

BolivianExpress

Gratis

Magazine



The solution for high altitude sickness
La solución contra el mal de altura
La solution contre le mal d'altitude

Die Lösung gegen die Höhenkrankheit
A solução contra a doença de altura
こうざんびょう の たいしょほう



- Prevents and brings relief to all high altitude sickness symptoms
- Previene y alivia todos los síntomas del mal de altura

www.sorojchipills.com

SOROJCHI PILLS®

A product of Laboratorios **CREZPAL**



Advertencias: No es recomendable para personas con alergias o intolerancia a alguno de sus principios activos: aspirina (ácido acetilsalicílico), salófeno, cafeína. Consulte a su médico si sufre de: desórdenes de coagulación, hemorragia gástrica, gastritis, alcoholismo, diabetes, hipertensión o reducción en la función renal, cardíaca o hepática. Mantener fuera del alcance de los niños.

Directors
Amaru Villanueva Rance and Ivan Rodriguez Petkovic

Partners
Jack Kinsella, Xenia Elsaesser, Sharoll Fernandez

Editorial Team
Caroline Risacher, Matthew Grace, Juan Victor Fajardo

BXdocUnit
Nicolás Taborga

Web and Legal
Jack Kinsella

Printing and Advertising Manager

Ivan Rodriguez Petkovic

Commercial Manager

Rodrigo Barrenechea

General Coordinator

Wilmer Machaca

Social Coordinator

Caroline Risacher

Head of Production

Adriana L. Murillo Argandoña

Head of Design

Luis Aranda

Photography Instructor

Manuel Seoane

Journalism Instructor

Reynaldo Gonzales

Journalists

Rodrigo Barrenechea, Nick Ferris, Catriona Fraser, Robert Noyes, Caroline Risacher, Julio C. Salguero Rodas, Fabian Zapata

Our Cover

Illustration: Ale Mamán

Marketing

Rodrigo Barrenechea

Advertise With Us

rodrigo@bolivianexpress.org

Address

Calle Prolongación Armaza, # 2957, Sopocachi, La Paz

Phone

78862061- 76561628 - 70672031

Contactzvvvvvv

rodrigo@bolivianexpress.org

La Paz – Bolivia
September 2017

f /Bolivianexpress

@Bolivianexpress

@Bolivianexpress



Thanks to: Thanks to: Asociación Nikkei Boliviano - Japonesa, Honorable Gobierno Autónomo Municipal de Potosí

Table of Contents

#76
Utopias

| | | | |
|----|-------------------------|----|------------------------------|
| 11 | THE POST OFFICE CRISIS | 13 | THE NIKKEI OF BOLIVIA |
| 16 | VEGANS IN A MEATY LAND | 18 | FACES OF TIWANAKU |
| 20 | THE CATACOMBS OF POTOSÍ | 22 | REVISITING THE TIPNIS DEBATE |
| 25 | CAN UTOPIAS LAST? | 30 | MY LOVELY WOOLLEN JUMPER |
| 32 | FERROVIARIA ANDINA S.A | | |

The World's Most DANGEROUS Road

BOOK WITH US ONLINE AT GRAVITYBOLIVIA.COM

gravity assisted mountain biking

THE BEST WAY TO DO THE ANDES & AMAZON

3 DAYS BIKE
From the top of the Andes

3 DAYS BOAT
through the steaming depths of the jungle!

Ride & River
www.AndeanEpics.com

Lináres Street #940. Upstairs. Between Sagarnaga y Tarija - La Paz, Bolivia - South America • Tel: (591) 231 - 0218, Cel: (591) 772 - 19634 • info@gravitybolivia.com • Show this ad when you book for a special offer!

Editorial #76:

Utopias

By: Caroline Risacher

Antonio de León Pinelo, a 17th-century Spanish-colonial historian, placed the 'Earthly Heaven' in the heart of the Amazon jungle and imagined Noah's Ark drifting down the Amazon River. The legends of El Dorado, the Fountain of Youth and the biblical return to paradise forged fragments of Latin American stories and identities. These utopias were based on the dreams and desires of the Spanish conquistadores, who saw in the 'untouched' lands of the Americas an opportunity to create perfect communities.

To begin to understand Bolivia, one has to see it from an outside perspective, to look at it through the myths and stereotypes that have shaped the idea of the country from abroad. The myths and the idealised versions of Bolivia and its people are intrinsically linked with a historical reality and the way in which the country has been formed. The remains of the colonial past are not only found in the social, economic and political spheres of modern Bolivia – they are also a part of how its people dream, love and identify themselves.

There are many different kinds of utopias one can find in Bolivia: vestiges of the dreams of the Spanish colonisers; our hopes for the future; and our (re)interpretations of the past, in the way history is reinvented to fit the present. As just one example of this utopian tendency, we can see how the 1952 Bolivian Revolution started a process of decolonisation in order to remove domineering political and racial structures and replace them with indigenous systems and indigenous history.

In this attempt to understand these different utopias, Catriona Fraser travelled to the Imperial Villa, now known as Potosí. By digging up bones buried deep down in the colonial city's crypts and catacombs, **potosinos** are coming to terms with a painful past, facing and embracing all facets of their history.

Sixty years ago and 17,000 kilometres away, Japanese settlers were sold tales of a new promised land situated somewhere near Santa Cruz de la Sierra, in eastern Bolivia. Nick Ferris visited the colonies of San Juan and Okinawa to see the communities these settlers created. Meanwhile, Catriona Fraser

continued her journey to María Auxiliadora, near Cochabamba, a woman-led community that used to represent a safe haven for women escaping domestic violence, but in which neighbours now find themselves cleaved apart.

And there are our own personal utopias. Our writers share theirs: Robert Noyes finds perfection in the shape of a jumper found in El Alto's massive market; Fabian Zapata imagines a Bolivia in which we send hand-written letters to each other; Julio C. Salguero Rodas photographs the faces of Tiwanaku, wondering who they were and what they dreamt about.

Together we ponder the possibility of travelling from Peru to Brazil by train while respecting the diversity of the continent. And, finally, we contemplate how the Bolivian **cosmovisión** is rooted in the concept of **Suma Qamaña**, a notion in which it is possible to 'live well' in harmony not only with other people but with nature too. Let's hope that, for the future of Bolivia and Latin America, this idea doesn't turn into just another lost utopia.

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


SPAZIO
WELLNESS AND LOUNGE

**DISFRUTA
DE MUCHO MAS
SPAZIO**

IMAGINA SOLO DIVERTIRTE

Calle 16 de Calacoto - Esquina Inafuentes
No. 7809 - Tel. 2797641



WOW!
TEMPORADA DE LOCURA

DESCUENTOS DE HASTA EL **30%**

ORURO, UYUNI, ATOCHA,
TUPIZA, VILLAZON

VÁLIDO DESDE EL 1 DE SEPTIEMBRE AL 31 DE OCTUBRE

f ferrovianaandina @ferroviaria_and ferroviana_andina ferroviana andina sa



**ADVERTISE
WITH US**
BolivianExpress

CEL: 78862061

WWW.BOLIVIANEXPRESS.ORG



CASA *fusión*



www.casafusion.com.bo
 EMAIL: GERENCIAR@CASAFUSION.COM.BO
 CALLE MIGUEL DE CERVANTES 2725
 ENTRE MENDEZ ARCOS Y VINCENTY
 TEL: (591) 222141372
 LA PAZ - BOLIVIA



THE **STEAKHOUSE**



WINE & GRILL



LA PAZ - Calle Tarija 243B

TARIJA - Av. Integración Megacenter

Highest RestoPub On Earth



RISKY Business
RESTOPUB

Av. Julio Patiño calle 12 de Calacoto
 Contactos y reservas: 2-793191



Teach & Travel

4 week Onsite TESOL Course

- Fully accredited
- 10 hours of teaching practice
- Monthly course dates
- Job finding assistance

