9 November, 2019). The first race of the year was the Snowrunning Chacaltaya race. This mountain was famous for having the highest ski station in the world (at 5,421 masl) and was available for seven to eight months of the year. But Chacaltaya became the first tropical glacier to disappear in South America in 2010, due to the rise in global temperatures between 1976 and 2006. This desolate mountain is no longer iconic for *paceños* and the city has lost an important water source for present and future generations.

For many foreigners, the idea of living at this altitude seems like an insurmountable challenge, especially due to the lack of

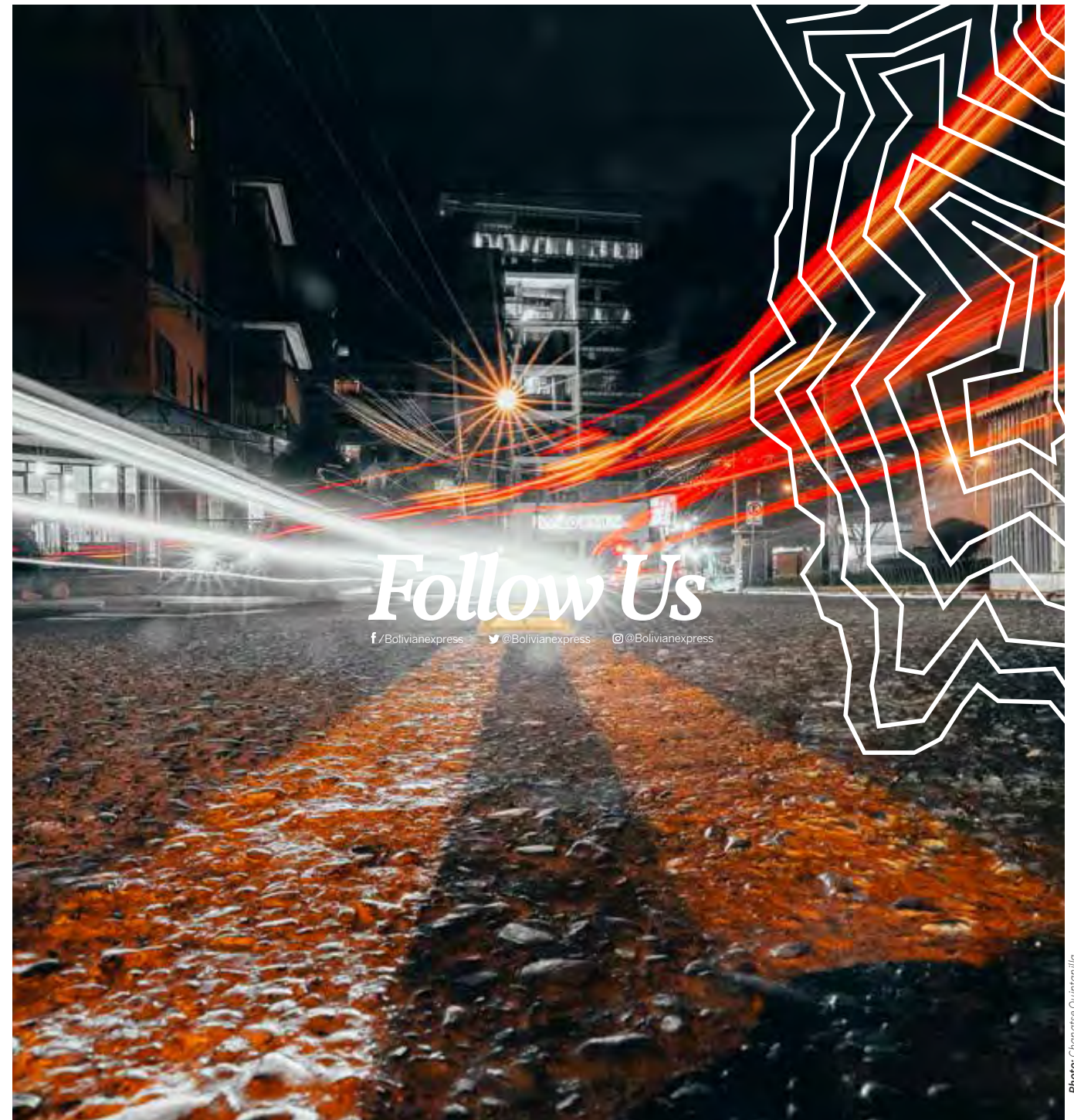
oxygen compared to sea level. Tourists, artists and diplomats, tend to consider the risks associated with high altitude when planning for a trip to the Andes. Those who live in the region, have lungs and hearts used to pumping enough blood at this altitude. But even locals can be affected by high altitude sickness when they experience sudden changes in altitude. Coca leaves are an ancestral remedy for this ailment. They are chewed, drank in an infusion or consumed in more concentrated products such as the Ajayo sweets. This millenary plant is beloved by locals who know their nutritional and therapeutic benefits.

Life in La Paz is vibrant in many ways. This is a city that is constantly evolving, with contrasts, cultural richness and an impressive biodiversity. A city where one can almost touch the sky.

THE ROUTINE OF A **PACEÑO**  
IS FULL OF UPS AND DOWNS.  
THE CITY EXPANDS AT A  
DIZZYING PACE AMONG  
VARIED TOPOGRAPHY AND  
LANDSCAPES .



Photo: Gonzalo Laserna



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# IT'S A WHISKEY BUSINESS

THE ANDEAN CULTURE DISTILLERY ADDS TO AN OAKY OFFERING

TEXT: ELIN DONNELLY / PHOTO: JAIME CISNEROS



Two years after its debut in their Bolivian liquor market, Andean Culture Distillery co-owners Fernando Marin and Felipe Gonzales-Quint talk to *Bolivian Express* about spearheading one of South America's few whiskey distilleries – particularly why it was that whiskey, of all spirits, had caught their eye and imagination.

'Given the definition of whiskey as a grain distillate that may or may not be aged,' Marin said, 'and given the richness and variety of grains available to us that have never before been used in whiskey distillation, we saw an opportunity.'

Living amidst the Andean mountain range with access to such a broad assortment of grains indigenous to the region, Marin and his partner were able to create something never before seen in Bolivia, let alone South America, that not only added another flavour to the Bolivian palate, but that was also simultaneously able to show off the vibrancy of Andean culture. The co-directors hope to challenge the notion that 'West is best' by introducing new whiskey products into the market that contrast with the ever-popular Scotch, Irish and bourbon whiskeys.

