

BOLIVIA

POTOSI DEPARTMENT

GENERAL DATA - HISTORY - ECONOMY - CITY OF POTOSI - CITIES AND VILLAGES.

GENERAL DATA OF POTOSI DEPARTMENT

Capital: City of Potosi (Tomás Frías province), founded in 1545 by Diego de Centeno, Juan de Villarroel, Pedro de Cotamiento y Luis Santandia. Height: 4,060 meters over sea level.

Area: 118,218 km² (10.76% the total territory of Bolivia).

Population: 823,517 inhabitants (Census 2012).

Population density (inhabitants / km²): 6.97 (Census 2012).

Average annual growth rate of population (2001-2012): 1.34% (Census 2012).

Geographical coordinates: 19° 33' S - 65° 45' O.

Languages: Spanish, Quechua.



DEPARTMENT OF POTOSI IS DIVIDED INTO 16 PROVINCES

<i>Nº</i>	<i>Province</i>	<i>Capital</i>	<i>Area</i>	<i>Population</i>
1	Alonso de Ibáñez	Villa de Sacaca	2,170 km ² (1.84%)	4.12%
2	Antonio Quijarro	Uyuni	14,890 km ² (12.60%)	5.17%
3	Bernardino Bilbao	Arampampa	640 km ² (0.54%)	0.15%
4	Charcas	San Pedro de Buena Vista	2,964 km ² (2.51%)	5.75%
5	Chayanta	Colquechaca	7,026 km ² (5.94%)	13.66%
6	Cornelio Saavedra	Betanzos	2,375 km ² (2.01%)	8.48%
7	Daniel Campos	Llica	12,106 km ² (10.24%)	0.07%
8	Enrique Baldivieso	San Agustín	2,254 km ² (1.91%)	0.25%
9	José María Linares	Puna	5,136 km ² (4.34%)	7.02%
10	Modesto Omiste	Villazón	2,260 km ² (1.91%)	5.30%
11	Nor Chichas	Cotagaita	8,979 km ² (7.60%)	4.55%
12	Nor Lípez	Colcha "K"	20,892 km ² (17.67%)	1.60%
13	Rafael Bustillo	Uncía	2,235 km ² (1.89%)	10.44%
14	Sud Chichas	Tupiza	8,516 km ² (7.20%)	6.49%
15	Sud Lípez	San Pablo de Lípez	22,355 km ² (18.91%)	0.73%
16	Tomás Frías	Potosí	3,420 km ² (2.89%)	26.23%

HISTORY OF POTOSI DEPARTMENT AND SILVER PRODUCTION

The department of Potosí is in southwestern Bolivia. The capital is the city of Potosí. It is mostly a barren, mountainous region with one large plateau to the west, where the largest salt flat in the world, Salar de Uyuni, is located.

Potosí was the richest province in the Spanish empire, providing a great percentage of the silver that was shipped to Europe. Founded in 1546 as a mining town, it soon produced fabulous wealth, becoming one of the largest cities in the Americas and the world, with a population exceeding 200,000 people. Miners at work In Spanish there is still a saying, valer un potosí, "to be worth a potosí" (that is, "a fortune"). For Europeans, Peru - Bolivia was part of the Viceroyalty of Peru and was known as Alto Peru before becoming independent - was a mythical land of riches. Potosí appears as an idiom for "extraordinary richness" in Miguel

de Cervantes famous novel, Don Quixote. One theory holds that the mintmark of Potosí (the letters "PTSI" superimposed on one another) is the origin of the dollar sign.

It is from Potosí that most of the silver shipped through the Spanish Main came. According to official records, 45,000 tons of pure silver were mined from Cerro Rico from 1556 to 1783. Of this total, 9,000 tons went to the Spanish monarchy. Indian laborers, forced by Francisco de Toledo, Count of Oropesa through the traditional Incan mita institution of contributed labor, came to die by the thousands, not simply from exposure and brutal labor, but by mercury poisoning: in the patio process the silver-ore, having been crushed to powder by hydraulic machinery, was cold-mixed with mercury and trodden to an amalgamation by the native workers with their bare feet. The mercury was then driven off by heating, producing deadly vapors.