Come see us at Instituto Exclusivo!
 Av. 20 de Octubre & Rosendo Gutierrez #2315, La Paz
 www.intesolbolivia.com - info@instituto-exclusivo.com



Jaén 722

ETNÖ
CULTURAL CAFE

in the most beautiful street of La Paz

the first absinthe bar in the city

contemporary culture since 2005

SIEMPRE PICANTE
SIEMPRE LOCO



La Cueva
Calle Tarija 210 B
casi esq. Murillo
Tel: 591-2-2147115
f /lacuevalapaz

• CARNES & OTROS •

H·U·M·O

LA WHISKERIA

COCKTAIL & TRAVEL

EST. 2018

Calle Pinilla #580
Z/ Sopocachi

Hygge (Jiu-gue)

Gourmet Hot Dogs

Sandwiches

Vegan Options

Healthy Juices

Craft Beers

Brownies & Cookies

Parfaits

Bolivian Coffee

Wifi Zone

Av. Sanchez Lima 2235

Tel: 67114220

Facebook: hyggebolivia

THE POST OFFICE CRISIS

TEXT & PHOTOS: FABIAN ZAPATA
TRANSLATION: NIALL FLYNN

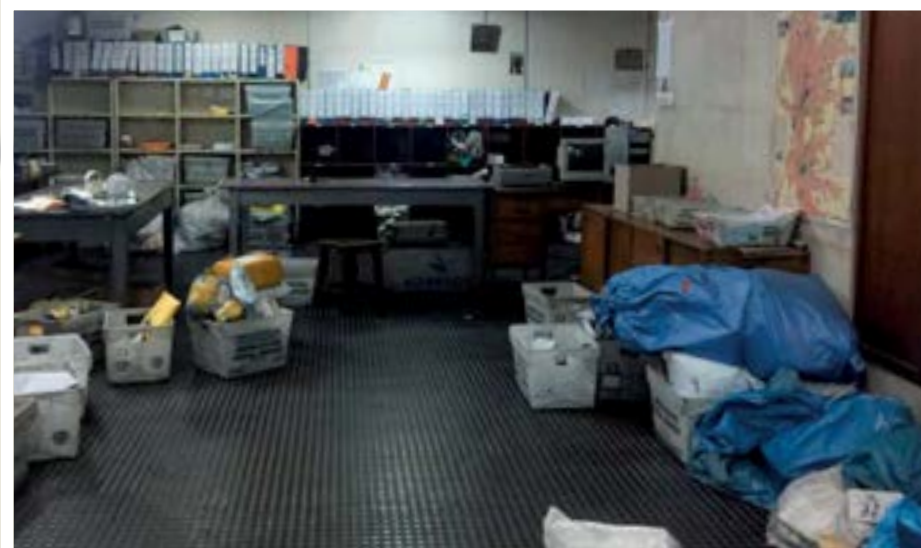
AS ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS BECOME THE NORM, AN OLD INSTITUTION GATHERS DUST

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT BUILDINGS IN THE CITY OF LA PAZ IS THE CENTRAL POST OFFICE: A DAUNTING 20-STORY TOWER AND SYMBOL OF BOLIVIA'S ECONOMIC BOOM. THE OFFICES WITHIN THE BUILDING ARE FILLED WITH DEMOTIVATED OFFICIALS WHOSE SALARIES ARE PAID LATE AND WHO RECEIVE NO SOCIAL BENEFITS, A GROUP OF PEOPLE WHOSE ULTIMATE CONCERN IS THAT LETTERS REACH THEIR INTENDED DESTINATION.

The corridors are vast and empty, decorated in typical 1970s style: walls lined with wood, yellow candlesticks and leather seats. You can sense a certain melancholic atmosphere in this building where every family in La Paz once had their own letterbox, where they could retrieve their post and parcels. Good news and bad news, love letters, business opportunities, prayers and threats all came through these letterboxes.

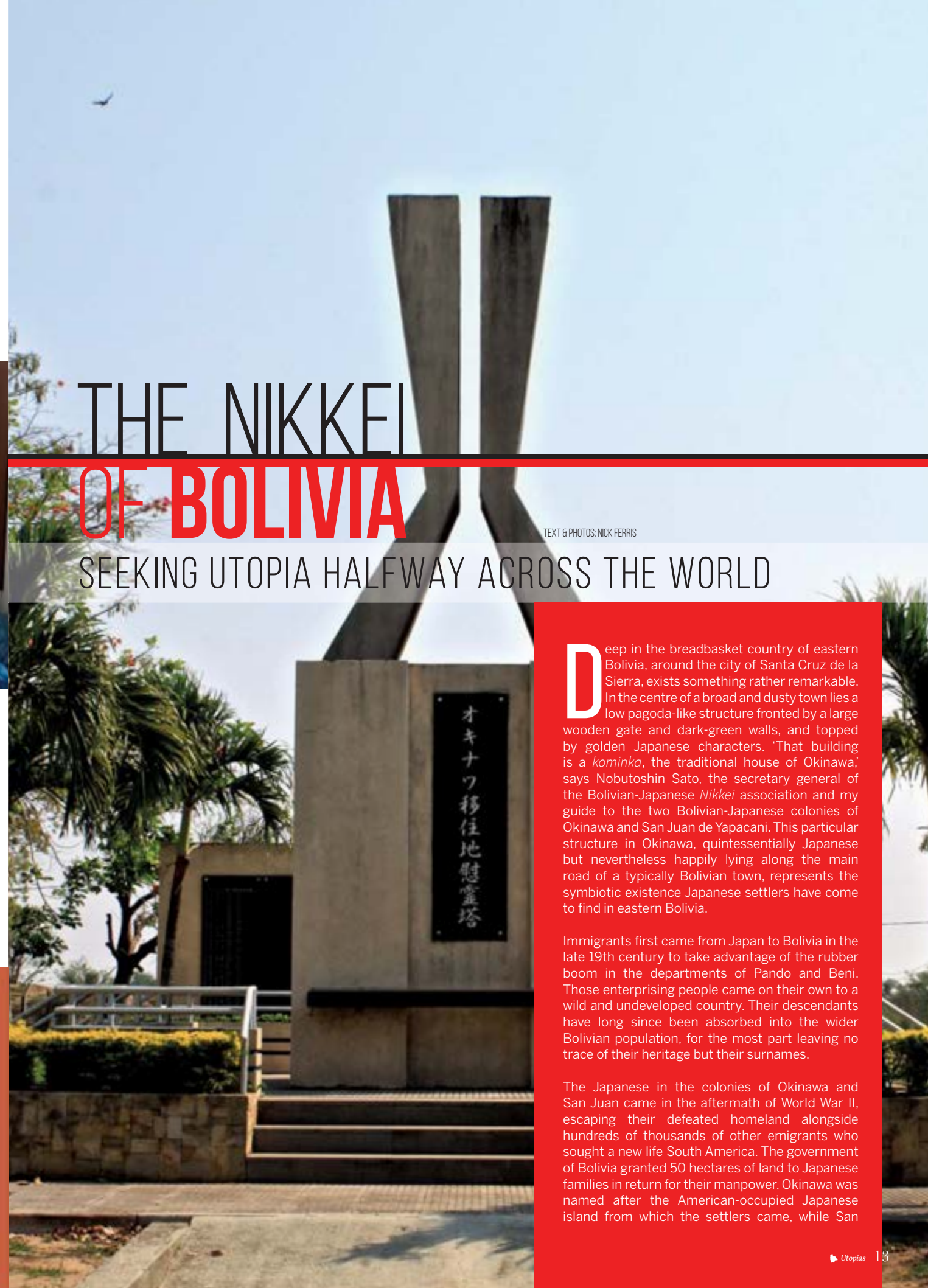


At the end of these bleak corridors is an old lady who accumulates blue sacks full of packages and overdue letters that are less likely to reach their intended recipient. Letters lie on the floor and boxes have collapsed in on themselves. They take all the time in the world. Yet the reality is that we remain dependent on this institution. Legal papers and packages cannot be sent via Internet. So much depends on the mood of these few officials.