The creators of this Bolivian whiskey feel that they are able to offer something different. As well as providing the classic ingredients of corn, rye and wheat, the Andean landscape also offers quinoa, **cañahua** and amaranth, therefore creating a new experience in whiskey distillation. In addition to this innovative approach to the process, Marin and Gonzalez-Quint have made the decision to age their new whiskey using oak harvested from the eastern Santa Cruz region of **Chiquitania**. 'We're able to get a different profile because of our *chiquitania* oak, as it tastes so different from French oak or American oak,' Marin explained. 'We're able to create another character, another whiskey.'

The Andean Culture Distillery has encountered great success over the past two years selling its original, crystalline, non-aged

Killa Andean Moonshine, a liquor inspired by the period of probation in 1930s America when amateur distillation was booming. This smooth liquor has since been making a name for itself in the bars and restaurants of La Paz, leading it to be lauded by many international master whiskey distillers.

Despite this success, however, the journey hasn't all been plain sailing. Towards the end of 2017, the two partners found themselves in deep water thanks to a stockpiling issue that left them almost bankrupt. Initially, the business started from nothing and, over the months that it took to get going, simply grew and grew in success, scale and stock. By this point, the Andean Culture Distillery was storing its ingredients by the tonne on a large lot in a factory, which in a sudden turn of events became contaminated by one faulty hose. The partners were left with nothing,



having lost all of their ingredients and a large portion of their profits. Over the following months, however, the business built its way back and was soon back on its feet once more, doing better than ever.

Discussing the setback, Marin said: 'You'll always encounter obstacles in life, but your successes simply depend on how you receive the blow. We've managed to come out winning, because the lessons we've learned from facing this obstacle have become our motivation.'

It seems this motivation has been put to good use as this month the Andean Culture Distillery will be releasing a new aged

whiskey. This product will take on a darker, earthier colour than the popular Killa Andean Moonshine thanks to the ageing period it's gone through resting in the casks made of *Chiquitania* wood. This new product was inspired by the South American fermented **chicha** beer of the Andes, which is derived from either maize or amaranth. *Chicha* is of pertinent social significance in Bolivia and South America, as a beverage that brings people in celebration at feasts and social gatherings and constitutes part of their social identity.

Discussing *chicha*, Marin explained, 'It is a corn-based beer that is, bit by bit, dying out and disappearing as a custom and a tradition.' In order to sustain the popularity of this indigenous beverage, the owners of the Andean Culture Distillery have attempted to reinvent it in the form of a distilled whiskey.

In terms of the company's aims and aspirations, it is clear that the Andean Culture Distillery has a promising future. Marin hopes to fulfil the company's objective of creating a business that not only benefits its consumers but also its regional producers by collaborating with local businesses. The Andean Culture Distillery's current success and growth is due, in part, to its collaboration with Innovación de Bebidas – the company behind the Bolivian spirit 1825 Vodka – which lets them use the its German-made distillery equipment.

Marin says he enjoys experimenting with the various flavours indigenous to and so indicative of Bolivia and South America, and potential collaborations with local Bolivian businesses to create products such as whiskey-flavoured chocolate and coffee beans aged in oak.

The impact that the Andean Culture Distillery is having on La Paz and Bolivia is not just that of commercial success, but also one of strong social significance as the company strives to develop a network of successful independent local businesses, from which we hope to see the whole of Bolivia benefit.

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# THE MAN IN THE MIRROR

## THE RISE OF MALE BEAUTY IN BOLIVIA

TEXT: ELIN DONNELLY / PHOTOS: NICK SOMERS AND ELIN DONNELLY


In 2016, the Latin American male beauty market had an estimated worth of 10 billion USD, a figure that is expected to increase by a whopping 27.4 percent by 2021, according to Euromonitor International. As an emerging trend far too consequential to ignore, *Bolivian Express* takes a look at why male beauty is booming in Bolivia and Latin America.


Within the Latin American beauty industry, male grooming has the second fastest growth rate of all market sectors, only second to hair removal. Due to the growth of disposable income among the region's emerging middle class, basic skin care products and specialised beauty goods are making an appearance for the first time in the male market. The sale of sunscreen and moisturisers, as well as traditionally 'feminine' goods, like facial scrubs, anti-aging soaps and hand and nail care, has increased among male consumers. Bolivian

men are now embarking on more trips to spas and beauty salons and, according to Euromonitor International, the use of general beauty counters by men seeking cosmetic advice has risen by 30 percent. It seems that the young generations of Bolivians and Latin Americans are becoming more open, more experimental, and more concerned with the image they portray to the rest of the world. With the desire to investigate how these statistics compare with the people of La Paz, we spoke with various individuals living in and around the city.



En route to our first interview, we struck up a conversation with our taxi driver, Santiago. Even though the statistics would suggest that the average Bolivian bloke now sports manicured nails and threaded eyebrows, this 36-year-old's take on male grooming seemed more conservative and, in fact, a little more realistic.




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Santiago told us he takes care of his appearance by using styling gels in his hair and sun protection to look after his skin. But grooming, he emphasised, is only important to him in terms of its practicality. He isn't interested in **'nada más complicado.'**

Other men around the city seemed to share in Santiago's views and practices, such as 43-year-old Carlos Manuel, who said: 'To me it's a farce. Leave the salons and the beauty products to the women. As long as you're clean, why does it matter?'

Although Carlos Manuel's stance on the matter is a little more drastic, it seems to reflect the views of many Bolivian men from older generations. It is a generation of young Bolivians that is spearheading the change, leaving behind the older **caballeros** to enjoy their classic looks in peace.

Barbers in Miraflores and Sopocachi like Juan, who has been in the trade since 1964, have witnessed this change over the past five decades. 'A true barber,' says Juan, 'cuts not just the hair but the beard also. Nowadays everyone does that part at home with their own razors,' he explains. 'Caring about your appearance is customary for young people today.'

Due to Juan's traditional technique, his customers tend to be older men interested in the **'look clásico.'** But since grooming habits, such as shaving, are more accessible to the masses with the advent of the disposable razor, it comes as no surprise that young men in Bolivia are keener to sport more experimental looks as the power—in this case the razor—is quite literally in their hands.

In the other 'trendier' barbershops, young barbers and customers make less of an effort to cling on to Juan's beloved *look clásico*. Carlos, a young barber originally from Colombia, explained that experimental hairstyles are becoming popular amongst young men in Latin America, whilst his older clients, just like Juan's, are more conservative. According to Carlos, the



CONTINUES ON PAGE 18 ▶

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internet has played an important role in changing this mindset. 'Young people are starting to think for themselves, and with access to the internet and social media they're exposed to more modern styles and ideas,' he explains. 'In places like Santa Cruz and Cochabamba you see this more often than in La Paz. Here we are more conservative, but there's definitely a change taking place,' Carlos said.

From flicking through hairstyle 'catalogues' and perusing barber shop windows, it's clear that in addition to the internet and social media, celebrities are the true trendsetters in the industry. Images of Hollywood stars, like George Clooney and Brad Pitt, and of international footballers, such as Cristiano Ronaldo and David Beckham, often adorn local **peluquerías**. It seems Bolivians care a great deal about how these figures choose to style themselves and even more so about replicating those styles.