Many Bolivians are hopeful of a resurrection of this place that used to fulfil our human necessity to communicate. At the end of the day, there are those who say that the letters will never disappear, regardless of the pace of technological progress. Feelings often seem more genuine on paper.

My grandfather left me his letterbox. We invite you to write to us about anything – dreams, stories, memories – and send it to PO Box 4444 in La Paz.



THE NIKKEI OF BOLIVIA

TEXT & PHOTOS: NICK FERRIS

SEEKING UTOPIA HALFWAY ACROSS THE WORLD

Deep in the breadbasket country of eastern Bolivia, around the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, exists something rather remarkable. In the centre of a broad and dusty town lies a low pagoda-like structure fronted by a large wooden gate and dark-green walls, and topped by golden Japanese characters. 'That building is a *kominka*, the traditional house of Okinawa,' says Nobutoshin Sato, the secretary general of the Bolivian-Japanese *Nikkei* association and my guide to the two Bolivian-Japanese colonies of Okinawa and San Juan de Yapacani. This particular structure in Okinawa, quintessentially Japanese but nevertheless happily lying along the main road of a typically Bolivian town, represents the symbiotic existence Japanese settlers have come to find in eastern Bolivia.

Immigrants first came from Japan to Bolivia in the late 19th century to take advantage of the rubber boom in the departments of Pando and Beni. Those enterprising people came on their own to a wild and undeveloped country. Their descendants have long since been absorbed into the wider Bolivian population, for the most part leaving no trace of their heritage but their surnames.

The Japanese in the colonies of Okinawa and San Juan came in the aftermath of World War II, escaping their defeated homeland alongside hundreds of thousands of other emigrants who sought a new life South America. The government of Bolivia granted 50 hectares of land to Japanese families in return for their manpower. Okinawa was named after the American-occupied Japanese island from which the settlers came, while San

Andean Dry Gin

LA REPUBLICA ANDINA

Distilled at more than 13,000 ft. above sea level La Republica Andina was created as the first premium gin made with Andean Botanicals. This unique recipe creates a very perfumed gin full of fruit, fresh herbs and spices.

LA REPUBLICA ANDINA THE FIRST PREMIUM GIN MADE IN BOLIVIA.

Juan was named after the land in which they settled. In the first ten years of immigration beginning in the early 1950s, 3,200 Japanese people settled in Okinawa and 1,600 in San Juan. Today, around 800 live in each. Both colonies have found great wealth through their agricultural endeavours: Okinawa is famed for its production of grains and cash crops like rice, wheat and soya, while the smaller colony of San Juan produces more specialist items like citrus fruits, macadamia nuts and eggs – currently 700,000 eggs a day.

Latin America has historically been perceived as a land of exoticism and utopia, a new world for migrants to begin a fresh and idealised existence. Both towns have a strange sense of a closed, idealised community inherent to the endeavour of founding a colony. They have Japanese-run hospitals and schools, Japanese graveyards and restaurants, and access to Japanese TV. Yet a visit to San Juan's museum with Masayuki Hibino, the 78-year-old president of the Bolivian-Japanese *Nikkei* association, revealed the settlement had a far from ideal beginning.

Hibino is an *Issei*, or first-generation immigrant, who took the two-month ship journey to South America in 1957, at age 18. 'My father was a specialist at selling and repairing cameras but his business was failing,' he tells me. 'There was only a 30% employment rate, everyone was struggling to get by.' Faced with no apparent future, his family was drawn to Japanese state propaganda offering a new life in Bolivia. 'My father had two houses in the city,' Hibino says. 'He sold them for ¥600,000 [or \$800 per house] in order to pay for transport to South America. We were promised land, access to a main road, a school and other amenities.'

The reality of their arrival, says Hibino, was very different. 'We arrived in Corumba [a city in southern Brazil] and were sent across South America in trains designed for cattle. When we reached the land designated for us,' he recalls, 'there was nothing there, only jungle. We had to transport all our crops through the jungle with horses. We built the first school by hand with **hojas de motacú**,' he says, 'it was a **choza**.'

Returning to Japan was also not an option. 'The boats were coming from Japan,' Hibino explains, 'they weren't going the other way. Plus, if we wanted to go back we would need to pay \$3,000 each. At that point, we were only making \$14 a month.'

The situation was the same, if not worse, in Okinawa, where the first settlement was met with an epidemic of a variant of the hantavirus in which 15 settlers died. There were times of drought, times of flooding. They moved the settlement twice before settling for good.

It was very affecting to hear the elderly Hibino's story, to have him eagerly show me photos of his family at the port in Kobe prior to their departure and of his community's struggles in the early days. He proudly showed the kimonos, a samurai sword and other artifacts the settlers had brought with them. He even demonstrated how the old, pedal-operated **picadora de arroz** worked. Hibino, who has seen the rise of his community, was understandably nostalgic about times past.

Meeting Satoshi Higa Taira, the secretary of the Japanese organisation in Okinawa, was a different story. Higa is a *Nisei*, or second-generation immigrant. He has a Bolivian wife, speaks fluent Spanish with a **camba** accent and identifies more as Bolivian than Japanese. Perhaps it is among this more settled generation that the Bolivian-Japanese utopia has been found.

'We are born here, we only know this way of life,' he tells me. 'We see the competitiveness of countries like the USA and Japan. There is so much pressure there and everything is the same.' Higa is among many Japanese known as the *Dekasegi* ('the returned'), who went back to Japan in the 1980s to take advantage of the booming bubble economy. He then came back to Bolivia, preferring the more relaxed and less repetitive Bolivian way of life, to a modern, fast-paced Japan, where returning emigrants are not always welcome.

Unlike the early days that Hibino described, current - day Bolivian -Japanese have more land, mechanised farming techniques and more money and are at the forefront of an ever-growing consumer market that has opened across the country. 'There is a stability now,' says Higa.

The Japanese colonists have also forged a hybrid sense of identity, taking advantage of favoured aspects of Japanese and Bolivian cultures. Local shops, for example, sell Japanese products that are unavailable elsewhere. According to one Nisei in San Juan, when the younger generations come home to the colonies from university in Santa Cruz, 'they eat, eat and eat! Our Japanese food is something that will never change.'



'WE WERE PROMISED LAND, ACCESS TO A MAIN ROAD, A SCHOOL AND OTHER AMENITIES.'
—MASAYUKI HIBINO

Higa also stresses the importance of a Japanese-style education. 'We want our children to have the same education and attitude as they would have in Japan,' he says. 'This attitude is what is most important.' The hard-working, resourceful 'attitude' of the Japanese people has of course made them successful all around the world. Yet it was also evident, in the way I travelled around with Nobutoshin Sato, jumping from minibus to minibus and sharing street food along the way, that for modern Bolivian-Japanese this 'attitude' translates into a thorough engagement with everyday Bolivian life and society.

The modern colonists are also very generous with their cultural heritage. Locals are invited to all events at the cultural centres. 'We really want to include everyone in our traditions and activities,' insists Higa. The Japanese schools welcome Bolivian and Japanese children, teaching in Spanish in the morning and Japanese in the afternoon.

So, is this utopia? A utopia is a place defined as the pinnacle of aspirations and dreams. It seems human nature dictates that such a state of entire fulfillment will never truly exist for our species. Just like the dream-like propaganda that Hibino's family fell for 60 years ago in Japan, the reality of life in the colonies will never be utopian. The sense of contentment evident in the *Nisei* and their descendents masks the incredible toil and effort that they invest in their communities to make them successful. And with success comes a handful of other problems, like Bolivian farmers migrating to the area to sell products under the name of 'Okinawa' or 'San Juan' and take advantage of their reputation for quality.

The prosperity of the colonies cannot be taken for granted. But as Higa says, if the modern residents of San Juan and Okinawa sustain the qualities and attitudes of their founders, they will surely continue to prosper in the years to come.