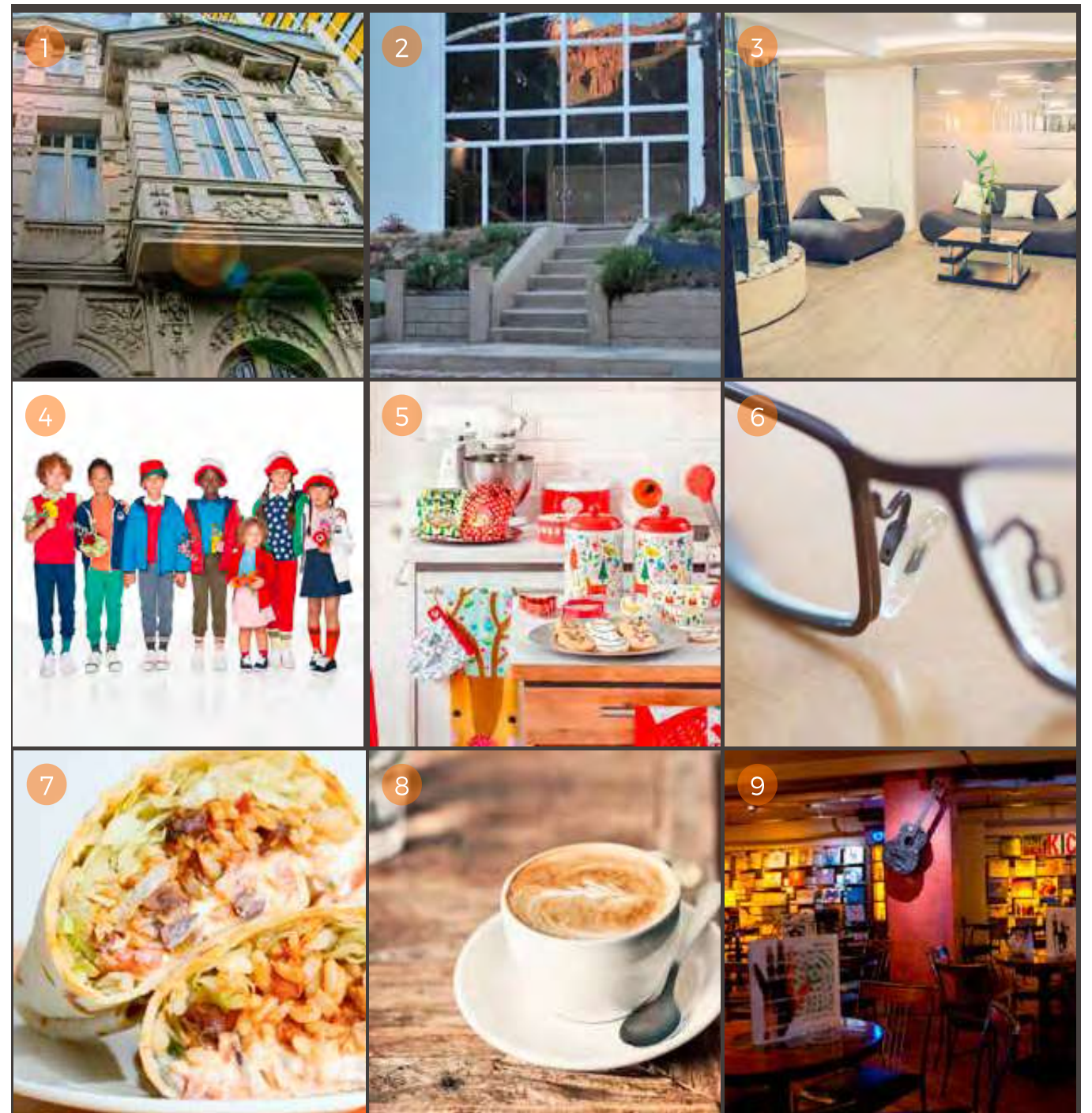
We even encountered a catalogue of hairstyles dedicated entirely to **extranjeros**, or foreigners. The owner of one of the barbershops we visited told us that the most popular look these days is 'The Ronaldo', and that it is common for youngsters to enter his shop brandishing an image of their favourite sports personality, requesting the same hairdo. A customer receiving a 'reggae-inspired' trim in the corner of the barbershop said that getting the same hairstyle as your idol is a way of identifying with them.

It doesn't matter how bold the colour is, or how crazy the stenciled pattern is, young Bolivians love to follow trends set by people they admire. Even Santiago, our taxi driver, confirmed this. Five years ago, Santiago had dyed his hair blonde in honour of his favourite band, Marilyn. Others, however, take their aesthetic choices one step further and decide to tattoo the image of their favourite celebrities onto the sides of their heads beneath tightly trimmed hair, a style aptly named as the 'Hair Tattoo.'

It seems that in La Paz, a wave of interest in male grooming and beauty is definitely taking shape. The statistics speak for themselves, but the people also confirm it. The older generations prefer to stick to what they know, but the youth delve into increasingly adventurous looks, predominantly through the experimentation of hairstyles. It's cool to look cool, and with movie stars and footballers sporting modern looks, it comes as no surprise that these filter down to the masses. But even with regards to skin care, Bolivia's male population is seeing a change in attitude and practice. As one young man asked: 'If women can use beauty products, why can't we?' The times are changing and men are taking more ownership of the way they want the world to see them, moving away from stereotypes and from the 'social norm', towards a space where attitudes to male beauty are more liberal and diverse.



Photo: Elin Donnelly



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# ALL EYES ON OCTOBER

A LOOK AT THE OPPOSITION IN THIS YEAR'S BOLIVIAN GENERAL ELECTION

TEXT: ALEXIS KING / PHOTOS: MICHAEL DUNN CÁCERES



**W**ith the general election due to take place in late October, this year could prove to be pivotal for Bolivian politics. Evo Morales and his Movement to Socialism (MAS) party, who have led Bolivia for over 13 years, are seeking a fourth consecutive term. Although Morales lost a referendum in 2016 to sidestep the Constitution and allow him to run for president again, a controversial decision by the country's Supreme Court ruled in his favour.

Under Morales's leadership, the Bolivian economy has grown at an impressive 4.9 percent, driven by high commodity prices which have enabled Bolivia's GDP to more than double in just over a decade. Morales's effort to redistribute this income has also seen extreme poverty fall by half. Furthermore, MAS's social policies have empowered and ensured representation for previously marginalised, predominantly indigenous sections of the population.