52 años

al servicio de los bolivianos desde 1965



Cascada Bolivia



ORGULLOSAMENTE BOLIVIANA

VEGANS IN A MEATY LAND

TEXT: CAROLINE RISACHER

MAYBE YOU WOKE UP WITH **CHAKI** FROM THE PREVIOUS **SINGANI-** OR **FERNET-FUELED** NIGHT, **MAYBE** YOU JUST WANT HEALTHIER FOOD AFTER ALL THE **CHICHARRÓN** AND **FRIED CHICKEN** YOU ATE THE DAY BEFORE, OR **MAYBE** YOU ARE **LOOKING TO EXPAND YOUR GASTRONOMIC HORIZONS.** OR **MAYBE** YOU ARE JUST A **VEGAN IN LA PAZ.**

WHICHEVER APPLIES TO YOU, THERE ARE OPTIONS AVAILABLE. LA PAZ AND BOLIVIA IN GENERAL ARE FAR FROM A VEGAN-BARREN LAND. ON THE CONTRARY, THE LARGE VARIETY OF GRAINS, ROOT VEGETABLES AND FRUITS AVAILABLE HERE PROVIDE FOR A VEGAN CORNUCOPIA. IN FACT, THE VEGAN CULTURE HAS REACHED LA PAZ AND ITS CULINARY ESTABLISHMENTS.

HERE IS AN OVERVIEW OF THE VEGAN ALTERNATIVES ONE MAY ENCOUNTER HERE. YOU MIGHT BE SURPRISED.

10:00AM

It's time for breakfast. People are having mid-morning snacks. The traditional options are found in the streets – juicy **salteñas** and fried **tucumanas**. Don't be fooled. As delicious as they may seem, *tucumanas* usually have eggs in them and *salteñas* are made with gelatine. Before you faint of inanition, there is one place to go: **Café Vida**.

Located in the busy, touristy centre of La Paz on **Calle Sagárnaga** (of llama-wool product fame), this café's relaxed atmosphere, great food and functional Wi-Fi make those unpleasant mornings a joy. Everything is vegan here. The smoothie bowls are a good choice. The green bowl, for instance, with a blend of spinach, mango and banana, is a great combo. For those with a sweet tooth, the choco bowl is also a good choice and will give you the necessary energy to survive another day.

NOON

After the smoothie bowl, you are considering trying one of the veggie bowls that **Café Vida** has to offer. You could also try the quinoa burger or the carrot noodles. However, you decide to keep exploring the city and its vegan options. For lunch you find that there are a few. **Namas Té** and **Tierra Sana** in the city centre are vegetarian restaurants offering vegan options. **Lupito** and **La Ventanita** are located in **Zona Sur**. Sick of seeing all these wool-jumpered tourists around you, you decide to try **Lupito** in **San Miguel**.

Lupito is another exclusively vegan establishment of La Paz. Here you have veganised versions of classic Bolivian dishes: **anticucho**, **chicharrón**, sandwich de **lomito**, etc. If you feel less adventurous, you can also order a veggie burger or tacos.



3:00PM

Your hunger satiated from an earthy lunch, you are now walking aimlessly in the streets of *San Miguel* wondering about the meaning of life and where to get your next vegan fix. By chance – or fate – you end up in the **Gigi Bonta** ice cream shop. There is one in *San Miguel* and another right on **Plaza Avaroa**, which happens to sell vegan ice cream made with olive oil. That will do for now.

4:00PM

Finally, it's the afternoon! Hopefully, it is not Sunday or Monday, because on these days **MagicK** is closed. But any other day after 4:00pm, it is the place to go for people in search of vegetarian food, vegan lattes and gin tonics. On the corner of *calles Salazar* and *Medina* just two blocks up from **Plaza Avaroa**, it is more vegetarian than vegan, but it has vegan options nonetheless. It's a cosy, comfortable place to wait until dinner, and perhaps even nosh on a snack. While sipping an almond-milk cappuccino surrounded with **Tinder-date** couples, **cholita-hat** lampshades and procrastinating journalists (such as ourselves), you can evaluate your options for dinner. You opt for **Ali Pacha**, a renowned vegan restaurant located in the centre of La Paz.

8:00PM

You've booked a table at this establishment near the corner of *calles Colon* and *Potosí*, just south of **Plaza Murillo**, because apparently that's what people do in fancy restaurants. The waiter comes with a menu that is not really a menu since you only have a choice between a three-, five- or seven-surprise-course-meal. While you wait for your food you gorge on warm and crusty white bread on which you have generously applied the coconut butter that accompanies it. It's free and unlimited. So is the water, which doesn't stop you from trying all the artisanal beers and local wines available here. Everything here is from Bolivia and is made with vegetables, grains and fruits. You discover the flavours of **copoazu**, **camu camu** and **quirquiña**.

10:00PM

Your palate expanded, your stomach full and your wallet significantly lighter, you are done with the day. Or are you? You head back to **MagicK**.

mistura

Manifestación Creativa



A unique and inspiring place, where you will find the essence of Bolivia. **Mistura** offers clothing, art, gourmet food, and a variety of curated products proudly made in Bolivia, by Bolivians.

calle sagarnaga no.163
la paz bolivia

www.misturabolivia.com

FACES OF TIWANAKU

TEXT & PHOTOS: JULIO C. SALGUERO RODAS

More than a millennium after its demise, Tiwanaku has become a Unesco world heritage site.

I ask our guide Hugo Tarqui Blanco what is the one thing that made Tiwanaku so successful:

'It's the extraordinary construction. The precision, the great architects, hydraulics engineers, metal workers behind it. The precision is tremendous, this is why for some time, it was said that probably they could make the stones.'

He tells me, 'Architecturally, they based it not only on what we call the Andean **cosmovisión**, but also on the three levels: Sky, Earth and Underworld.'

The semi-underground temple, the Kalasasaya temple, the pyramid of Akapana and Pumapunku are four of the seven most important structures. I ask Hugo why number seven is important in understanding Tiwanaku. He responds, 'The number seven is important, because it is based on the four elements which are: Air (The Condor), Earth (The Puma), Fire (The Llama) and Water (The Fish).'

It's these four elements fused with the three Sky, Earth and Underworld levels which gives us the number seven. This is reflected in their architecture: seven structures with seven platforms, and seven steps in each stair.

As I leave, I look on the ground to see the many footprints of people who come every day to visit the site. I can't help but think that another century may pass before we fully understand and discover in its entirety what made Tiwanaku so exceptional. A wait all the more exciting.



THE CATACOMBS OF POTOSÍ

A LOOK AT THE PAST TO SERVE THE FUTURE

TEXT: CATRIONA FRASER PHOTOS: CATRIONA FRASER/NICK FERRIS

It is the 1990s, and the roof of San Agustín church groans a final breath of life before surrendering to the mould of time and collapsing into the floor beneath. Dust dances in the speckled light of the hall, before slowly settling to reveal something that has been lying in a secret silence under this old church for more than 300 years. It is something that susurrates with a promise of skeletons, of legends, of skulls: catacombs - something that, ironically, promises revival.

When asked about Potosí's past, many see an image of utopia. Like the town itself, the public perception of Potosí is caught in the shadow of Cerro Rico, the mountain that raised Potosí on a bed of silver and made it one of the largest and richest cities in the world by the end of the 16th century. However, when one delves into the darker corners of the colonial era, it is unclear whether Potosí's past can truly be given the title of utopia. It is not only the evanescent nature of the silver boom that hints at the negative-utopia of Potosí's history, but also the murmurs of death, of murder and of slavery, which mutter beneath the glittering history of this once opulent city. The colonised era of Potosí is scarred by the horrendous working conditions of the mines. It is estimated that between 1545 and 1825, around 8 million lives were lost at the hand of colonial greed, mainly the lives of African slaves and indigenous labourers.