However, the failure of MAS to diversify Bolivia's economy and its seeming disregard for democratic principles have put the party in a precarious position. Unsustainably high hydrocarbon and metal ore prices have so far excused a dependence on an extractivist model, but a lack of industrialisation could jeopardise Bolivia's economic future. Morales's government has also so far failed to address the shockingly high rate of violence against women and claims of rampant corruption across the country. The government's dismissal of the 2016 referendum, coupled with its almost complete control of electoral organisations, has set a dangerous precedent for the future of democracy in Bolivia.

What is for certain is that there is a real opportunity and significant momentum to put an end to Morales's grip on power. What remains very much in doubt, though, is whether any one candidate or party can capitalise on such an opportunity. Since assuming power, President Morales has faced a divided and hitherto ineffective opposition. Now, with a total of nine names on the ballot and a host of familiar faces amongst the candidates, the anti-Morales side is still fractured. Unlike in the past, though, the president's slide in popular opinion might portend that this election will prove different.

## THE CANDIDATES

The list of challengers to the incumbent president includes the vastly experienced, former presidents; Carlos Mesa, for Civic Community (CC) and Jaime Paz Zamora of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC). The current governor of the La Paz department, Felix Patzi of the newly-established Third System Movement (MTS), and Virginio Lema is standing for the historically left-wing National Revolutionary Movement (MNR). Candidates further to the right include Santa Cruz native and current senator Oscar Ortiz for Bolivia Says No (BDN) and Victor Hugo Cárdenas of Solidarity Civic Unity (UCS). Ruth Nina for National Action Party of Bolivia (PAN-BOL) and Israel Rodriguez of the Front for Victory (FPV) have also declared their candidacy.

The most likely challenge to Evo Morales's position will come from ex-president Carlos Mesa. In 2002 Mesa served as vice president under then-president Gonzalo 'Goni' Sánchez de Loza and subsequently assumed power when the latter fled the country in 2003. Mesa's time as president proved to be ill-fated, however, and he resigned in 2005 following widespread demonstrations and violence. The well-known historian and TV journalist is now the candidate for the Civic Community party. This centre-left alliance unites Mesa's former party, the Left Revolutionary Front, with the Sovereignty and Freedom Party, led by the current mayor of La Paz, Luis Revilla.

An advocate of free-market economics and critic of Morales's protectionist and state-interventionist policies, Mesa has supported opening Bolivia's economy to international markets

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and foreign investment. Unsurprisingly, Mesa depends on the urban-based, highly educated circles of Bolivian society for support. Since declaring his candidacy, he has surrounded himself with upper-class elites to further his political aims. According to Bolivian journalist and political commentator Fernando Molina, Mesa may struggle to convince poorer and less well-educated Bolivians to vote for him. There's an ethno-cultural tendency to reject **blancos** in Bolivia, Molina says, due to a history of exploitation, and Mesa's association with Bolivia's elite makes support for him much less certain.

Molina also says that Oscar Ortiz could play a role in undermining Mesa's bid for the presidency. The former president of the Senate and current senator for Santa Cruz is the candidate for Bolivia Says No (BDN), a right-wing conservative alliance between the National Unity and the Social Democratic parties. BDN's main support is likely to come from the east of the country, in particular from wealthier landowners around Santa Cruz who favour BDN's proposition to federalise Bolivia. Like Mesa, Ortiz is also a vocal advocate of a more capitalist economic model based on free-market principles.

At the time of writing, most polls have both Morales and Mesa tied with around 30 percent of the vote each. Ortiz is seen as the next favourite, currently slated to receive between 6-10 percent of the vote. For the candidates, much will depend on their respective campaigns. For Mesa the key will be convincing working-class and indigenous voters to challenge MAS's recent dominance. For Ortiz, it will be a case of how far he can erode Mesa's popularity.

On the far-right of the political spectrum in Bolivia is the ever-divisive candidate for UCS, Victor Hugo Cárdenas. The 68-year-old Aymara politician became the first indigenous vice president, in 1993, during the first presidency of the now-loathed Goni. Cárdenas was also an important part of the neoliberal project in Bolivia of the 1990s and early 2000s, and he's retained connections with international and US institutions as well as with Brazil's controversial leader, Jair Bolsonaro.

Along with his running mate and former pastor, Humberto Peinado, Cárdenas does not seem afraid to divide opinion. In March this year, Cardenas chose International Women's Day to launch a somewhat controversial campaign proposal: to open the debate on women carrying weapons as a solution to gender violence. Peinado also openly opposes abortion and 'gender ideology.' Come election day, Cárdenas's appeal may well be limited to predominantly Catholic groups and right-wing supporters.

Felix Patzi, former minister for education and current governor of La Paz, is another interesting candidate. An erstwhile member of MAS, the Aymara native is representing MTS, a new party pushing to represent the rights of indigenous groups. The party's campaign is based around a rather generalised criticism of traditional left- and right-wing politics

and advocacy of a revolutionary new political system.

Patzi says the MTS is a centrist party that, supposedly, 'doesn't mix any elements of the left or the right.' He proposes to combat Bolivia's epidemic of violence against women by developing strong family norms, and suggests that 'communal businesses' – arranged without hierarchy or individual ownership – could usher in a restructuring of the Bolivian economy. However, Patzi's very traditional social ideas and indigenous ideology seem highly unlikely to resonate with much of the population.

For the majority of the challengers to the presidency, they can only realistically hope to win at least 3 percent in the general election, which would protect their respective party's legal status.

### A DIVIDED FRONT

Despite real dissatisfaction with the current regime, the opposition remains perhaps critically divided. Those in the running to become president in October include two ex-presidents, a former vice president, the current governor of La Paz and a former president of the Senate. Almost all of the opposition candidates have claimed that a defense of the people's rights in light of the 2016 referendum to be a priority. Yet all of them are standing for a separate political party.

At this stage, it appears that this reticence to form an alliance could undermine the challenge to President Evo Morales. Molina suggests that the success of Mesa and Ortiz appear to be mutually exclusive, and Mesa's refusal to ally himself with the cruceño 'could cost him the election.' BDN's negative campaign against Mesa, in which it has accused the ex-president of profiting handsomely from Bolivia's legal fight for access to the Pacific, looks set to play into Morales's hands.

First-time candidate Israel Rodriguez insists that despite his lack of political experience, he is the only candidate that can offer something different. When asked what his party can realistically hope to achieve, Rodriguez responded that their hope is to form an alliance with other candidates against Morales but, crucially, not with someone such as Mesa or Ortiz as leader. Instead, Rodriguez proposed that it should be 'someone young and clean, and with beliefs and strong values, with new ideas... and that is ourselves.'

MNR candidate Virginio Lema is also basing his campaign on offering a fresh perspective. Irrespective of his party's 60-year history, Lema is counting on the appeal that he is not a traditional politician and the only candidate who can bring change to Bolivia. You get the idea.