Yet it is difficult for the external viewer not to see Potosí as an anachronistic echo, and avoid being impressed by the shining, albeit ephemeral, glory of its history. By turning our gaze to the past, however, we risk losing sight of a present expanding city. With the discovery and planned recuperation of catacombs beneath Potosí's streets, a new utopia has begun to rear its head.

Architect Daniel Sandoval, who is the Director of Patrimonio Honorable Gobierno Autónomo Municipal de Potosí and leader of the catacomb restoration project, tells me the project began at the start of last year. At present, it is in the process of recuperating the network of catacombs that runs underneath the city, with the aim of opening

it to the public. The enterprise is part of a wider scheme that involves the convalescence of five World Heritage Sites around Potosí. The goal is to make these sites accessible to the public, with the creation of cycle lanes, souvenir shops, a transport system and safety measures to suit. Potosí is a town of dreams and aspirations and the catacombs are no exception. By excavating and recuperating these networks of mystery, it is hoped that tourism will bring money back to this area by showing a different side of Potosí.

Like the rest of the city, the San Agustín church vibrates with a promise of legends and history, of tales and mystery. Most of the bones found underneath the church floor were of indigenous descent – men, women and children – and were marked by a single hole pierced through the skull. While work is still being carried out to understand exactly who these people were and how they died, one hypothesis is that they were sentenced to death, or perhaps underwent the procedure of trephining, a process in which a hole is drilled into the skull to remove evil spirits from the body. Now the skulls look straight back at you, the hollow sockets of the eyes daring you, provoking you, asking you to find out more. As Sandoval stated when I talked to him on my visit, 'the idea is to preserve the catacombs and show them the way we found them.'

The catacombs are not restricted to San Agustín, but they extend beneath the feet of the present city. One of the most ambitious parts of the project, is the recuperation of catacombs that run below the Cathedral and stretch to a school in the centre of Potosí. The resurrection of the San Agustín catacombs alone will cost around two million dollars, since the walls need to be reinforced and glass paneling needs to be put in place. As Sandoval explains, the project awaits funding before it can open to the public. 'We presented it to different entities: The Ministry of Culture, the European Union, the Spanish Cooperation (ESIP), but we still haven't heard a reply,' he says.

Thus, while the past utopia of Potosí echoes through its history books, and the present reveals itself from beneath the city floor, it is from the outside that the future of this project can hope to continue. There is a certain irony in that the city that once benefited foreign colonisers with its silver, now needs external funding to progress. For now, the next rise of Potosí remains an aspiration; yet it is an aspiration that is becoming increasingly real for the people of the town, as legends and tales solidify into reality. The catacomb project poses a possibility for Potosí to look at its past while serving its future. It presents an opportunity for the city to move forward from the darkness of its colonised era and convey its own pride in the unique culture of this growing, idiosyncratic city.

POTOSÍ IS A TOWN OF DREAMS AND ASPIRATIONS AND THE CATACOMBS ARE NO EXCEPTION.

REVISITING THE TIPNIS DEBATE

A GAME-CHANGING LAW THAT ENDANGERS THE PARK

TEXT: CATRIONA FRASER, CAROLINE RISACHER

Back in 2011, we printed a special edition themed around the TIPNIS, which stands for the Isiboro Sécore National Park and Indigenous Territory. We looked into the culture of protest in Bolivia, and tried to understand what this fight meant for the country's future and how the TIPNIS became a symbol of identity for many Bolivians. Following a 40-day march led by indigenous organisations, on 24 October 2011 the government passed a law declaring the intangibility of TIPNIS. We are now revisiting the topic in light of a recent development. On 13 August 2017, the government passed Law 969, which cancels Law 180 and with it, the 'intangibility' of the national park.

Six years ago, swathes of marching feet swarmed into La Paz in a wave of protest, after walking over the soil that covers most of Bolivia: from the harsh altiplano of the highlands, to the damp earth of the lowlands. The march emerged in response to the government's decision to build a highway through TIPNIS, home to almost 70 different indigenous communities and to one of the highest densities of biodiversity in the world.

Back then, TIPNIS was used as a springboard for multiple converging, contrasting and often colliding objectives. The debate augmented into something greater than extractivism against environmentalism, or infrastructure against indigenous rights. It snowballed into the culture of protest inherent in Bolivian society, a culture that uses strikes and marches as a form of democracy.

TIPNIS emerged to become a question of identity, of self-determination, of the very essence of citizenship in a nation that claims to embody a multicultural, plurinational ethos. Although president Evo Morales argued he was 'working for the dignity of all', this was seen to dissolve into 'working for the dignity of some'. Eventually, facing both national and international pressure, the government withdrew its plans. This year, the plans have been officially revived, and the construction of the road is expected to continue.

SO, WHAT HAS CHANGED?

Pablo Villegas, investigator at Centro de Documentación e Información Bolivia, is not surprised by the latest developments. He sees it as a logical step of the 'progressive extractivism' policy articulated by the government. According to Villegas, the recent reversal regarding TIPNIS, is in line with the Coca law of 13 March 2017, which increased the cultivation area of the leaf from 12,000 to 22,000 hectares. For better or for worse, Villegas sees a larger pattern and a planned policy to integrate Bolivia with the South American continent through the extraction of the country's natural resources.

The road, which will link Villa Tunari in the department of Cochabamba to San Ignacio de Moxos in the Beni, is meant to support the development of the area. Indigenous communities living in the park will benefit from the construction of schools and hospitals and will gain access to basic services. Some indigenous leaders argue that the notion of 'intangibility' has become more of a barrier to the economic and social growth of indigenous people, than a concept that protects them. Pedro Vare, the recently elected president of CIDOB (Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia), denies that the fight was ever about making the park intangible. 'There can't be an intangible territory,' he says. 'We are human beings, we have fundamental rights. We have a right to develop in a productive way. We can't live from subsistence anymore.'

His call for development and his acceptance of the road ring hollow, but show how much things have changed in only six years. Back in 2011, Vare and CIDOB were at the forefront of the TIPNIS march. According to Norika Paz, an environmental activist, their change

'THERE CAN'T BE AN INTANGIBLE TERRITORY... WE CAN'T LIVE FROM SUBSISTENCE ANYMORE.'
—PEDRO VARE,
PRESIDENT OF CIDOB

GRUPO
ONKEL.INN
Hotelería y Turismo



Disfruta la llegada de la primavera desde el hotel con la mejor vista de Copacabana

HOTEL
ONKEL.INN 
Torres de Copacabana

copacabana@onkelinn.com
Cel (+591)796 26 886, 67019394
70645477

www.onkelinn.com

in position is the result of the 'progressive weakening of indigenous organizations that has occurred due to oppression, repression and monetary incentives.'

The reality is that several stakeholders would benefit from the TIPNIS road and the extraction of the park's resources. The road would benefit the **cocaleros** in Polygon 7, an area in the south of TIPNIS that was delimited in 1992, when colonisers from the highlands flooded the region. In their search for work, these migrants started planting coca, leading to the deforestation of 60% of the area. The growth of the crop raises fears regarding narco trafficking in the park. Between 2015 and 2016, the cultivation of illegal coca increased by 150% in Bolivia, according to the UN office on Drugs and Crime.

Another suggested motive for the road's construction is the discovery of hydrocarbon banks in the TIPNIS. Since Morales' election, gas and oil contracts have been renegotiated through nationalisation and foreign investments. According to the Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo Laboral y Agrario, based in La Paz, one third of the park has been marked for natural gas extraction. **Ganaderos, madereros, sojeros** would also gain easier access to the park and could start cutting, planting and colonising the park.

The planting of soy crops in particular, could prove advantageous to Brazilian interests. With a road through Bolivia, linking the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, Brazilian soy planters could access Asian markets significantly faster and cheaper. 'Instead of the 26 to 30 days it currently takes them to reach Asia, through Bolivia it would take 5 days,' says Pablo Villegas, while pointing at the shortcut on a map.