In addition, aside from MAS, the political left in Bolivia remains underrepresented. In fact, MAS is the only effective party which purports to offer a left-wing or socialist government. As well as being closely tied to the middle and upper classes, the majority of political

parties belong to the political centre or further to the right. And then there is Patzi's MTS, which doesn't belong on any political spectrum. Morales's simple, ostensibly left-wing rhetoric has so far been very successful in appealing to many Bolivians who have long lacked a political voice.

Waldo Albarracin, a very vocal critic of the current government, was unequivocal in his opprobrium of the current opposition candidates. The former human-rights lawyer is the current director at La Paz's main public university, UMSA, and a highly influential political and social figure. In Albarracin's view, 'the same shortcomings of the government can be seen in the opposition.' More specifically, Albarracin referred to a lack of transparency and, notably, each candidate's own aspiration to lead the country. Ivan Rodriguez Montenegro, a former general secretary of the Bolivian railway workers union, is also sceptical. Highlighting an inability to unite behind a common front, Rodriguez attributed this to the self-interest of current politicians. 'Since the era of the dictators, everyone has been looking out for their own interests,' Rodriguez argued.

While it is possible that the political outlook will change considerably before October, such a divided opposition is welcome news to Evo Morales.

### EL MAL MENOR?

The opposition is certainly facing an uphill battle in their bid to gain the presidency, even more so considering the unlikelihood of completely fair elections. On this point, Albarracin is characteristically critical, declaring that for the government, 'playing fair is suicide.' Molina is slightly less cynical but still pessimistic, likening the elections to playing football on a sloped pitch. Thanks to its comparatively vast resources and current dominance of supposedly autonomous electoral institutions, MAS has a clear albeit unfair advantage.

Whatever the outcome, what does appear likely in the aftermath of this year's elections is more extreme polarisation and a sharp rise in tensions. If Mesa wins, he will almost certainly face strong resistance from the incredibly influential and heavily pro-MAS Chapare region, important for its coca production. If Morales retains power and democracy in Bolivia continues to be worn away by MAS's political machinations, public outcry and mass mobilisations would seem a foregone conclusion.

Whatever the outcome, with a dearth of fresh faces and ideas on this year's ballot paper the decision on October 20 could well be a case of **el mal menor** – the lesser evil.



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# THE HEARTBEAT OF THE CITY

TEXT & PHOTOS: ALEXIS KING

It doesn't take long to realise just how important football is in Bolivia. Perhaps not known for its high quality of football, it is nonetheless followed with passion and played with intensity at all levels. In the **altiplano**, winners of rural leagues can expect to be rewarded with a cow. In the sprawling cities of La Paz and El Alto, there exists its own form of "Champions League", where some "amateur" teams are known to pay for certain players. While the quality of the pitches varies enormously, it is clear that almost any possible space has been dedicated to host even the most rudimentary pitch. For many who use these pitches football is more than just a hobby, enabling some to represent their heritage, and others to earn a better life.

I tried to capture the importance of the sport at its grassroots, as well as a snapshot of the sheer variety of pitches across the two cities.



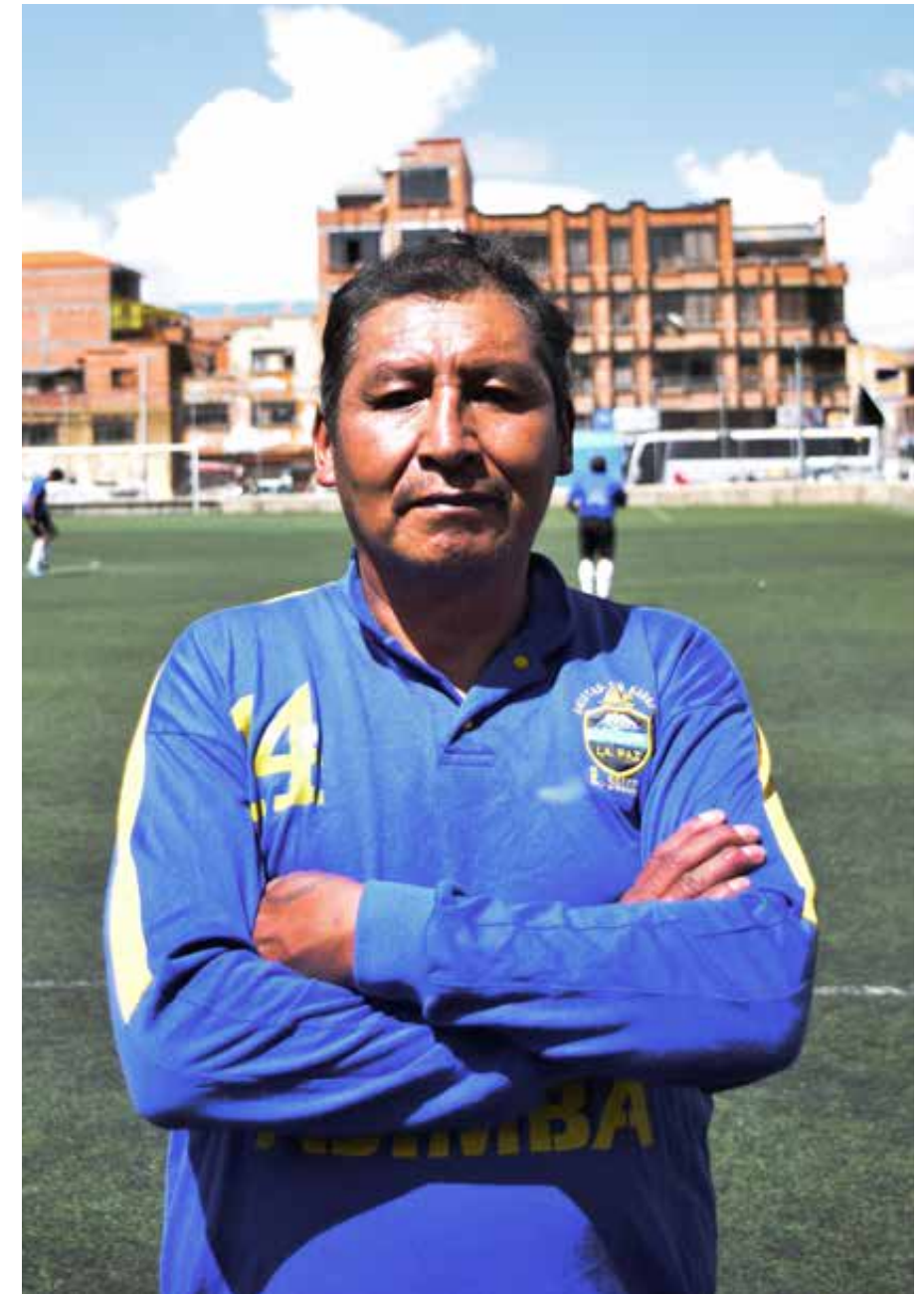
Concrete pitch in Alto Tacagua. Perched precariously on a hill well-above the city of La Paz, this pitch has breathtaking views. The chances of recovering a lost ball, however, are remote.