Even if Bolivia has a lot to gain economically and politically from integrating within the continent, it is not clear how the incursion into the park will benefit local indigenous populations. After laying a large map of the TIPNIS on the table in front of us, Villegas and Norka Paz sketch the planned construction route with a marker. As Villegas points out 50% of the communities in the area are too far from the road to benefit from it. 'For electricity, you need cables,' he says, 'not a road.'

More than the construction of the highway - which is already underway - Paz and Villegas fear that Law 969 will open the park to all sorts of private endeavours. Article 9 of the law mentions the 'opening of roads, highways, fluvial and aerial navigation systems, and others.' Article 10 goes even further, inviting privados to 'exploit natural renewable resources' and to develop 'productive activities.'

To activists such as Paz and Villegas, this reads like an environmental and social disaster. The inhabitants of the park are concerned that the territory will be colonised by cocaleros and highland farmers. Although the law forbids the illegal settling of colonos and states that local populations and the environment will be respected in future projects, earlier this year, a meeting held by the communities of TIPNIS resulted in the rejection of the law.

Because of the highly politicised tone of the debate and the range of interests at hand, one aspect of the TIPNIS dilemma has been continually marginalised. TIPNIS is home to an uncountable number of species, many of which are endemic. Paz and Villegas suggest that if the plans move forward, in around 20 years the area could be subject to up to 70% deforestation, which would be catastrophic for the environment.

'There could be another march,' Paz says, who remains vague yet positive about the future of the park. According to her, international attention will be key if the road is to be stopped and environmental measures are to be taken seriously. In Villegas's view, the people of TIPNIS have practically become 'prisoners in their own land', caught in layers of corruption, mismanagement, and bureaucracy.

As Paz acknowledges, the issue is much larger than the construction of a road in the jungle. 'This is happening all over Latin America and the world,' she says. Transcending political tendencies, economic impulses are pushing for a globalised and integrated economy. For now, those paying the price are the forests and the communities that live and depend on them.

Brasil, Peru, Paraguay, Uruguay and Bolivia will meet this year in the city of Cochabamba to discuss the plans for the Bioceanic Train, a future railway that will link the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans. Integration seems inevitable. Roads will most likely be built in the TIPNIS and across Bolivia. But perhaps the continent could integrate around a respect for the environment and its inhabitants, leaving behind its past of extractivism and colonisation. After all, that's what President Morales promised when he pledged to the idea of **Suma Qamaña**: the notion of living in harmony.

**FIFTY PERCENT
OF THE
COMMUNITIES IN
THE PARK ARE
TOO FAR FROM
THE ROAD TO
BENEFIT FROM IT.**

CAN UTOPIAS LAST?

A GLANCE AT THE MARÍA AUXILIADORA COMMUNITY IN COCHABAMBA

TEXT & PHOTOS: CATRIONA FRASER

The history of Bolivia is rife with violence and disruption. Even the name of its presidential palace, el **Palacio Quemado**, is a nod to the country's numerous coups and revolutions. Less visible, however, is the violence which remains hidden behind the closed doors of family rooms. In many parts of Bolivia, domestic violence stems from poverty, poor living conditions, and the polarising machismo and marianismo stereotypes. In 2016, 94 women were killed by their partners, and this year that number is expected to increase.

On one of the hills surrounding the city of Cochabamba, the women of the María Auxiliadora community are trying to maintain a place of sanctuary from domestic violence, a utopia for the many Bolivian women struggling in an oftentime brutal patriarchal world.

María Auxiliadora, a **barrio** which skirts the metropolis' edges and looks down on the valley below with a tranquil silence a world apart from the blaring horns, smog and dirt of the urban sprawl, is home to over 400 families. It was founded in 1999 by Dona Rosemary and four other women with the mission to provide a sanctuary removed from the pressures of poverty and domestic violence that affect so many women. For a total of \$200,000, 10 hectares of land were bought by these five women, the money being obtained partly through loans. Plots of land can be bought by families or single mothers - with homeless families given preference - for \$3 per square metre.

The community has certain rules that residents and visitors alike must adhere to: no selling of property, no alcohol sales, a democratically elected municipal government with a female president and vice-president, and a communal labour ethos in which community members all work together every Sunday to build up the barrio's resources.

Jo Maguire is a former NGO worker from England. After hearing that she was looking for somewhere to live, Dona Rosemary suggested she move in. Maguire has now been living in the community for 10 years. 'It was just an amazing place to get involved with,' she says while making freshly squeezed orange juice in her sunlit home. 'I remember one guy fell off a roof. Every day, people took food to the family, people who have barely enough money to feed themselves.'



Premium Experience



• Tel. (591-2) 2315656

• reservas@hoteleuropa.com.bo

• Calle Tiahuanacu No. 64, La Paz - Bolivia

www.hoteleuropa.com.bo

One of the primary focuses of the community is female autonomy, with the aim of reducing domestic violence. The excessive consumption of alcohol is a primary cause of domestic violence, and is something encouraged by the stereotyped image of machismo, a symbol of Latin American masculinity defined by strength and sexual aggression. In María Auxiliadora, it is illegal to buy or sell alcohol. This is just one of the ways in which domestic violence has been tackled by the community. Other ways include the blowing of a whistle if neighbours hear physical disputes. When the whistle is blown, a family liaison officer (a member of an elected committee) will enter the house and speak with the couple. If the violence continues, whoever is inciting it will be thrown out of the community. Maguire says this has happened four times since her arrival.

The community is mainly filled by people who have informal jobs such as taxi drivers, or those who sell food on the streets of the city below – jobs that do not provide a high income level. In the city, where tenacious landlords and poor living conditions abound, this can create domestic strife. But here in María Auxiliadora, cheap prices create a haven for those struggling below the poverty line. The community-lead ethos of solidarity also provides a safe environment free from the stress and cramped single-room life of the city. As recent research shows, the immediate social environment of any home is a leading factor in levels of domestic abuse and childhood performance at school. And according to Maguire, that's evident here. 'All the children do better here at school than those from the surrounding villages,' she says while her son plays on his scooter outside.



A UTOPIA? PERHAPS.

The roots of that word—utopia—come from the Greek for 'no place,' suggesting its confinement to the world of fiction. While the first nine years of this community's life did verge on a utopia for those who lived here, recent rifts and divisions have formed over land distribution, causing this utopian vision to fade. The community's cheap prices for land plots were viewed as competition by the surrounding **loteadores**. According to Maguire, beginning in 2010 some families demanded that the land be turned into private property, despite agreeing to the terms and regulations of the community upon arrival. This corruption has since been caught by the wind like the dust that blankets the barrio's streets and spread through the community.

Bolivia's 2009 Constitution grants rights to both collective and private property, as long as 'the use made is not harmful to collective interests.' Arguably, those who demand that the community revert to private property are acting outside the scope of the law. 'The men didn't see the benefits of the community, only the women,' says Maguire. 'They had alcohol-fuelled meetings, which resulted in physical violence. Once, 12 people were injured in clashes.' Maguire also explains why the community isn't receiving the full protections of the law: 'When the new Constitution was created, communal land ownership was made legal. However, Dona Rosemary didn't act quickly enough to gain legal autonomy for the community's land.'

Even water is now a matter of dispute. Originally, everyone paid to have access to water, with profits going towards community infrastructure. Maguire says that eventually a group of around 40 people stopped paying for water, arguing that it had no legal status as it was not owned by the Bolivian government. The community split between those who wished for the land to remain communal, those who wanted private ownership and those caught in the middle, no longer paying for the water but also refusing to take sides.

These cracks within the community deepened over time, with neighbours turning on neighbours. Maguire recalls how her neighbour, a man she views as quiet and pleasant, threw dynamite into the face of Dona Rosemary's husband. She says that the corruption within the community expanded to a governmental level, and resulted in Rosemary being imprisoned for four months. 'The *loteadores* are the authority. They are the policeman and the politicians,' Maguire says.