**Estadio Luis Lastra in Sopocachi**, the former home of Deportivo Municipal de La Paz. The hugely successful team in the 1960s, which finally folded in 2010, used to welcome up to 10,000 fans to home games. The pitch has seen better days.

**Eufrasio Cruz, 54 years - from Colquiri, playing in zona 12 Octubre, El Alto**

The captain of a team of former miners who have moved to El Alto. Playing in the seniors (over 50) category, what is lacking in quality is certainly made up for in desire. When asked what playing for the team means to him, Eufrasio says: 'We carry the pride of our mining centre, Colquiri, which we represent with dignity and love. The most important thing is to carry the name in El Alto.'



**Estadio Maracana, El Alto**

Taken around midday at over 4,000m The sun burns with a ferocious intensity, but the locals are not put off.



**17 de Obrajes at around 8.30pm**

Despite the threat from lightning, they continue until one player boots the ball down a nearby hill.



**Mansilla Zene Macario, 85 years - from La Paz, playing in Estadio Obrero, Miraflores, La Paz**

Mansilla comes here every Saturday and Sunday to watch whoever happens to play. Mansilla turns out to be a hive of info about football in La Paz. When asked why do you love football: 'Football is a universal sport.' He collects the balls that fly into the stands 'because we love football.'



# FUNDACIÓN CASARI

HELPING FAMILIES ACROSS COCHABAMBA  
TEXT & PHOTOS: ALEXIS KING

**S**at in Don Massimo's office, the walls of which are adorned with photos and trophies from various football teams he's been involved with, he tells the story of when he first established a football school in Cochabamba. He recalls that the first obstacle was to win the trust of the locals who weren't convinced, with the general attitude: 'Who does this Italian think he is coming here and claiming he can teach our kids how to play football.' But over two decades later, Massimo Casari and his wife Verónica Urquidi have become important members of the local community. Since 1996, they have set up various projects through their main foundation, Fundación Casari, aimed at helping disadvantaged families and children in difficult situations across Cochabamba.

Don Massimo, as he is affectionately referred to by the children and parents alike, is originally from Bergamo in Italy. He



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first came to Cochabamba in 1986 with an Italian charity that helped children in need. Returning every year thereafter, he would pay for his trips by selling any type of car he could. In 1994, Don Massimo met Verónica, his wife, and moved to Bolivia permanently after getting married in 1995. After spending three years running a house for children, in 2000 the couple decided to build a recreational and educational centre (*Centro Educativo Recreativo*, CER) in the **barrio** of Ticti Norte. Verónica, a **cochabambina**, has been hugely important in everything they do, providing local knowledge and experience.

The aim of the centre is to provide **apoyo escolar**, or educational support, for underprivileged children while they are not at school, supporting around 150 students up to the age of 15. Most of the children are from poor or troubled families in the neighbourhood. The centre provides a safe place for them to learn and have fun, while attending homework class and playing sport together.

It doesn't take long talking to Massimo to realise just how important football has been and still is in his life, and something which

is at the heart of what he and his wife do to support young people in Cochabamba. The free football school, which was once an important part of the CER, has now become a project in itself. While the two initiatives have steadily become less connected, many children still attend both.

Since 2008, Fundación Casari has been working with Inter Campus, the foundation of Italian football club Inter Milan. As well as helping to fund the CER, the club provides training and pay the coaches' wages, all of whom come from Cochabamba. Every year, Inter Campus also provides 220 uniforms for the children, which cost over 80 euros a piece in Europe, as Massimo proudly points out.

On weekdays, morning and afternoon, children are able to go along to the football school without having to pay a cent. Watching a training session was an impressive and somewhat surreal sight, to see the mass of navy and black Inter Milan shirts in a quiet neighbourhood of the city.

Unsurprisingly, Massimo is effusive in his praise for Inter Campus. He fondly recalls how in 2009, the foundation paid for 14 children from CER under the age of 12, to

participate in their '*copa del mondo*.' Even though the majority of the kids had never left Cochabamba, the programme flew them to Florence to spend a week playing football against children from other Inter Campus foundations.

The foundation's work with Inter Campus has enabled Verónica and Don Massimo to launch other social projects. In Irpa Irpa, about 70 kilometres away from Cochabamba, they set up a centre for children named *Jatun Sonqo*, which means big heart in Quechua. The project involves a similar apoyo escolar, but also works with the mothers of the children, running workshops, such as bakery classes or clothes making. The project partners 160 local families with 160 sponsors in Italy who support the centre.

With the help of Sister Mariana Heles González, Fundación Casari also supports children who live with their mothers in the local prison. Every Saturday morning, around 40 to 50 children are picked up from a nearby prison and taken to the CER to play football and enjoy themselves. The programme, called 'Niños Fuori', which means 'Children Outside', in a mix of Spanish and Italian, is completely funded by Inter Campus. For the kids involved, Massimo explains, it gives them a break from the strict life inside the prison and a day of freedom.

As if that were not enough, Fundación Casari also helps run a community house for people with a variety of mental and physical disabilities, funded by his friends back in Italy. Every evening Massimo and Verónica have dinner at the house.

Talking to the children at the CER, they talk about feeling happy and making friends. When we asked what they like most about the centre, they unanimously replied: 'Doing homework!' Perhaps a little surprising, but it's clear nonetheless how important it has been for them to have a fun and safe place to come and learn.

We spoke to one parent whose child attended the football school, to ask about the influence of the foundation's work. 'Apart from doing physical exercise,' he said, 'as a way of distracting themselves and having fun, some kids have become more independent.' When asked what he thought of Don Massimo, '**muy buena gente**' was the simple response.

What is perhaps most amazing is to see Massimo and Verónica laughing and joking with both the children and their parents. The close bonds him and Verónica have developed with the children, that he describes as '**como sus hijos**', have meant they have become almost parental figures for some. Being so close with the children also brings a real responsibility, something Massimo is very aware of. He mentions times when children have confided serious problems in him, including instances of domestic violence, or young girls experiencing the inevitable challenges of puberty.

When a former *hijo* comes back, it is always special for Massimo. He fondly recalls the example of a young boy that recently came back after many years with his wife and son; or a young girl who is now a qualified vet and others who are now doctors, policemen and footballers.

Through the amazing work of Massimo and Verónica, Fundación Casari has truly changed the lives of thousands of children across Cochabamba.

For more information, visit <http://www.comitocasari.org/>.





# THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE CHOLA PACEÑA

INTERNATIONAL MODISTAS LOOK TO THE ANDES FOR INSPIRATION.

TEXT: ADRIANA L. MURILLO, A. / PHOTOS: CHANGTSE QUINTANILLA

**W**ithout doubt, the first thing that comes to mind when thinking of La Paz is the **chola paceña**. Characteristic of La Paz and other departments in the east of Bolivia, the **mujer de pollera** is proud and elegant, courageous and confident. What distinguishes these Bolivian indigenous women, especially Aymara women, is how proud they are of their identity.

The proud and confident *chola paceña* was recently showcased for international fashion representatives in La Paz at an event organised by the city municipality on 2 April 2019 at the Modesta Sanjinés museum. Attending were José Forteza, editor of *Vogue* and *GQ* magazines (Mexico); Cristina Chamorro, digital editor of *Vogue* (Mexico); Patrick Duffy, Global Fashion Exchange correspondent (United States); Luisa Fernanda Moreno, *L'Officiel* correspondent (Argentina); Mexican photographer Aldo Decaniz; and German fashion designer Samuel Acebey. Bolivian women showed off their best outfits on the runway in a beautiful and elegant fashion show in front of Bolivian

designers such as Ana Palza, Pamela Aliaga, Rosario Sanjinés, Amanda Aliaga, Zulma Choque, Jacqueline Sepúlveda, Iván Cusi, Reyna Quispe and Erika Centellas.

Guests were impressed by the colours and the refinement in the clothing details, but, above all, one could sense the pride that **cholitas** carry in the way they walk, smile or wear their accessories. 'It is impressive how colourful the outfit of the *chola paceña* is,' the German fashion designer Samuel Acevey said. 'And it is powerful...it is what she wears every day.' The *chola paceña* is becoming more and more a fashion icon and a symbol of empowerment for Bolivian indigenous women. 'I think it is very important to show where Latin American cultures come from,' *Vogue*'s Cristina Chamorro said. 'Today I saw a woman who is proud to wear the clothes she wears. I love seeing so much tradition on the catwalks. I saw a lot of the structure in the [construction of the] pieces—in the clothes, the hairstyle, the level of detail that they have in the shoes.'

But *cholitas* are more than a fashion icon; they play different roles in society and can't be reduced to one single stereotype. We have reached a point in the history of Bolivia where it is impossible not to turn our gaze towards the indigenous woman and the challenges they face today.

**CHOLITAS PLAY DIFFERENT ROLES IN SOCIETY AND CAN'T BE REDUCED TO ONE SINGLE STEREOTYPE.**





# BX-93 RECOMMENDATIONS

## DESTINATION

### SORATA

**DESCRIPTION:** Sorata is a town in the department of La Paz located at the foot of the Illampu mountain, with a warm weather and beautiful landscapes. Its main attractions are the San Pedro cave, the San Cristóbal river, the Chilata lagoon and other scenic viewpoints in the area.

**HOW TO GET THERE:** Take a minibus from the general cemetery, it takes about 4 hours to reach the place, the road is safe and fully asphalted.

**PHOTO:** Mark Goble via Wikimedia Commons



## ACTIVITIES

### URBAN RUSH

**DESCRIPTION:** If you want a dose of adrenaline this is for you! With seven years of experience, Urban Rush offers rappel of 50 metres and free falls of 20 metres in the heart of the city of La Paz. The activities comply with all the necessary safety standards. You can also try wearing superhero costumes, do you dare?

**ADDRESS:** Potosí street #920  
**OPENING HOURS:** 12:00-17:00  
**PHOTO:** Courtesy of Urban Rush



## RESTAURANTS/BARS

### SOL Y LUNA

**DESCRIPTION:** Sol Y Luna is a lovely rustic restaurant serving Bolivian, Dutch & Indian food. As well as La Paz's biggest selection of Bolivian craft beers and a variety of cocktails. If you find yourself longing for different and exotic flavours, combined with a touch of Bolivia, this is the place to go. On Tuesday they have salsa night with live music.

**ADDRESS:** Murillo street #999, corner of Cochabamba street  
**OPENING HOURS:** 12:00-00:00  
**PHOTO:** @a.a.cruises



## COFFEE SHOPS

### ELEVATE COFFEE

**DESCRIPTION:** In a welcoming environment, the friendly owners carefully prepare each coffee drink using only the finest, best-tasting, specialty coffee that they roast onsite in small batches. It is the ideal place to enjoy an exquisite coffee while supporting Bolivia's most dedicated and talented coffee producers.

**ADDRESS:** Pando avenue #1143. Cochabamba, Bolivia.

**OPENING HOURS:** 9:00-12:30 and 16:00-21:00

**PHOTO:** Renata Lazcano



## HOTELS

### LA CASA DE MARGARITA HOTEL BOUTIQUE

**DESCRIPTION:** Boutique hotel in the centre of Cochabamba, in a safe area known for its tranquility and proximity to a variety of cultural, touristic and commercial sites. With a modern-colonial design, five beautiful and comfy rooms, spacious common facilities with natural lighting and personalised attention, you will feel at home.

**ADDRESS:** Queru Queru, Pasaje Juan José Quezada #449. Cochabamba, Bolivia.

**WEBSITE:** www.lacasademargaritahb.com

**CONTACT:** +591 79955977 - +591 44019495

**PHOTO:** La Casa de Margarita Hotel Boutique



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**PHOTO:** Michael Dunn Caceres



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## GLOSSARY BX93 BolivianExpress Magazine



BolivianExpress Magazine

ACHACHILA	Grandfather, old man. Refers to the divinities framed in the mountains
ALTIPLANO	Bolivia's highlands
APOYO ESCOLAR	Learning centre
APU	God/Lord
BARRIO	Neighbourhood
BLANCOS	'White'
CABALLERO	Gentlemen
CAÑAHUA	Species closely related to the quinoa, native from the Andes region
CASERITO/A	Word used to refer to street sellers
CHICHA	Macerated drink made of corn that is consumed in different places of the valleys and the highlands of Bolivia
CHIQUITANIA	Region in the Santa Cruz department
CHOLITA	Bolivian women of indigenous descent
COCHABAMBINA	Women from Cochabamba
COMO SUS HIJOS	'Like his children'
CRUCEÑO	From Santa Cruz
EL MAL MENOR	'The lesser evil'
EXTRANJEROS	Foreigners
KANTUTA	National flower of Bolivia for having the colours of the flag: red, yellow and green
LOOK CLÁSICO	Cassic look, in this case referred to men haircuts
MARRAQUETA	Typical bread of La Paz
MUJER DE POLLERA	Refers to a woman (cholita) wearing the traditional multilayered skirts
MUY BUENA GENTE	'A very good person'
NADA MÁS COMPLICADO	'Nothing more complicated'
PACEÑO/A	From La Paz
PELUQUERÍAS	Barber shops or hairdressing salons
SALTEÑA	Type of baked empanada from Bolivia
WARA	Star, in Aymara

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# CULTURAL AGENDA

## APRIL - MAY 2019

### LA PAZ

#### MUSICIANS UNITED FOR THE ANIMALS OF 'LA SENDA VERDE'

20:00  
April 25, 2019  
Bs. 100 or Bs.120  
Teatro NUNA - Calacoto, street 21 #8509

#### CITY NATURE CHALLENGE

Cities around the world will be competing to see who can make the most observations of nature, find the most species, and engage the most people in the 2019 City Nature Challenge.