Eventually, in 2015, an electoral coup took place, with a pro-private-ownership leader taking power. Maguire no longer views the leaders of the community as viable – although they are still female, the community has lost its focus on the reduction of domestic violence. The whistles which once blew through the community as cries of concern for neighbours being abused are no longer heard. The barrio pulses with an empty silence.

'We're at a stalemate,' Maguire says. When asked about the future, she shrugs her shoulders and gives a wry smile. 'I really don't know.' María Auxiliadora once provided a safe haven from the cramped family life in the city, a place removed from domestic violence and the pressures of domineering landlords. It was a community based on trust. And like most utopias which remain enclosed like snow-globes in the world of fiction, the trust which this community based its dreams on proved too fragile a basis not to crack.

Ciclik
HONEST GLOBAL FOOD

www.ciclik.com

FOOD FROM BOLIVIA, SOUTH AMERICA, NORTH AMERICA, EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST AND ASIA

RESTAURANT OPEN FROM 8:00 TO 23:00

C. ROSENDO GUTIERREZ #393, ESQ. AV. 20 DE OCTUBRE. SOPOCACHI. TELF. 2124557

URBAN RUSH

"He has not learned the lesson of life who does not every day surmount a fear."
-Ralph Waldo Emerson

- > #1 Activity on Tripadvisor
- > The most fun you can have with your pants on in the center of La Paz!
- > Rappel/Abseil 50 meters! (Traditional Style or Face First!)
- > Exceeds ALL International Standards
- > 100% safe! (3 brakes! 2 ropes!)
- > For extra adrenaline, try the 20 m. FREE FALL!

Accompanied by

> Book at most tour agencies or just come on by Hotel Presidente! (Potosí St. 920, Big Green Building across the street from San Francisco Church). We are open every day from 1-5 pm! > 1st Drop: 150 bs > More Drops! 70 bs

Check us out on Facebook! www.facebook.com/urbanrushworldwide - www.urbanrushbolivia.com

Tel. (591-2) 240-6666
After hours: (591) 762-85738
info@urbanrushbolivia.com

Jodanga

Backpacker's Luxury Hostel • Santa Cruz - Bolivia

Facilities:
Dorm beds & Private Rooms, Breakfast included, BAR, SWIMMING POOL,
All you can drink and eat BBQ's, Billiard Table, Spanish Lessons, TOURS, Book Exchange

www.jodanga.com
info@jodanga.com
C/O Fuerte #1380 - Barrio "Los Choforos"
(AV. 6 - Zona Parque Urbano) - Telf. 561-33-399-542

ZIP
The Flying Fox

Come "Fly" With Us!

Located in Yolosa, at the end of the WMDR "Death Road" bike ride

- Speeds of up to 85 km/h
- 1555 meters of Zipline divided into three exciting segments
- Built to exceed U.S. ACCT (Association for Challenge Course Technology) standards with 1/2" steel cable rated for 12,600 kgs!

Book now at: www.ziplinebolivia.com - info@ziplinebolivia.com - Phone in La Paz: 231-3549

BOLENESE OWNED & OPERATED

ZIPLINEBOLIVIA.COM
FIND US ON FACEBOOK AS "ZIP THE FLYING FOX"

BARRACUDA

THE "RIDICULOUSLY AWESOME" BOLIVIA DEATH ROAD MOUNTAIN BIKING OPTION

- *EXTREMELY EXPERIENCED GUIDES
- *FULL SAFETY EQUIPMENT

**NORMAL PRICE...630 BS.
BRING THIS IN FOR A HUGE GRUPAL DISCOUNT!**

Phone: (591-2) 231-0176 | Cell: (591) 767-28881
Main Office: #971 Linares St. (Between Sagarnaga And Tarija St., Office #5)
info@barracudabiking.com | www.barracudabiking.com

NO BULLSHIT GUARANTEE

SHAMROCK

Irish pub

COME CELEBRATE ST PATRICK'S DAY WITH US ON THE 17TH OF MARCH

20 DE OCTUBRE AV. ACROSS AVAROA SQUARE LOOK FOR THE SHAMROCK

CONSULTORA MULTIDISCIPLINARIA "FMG" S.R.L.
Auditores & Consultores

AUDITORIAS

- Operativa
- Financiera
- Impressiva
- Técnica
- Especial
- Forense
- Integral
- Evaluaciones de Control Interno
- Sistemas

ASESORAMIENTO

- Administrativo
- Financiero
- Tributario
- Laboral (Recursos Humanos)
- Contable
- Aportaciones al Seguro Social
- Importaciones y Exportaciones

CONSULTORIAS

- Revalorización Técnica de Activos Fijos
- Desarrollo de Sistemas Contables
- Sistemas de Inventarios de Almacenes
- Elaboración y Evaluación de Proyectos
- Organización de Empresas
- Entrenamiento y Cursos Actualización
- Evaluación de Personal

CONTABILIDAD

- Externa
- Balances de Apertura
- Balances de Gestión
- Balances de Cierre
- Libros de Contabilidad
- Declaraciones Impuestos
- NEWTON - OFICINA VIRTUAL
- Libros de contabilidad
- Libros de Compras y Ventas IVA
- Comprobantes de contabilidad

OTROS SERVICIOS ESPECIFICOS

- Tramites de inscripciones y afiliaciones al Seguro Social, Fundempesa, Impuestos Nacionales, Ministerio de Trabajo Gobiernos Municipales y otros.
- Tramites de CEDEMS, Sector Exportador, Tradicional y no Tradicional.

Calle Salmayor esq. Victor Saizinas # 82 Sopocachi
Foner199@outlook.com
Tel: 231-1991
Twitter: confting_aull

7181214-7888013-7090842
591-2-2419199-2419193
facebook.com/fmg_aull

MY LOVELY WOOLLEN JUMPER

TEXT: ROBERT NOYES PHOTO: NICK SOMERS

*¿Listo, Roberto?
¿Dónde estás?
¿Roberto, listo?*

It is a Thursday morning, March 2013. Eighteen years young, I still think that history is over. I am sitting on the floor of an empty bunk room in my new home in Sopocachi. I have just arrived.

All of my new flatmates have gone to some festival in Coroico. There will be hot tubs, hot springs, sex and presumably at least one actual Bolivian. I have not gone with them. No. Instead, I am sitting here. On the floor. In an empty bunk room. And no. I am not ready.

I sit in silence, hands hugging my knees like swept-up summer leaves in autumn; I hold them like hopes to my chest and pray the wind won't blow them away. I can hear cats scratching the tiles of the roof, and their claws screech like torn sheet music.

Pancaked on the floor, all I want is to call my mum. I want to hear her voice. Her love and care will breathe into me like butter melting into the aching pores of a crumpet. But I don't call her. Loudly, I lie: *¡Listo! ¡Vamos!*

The person shouting my name is my editor's father. The night before, he had taken me out to dinner with his family. We liked each other a lot. Simon and Garfunkel can do that for a pairing.

At dinner, we had agreed to go to the market in El Alto the next morning. It is the best time to go, he said. In the sound of silence I agreed, but the silence lasted longer than four minutes and 22 seconds, so I got scared.

Walking to the bus now, the **cholitas** seem to snarl at me. Every red traffic light flashes like a heart threatening to quit. Cramming into a small minibus, we rub knees. I recoil from this physical connection. I am now holding my legs so tightly I could flatten my kneecaps into skipping stones. After an age, we arrive.

Bursting from the minibus, I'm thrown into the throng. We march relentlessly on. Him leading. Me behind, considering leaving. Without comment, we pass three llamas being milked, 400 used cars and a woman selling headless Barbie dolls. To my left, an island of doors for rent. To my right, concoctions of coca for miles. Everyone and everything is right here. I am out of control and utterly alone, in the world's largest lost and found.

An age passes. We seem to have approached the final spinning cycle of whatever tombola we've been inadvertently entered into. Suddenly, the drum stops revolving. And just like that, it spits us out, into the arms of the loveliest woollen jumper I've ever seen.

You know the jumper I am talking about. You've probably even worn it once. It smells like a living thing. It hugs me like I am the leaves. Pulling it over my head, I let it linger around my nose, so I can breathe in that other air. Whole days have passed where the only good things I have thought have come from holding the seams to my skin.

In the sleeves, my stubby hands become brilliant fists of bright longing. The angled lines carving its design are my legs, tucked into a triangle so I could press them against my mother's calves when I am afraid of the dark. In these threaded rivers, I have buried every place I've been.

In this cradle I keep the stethoscope I would hold to my heart, so you might hear how fast my heart is beating when you kiss me. It's at least four sizes too big for me, and it's got holes the size of craters on the moon. But it's home. My lovely woollen jumper.



Bolivia orgullosa... ¡La Paz maravillosa!

Calacoto, calle 10 No 300 casi Costanera booking@gustu.bo - www.gustu.bo
Abierto de lunes a sábado -Teléfono: 591 (2) 2117491

FERROVIARIA ANDINA S.A

AS SOUTH AMERICAN RAILWAYS FALL INTO DISUSE AND DISREPAIR, BOLIVIA LOOKS TO EXPAND ITS NETWORK.

TEXT: RODRIGO BARRENECHEA PHOTO: IVAN RODRIGUEZ P.

Back in 2011, I decided I wanted to know my country, Bolivia, better. I begun my journey by embarking on an Expreso del Sur train going from Oruro to Uyuni. I was 21 at the time, and this experience meant something special to me because of one fundamental element: I had never taken a train before. Furthermore, until recently I had never realised the historical importance behind these locomotives and carriages and their contribution to the Bolivian national economy. Not only were trains instrumental in carrying silver and other riches from the mines to the Pacific ports, they used to be the preferred method of transportation, connecting Bolivia to the rest of South America. But today, railways in South America have largely disappeared. But Bolivia, with 1,834 kilometres of track, has the longest network on the continent.

As I remember this journey, I also realise that my generation and the ones that follow don't have any knowledge about these railways and what they represent for Bolivia. They were like living veins traversing the country's five departments, and they are still used to this day to transport a large amount of the country's external trade to its neighbours. Michel Piñango, inter-institutional manager of Ferrovial Andina S.A. (FCA) tells me, 'In 2016, more than 1,300,000 tonnes of cargo were carried across the country.' And, he adds, 'in the communities of western Bolivia, a high number of passengers are still taking the train.'

In the current economic and political context, Piñango also thinks that FCA, considering all its technical capabilities and desire to invest in Bolivia, could play a major role in the Bioceanic Train line in which Bolivia is involved. The Bioceanic Train is a mega-project that will connect the port of Ilo in Peru, cross the whole of Bolivia's territory via El Alto, La Paz and Puerto Suárez, and terminate in Corumbá, Brazil. From Corumbá, there will be a connection to Santos, a large railway port near São Paulo.

With this project, it becomes tempting to envision a second railroad age in South America. This could become a reality in a near future since the Bioceanic Train involves the governments of Peru, Brazil and Bolivia signing a tripartite treaty. This would give Bolivia a very strong negotiating position. For the first time in a long time, Bolivia would gain (indirect) access to the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and would become the heart of the continent's commercial and touristic networks. This central position upon which the other South American economies would depend could play a huge role for Bolivia, both economically and politically.

Another one of FCA's priorities is tourism. Piñango explains that one of his company's priorities is to develop an online presence on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube while also maintaining a website in Spanish and English where tourists and travelers can directly purchase train tickets. The marketing strategies the company is currently implementing promote popular destinations like Lake Titicaca, Tiwanaku and Salar of Uyuni. But FCA also wants to raise the profile of lesser-known places like Tupiza, where Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid met their end; Guaqui and its locomotives museum; and Machacamarca, near Oruro. By opening up these new routes, FCA wants to give more options to the traveller who wants to learn more about Bolivia.

FCA is also focusing on developing strategic alliances with the Bolivian Ministry of Culture



and Tourism. Last year, for instance, FCA represented Bolivia at the International Tourism Fair of Latin America in Buenos Aires. The company also works closely with local tourism agencies. Because of these collaborations, FCA has become one of Bolivia's major ambassadors abroad by promoting its projects and offering alternative South American travel itineraries. Instead of buses, travellers will be able to travel along the Inca Trail by train. They will ride the rails from Cuzco in Peru to Argentina, with stops along the way in La Paz, Uyuni, Potosí and Villazón.

Piñango says that the majority of foreigners traveling in Bolivia by train are from Argentina. But French, American, Korean and Chinese tourists can also be frequently seen travelling by train. Piñango hopes for the train to become part of the Bolivian culture, for more tourists to experience this way of travelling, something he views as much more 'emotional' than travelling by bus. 'It's also more comfortable,' he adds. 'In our Expreso del Sur line, we have a restaurant coach where you can have lunch and dinner.' Piñango also counts on charter trains in which groups up to 80 people can rent carriages.

IT'S A MUCH MORE 'EMOTIONAL' WAY OF TRAVELLING THAN BY BUS.

When I first took the train to Uyuni, I had no idea of this potential, and talking with Piñango made me realise and understand why travelling in train is so special. That journey I took was indubitably one of the best of my life, not only because of the breathtaking scenery, but also due to the train itself. The experience brought back feelings of nostalgia and happiness, emotions I didn't expect to encounter at that time. Maybe it was because it was my first time travelling in train, or maybe it was the histories, memories, anecdotes and characters of my country that were resonating through that train.

By developing freight and passenger services, FCA may be about to revive one of Bolivia's most important mode of transportation: the train.

For more information visit: www.fca.com.bo

GLOSSARY

BolivianExpress Magazine

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| BARRIO | 'Neighbourhood' |
| CALLE | 'Street' |
| CAMBA | Word used to refer to people from eastern Bolivia |
| CAMU CAMU | Red/purple cherry-like fruit from the Amazon |
| CHAKI | 'Hangover' |
| CHICHARRON | Fried pork |
| CHOLITA | A traditionally dressed indigenous woman of Aymara or Quechua descent |
| CHOZA | Small house with |
| COCALERO | 'Coca farmer' |
| COPOAZU | Tropical rainforest fruit related to cacao |
| COSMOVISIÓN | A way of seeing the world |
| HOJA DE MOTACÚ | Leaves from a palm tree |
| GANADERO | 'Cattle rancher' |
| LOMITO | 'Beef' |
| LOTEADOR | A person who unlawfully occupies an uninhabited building or unused land |
| MADERERO | 'Timber merchant' |
| PALACIO QUEMADO | 'Burned Palace' |
| PICADORA DE ARROZ | Mechanical rice picker |
| POTOSINO | From Potosí |
| PRIVADO | 'Private' |
| QUIRQUIÑA | Bolivian herb (aka Bolivian coriander) |
| SALTEÑAS | Typical pasties filled with stew |
| SAN MIGUEL | Neighbourhood in the south of La Paz |
| SINGANI | Bolivian grape liquor |
| SOYERO | 'Soy farmer' |
| SUMA QAMAÑA | Suma Qamaña stands for the philosophy of a mutual relationship between humanity and 'Mother Earth', living from the planet's resources only to what is necessary, rather than the opposing capitalist angle of 'live better'. |
| TUCUMANAS | Fried pasties |
| ZONA SUR | Area in the south of La Paz |

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN TAKING COLLEGE CLASSES IN BOLIVIA?

Study at Universidad Privada Boliviana and transfer credit to your college.

How to get started

1. Contact home institution advisor.
2. Verify that they will accept credits.
3. Contact admisiones@lp.upb.edu.
4. Ask about **FREE MOVERS**.
5. Await response for registration.

We are looking forward to hearing from you!



Cochabamba

2017

años libres

XI Juegos
Suramericanos
COCHA
2018
UN MISMO SENTIR



COCHABAMBA, LA SEDE DE LOS XI JUEGOS SURAMERICANOS

*¡Trabajamos para ti
Llajta querida!*