April 26-29, 2019  
Global Event  
More info: <http://citynaturechallenge.org/>

#### 'BARRIO DE TANGO' - BY EFECTO TANGO BOLIVIA

19:30  
April 27-28, 2019  
Bs.60 or Bs.80  
Tickets: <http://superticket.bo>  
Teatro NUNA - Calacoto, street 21 #8509

#### 'ESMERALD' - BY IKRAAM COMPANY OF ORIENTAL DANCES

19:30  
April 27-28, 2019  
From Bs.35  
Tickets: <http://superticket.bo>  
Teatro Municipal Alberto Saavedra Perez

#### 'CONTRACCIONES' - BY TEATRO PUNTO BO

20:00  
May 10, 2019  
From Bs.60  
Tickets: <http://superticket.bo>  
Teatro Municipal Alberto Saavedra Perez

#### THURSDAY OF CONSCIOUS FOOD

12:30-14:00  
May 16, 2019  
Bs.20  
La Casa de les Ningunes - Street Rosendo Gutiérrez #696

#### 17TH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF COMICS 'VIÑETAS CON ALTURA'

19:00-22:00  
May 15-31, 2019  
+Info: Viñetas con Altura (Facebook)

#### PIRAÍ VACA

20:00  
May 25-26, 2019  
From Bs. 100  
Tickets: <http://superticket.bo>  
Teatro NUNA - Calacoto, street 21 #8509

### COCHABAMBA

#### CINEMA DEBATE: LITERATURE AND FEMINISM

19:00  
April 30, 2019  
Bs.5  
Centro Simón I. Patiño Cochabamba - Av. Potosí #1450

#### LABOR DAY 5K-10K

Registrations until May 3  
7:00-11:30  
May 5, 2019  
Bs.30  
Info: +591 72733457

### SANTA CRUZ

#### LIFE IN COLOR

Paint Party  
6:50-8:50  
May 11, 2019  
From Bs.160  
Ventura Mall

#### 'CHERUJE' GASTRONOMIC MARKET

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# MUNAY

outfit design



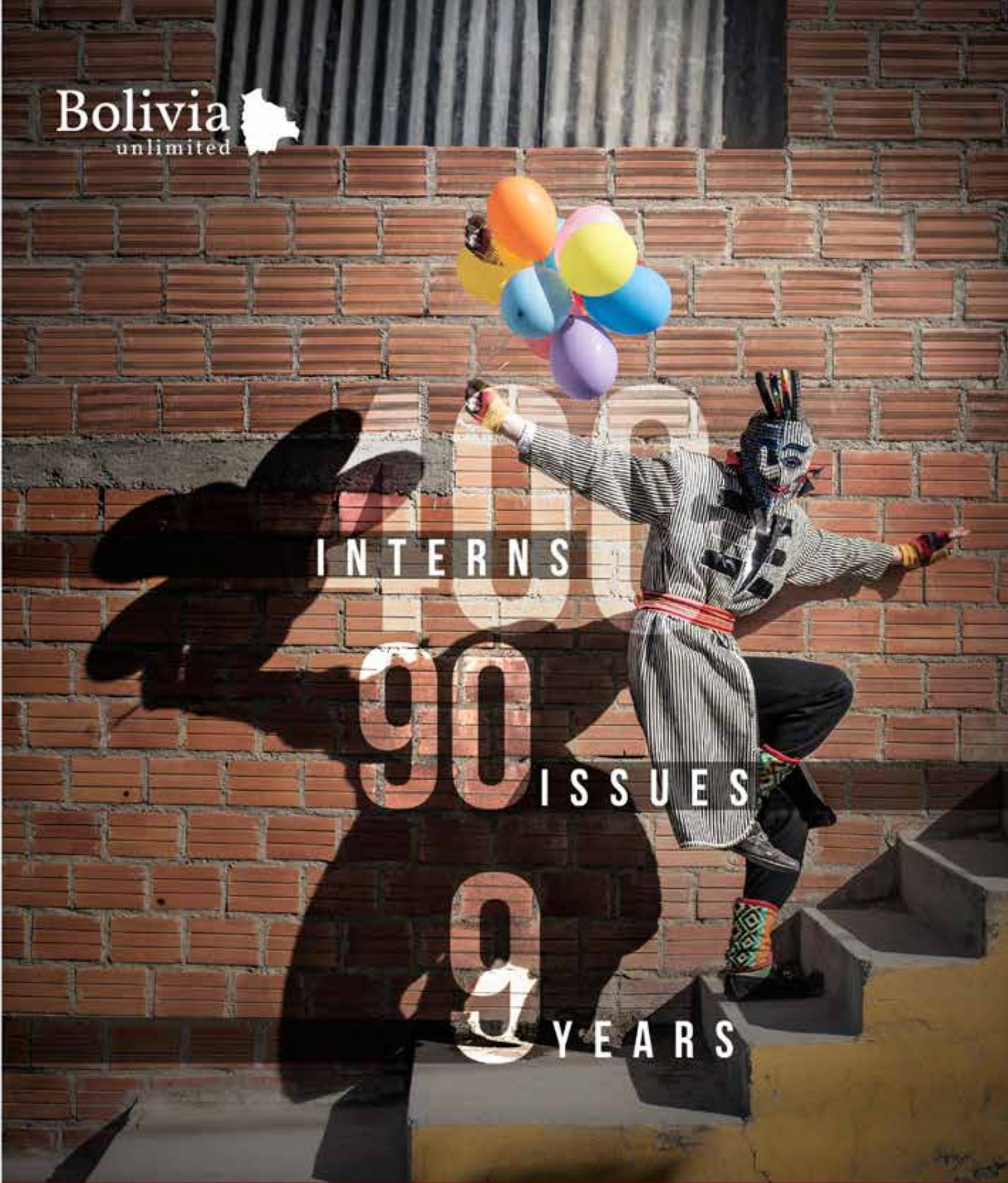
📍 Calle Linares #956  
entre calle Sagarnaga y Viluyo

📌 Munay outfit design

📷 Munay (outfit design)



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