To compensate for the diminishing indigenous labor force, the colonists made a request in 1608 to the Crown in Madrid to begin allowing for the importation of 1,500 to 2,000 African slaves per year. An estimated 30,000 African slaves were taken to Potosí throughout the colonial era. African slaves were also forced to work in the Casa de la Moneda as acémilas humanas (human mules). Since mules would die after couple of months pushing the mills, the colonists replaced the four mules with twenty African slaves.

In 1672, a mint was established to coin silver and water reservoirs were built to fulfill the growing population's needs. At that time more than eighty-six churches were built and the city's population increased to nearly 200,000 making it one of the largest and wealthiest cities in Latin America and in the world.

After 1,800, the silver mines became depleted, making tin the main product. This eventually led to a slow economic decline.

Still, the mountain continues to be mined for silver to this day. Due to poor worker conditions (lack of protective equipment from the constant inhalation of dust), the miners still have a short life expectancy with most of them contracting silicosis and dying around 40 years of age. It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of Indians died under the harsh working conditions.

During the War of Independence Potosí frequently passed between the control of Royalist and Patriot forces. Major blunders by the First Auxiliary Army from Buenos Aires (under the command of Juan José Castelli) led to an increased sense that independence was needed

and fostered resentment towards him. During that occupation, there was anarchy and martial excess, and Potosí became unfriendly to the point where it could not be defended. When the second auxiliary army arrived it was received well, and the commander, Manuel Belgrano did much to heal the past wounds inflicted by the tyrannical minded Castelli. When that army was forced to retreat, Belgrano took the calculated decision to blow up the Casa de Moneda. Since the locals refused to evacuate this explosion would have resulted in many casualties, but by then the fuse was already lit. Disaster was averted not by the Argentinians who at that time were fleeing, but by locals who put the fuse out. Two more expeditions from Buenos Aires would seize Potosí.

MAP OF POTOSI DEPARTMENT



ECONOMY OF POTOSI DEPARTMENT

The Potosi department has thrived on mining (mainly the extraction of silver and tin) developed in territory of Potosi. But with time the silver veins, that made it legendary, is low and mining activity is currently directed towards other minerals exploration.

MINING. Potosi is one of the largest operators of tin and silver from Bolivia. Currently projects are brewing large concentration of low-grade ores (especially silver wastes accumulated since colonial times) and derivatives. There are significant reserves of antimony, sulfur, bismuth, zinc, gold, lithium, potassium, borax or borates, carbonates and sodium chloride...

AGRICULTURE. En Potosi department produces potato, quinoa real, corn, wheat, oxalis tuberosa (oca), Ullucus tuberosus (papaiza) and barley. Also in the department of Potosí (in valleys of the Cordillera Occidental) produce a variety of fruits.

CITY OF POTOSI

Potosí is a city and the capital of the department of Potosí in Bolivia. It is one of the highest cities by elevation in the world at a nominal 4,090 meters. It lies beneath the Cerro de Potosí – sometimes referred to as the Cerro Rico ("Rich Mountain") - a mountain popularly conceived of as being "made of" silver ore, which has always dominated the city. The Cerro Rico is the reason for Potosi s historical importance, since it was the major supply of silver for the Spanish Empire. Cerro de Potosí s peak is 4,824 meters (15,827 feet) above sea level.

CITIES AND VILLAGES OF POTOSI DEPARTMENT

TUPIZA. It is a city in Potosí Department, at an elevation of about 3,160 meters. Tupiza is the capital of the Sud Chichas Province within the Potosí Department. From Tupiza are

accessible various towns in the local mining districts, as is the Salar de Uyuni. The city of Tupiza is associated to the splendor of the Bolivian Mining. The main mining companies such as the Aramayo of Chichas had their seats in the city. They adorned their buildings with selected European architecture. The commercial and cultural activity was really intense in that period. Among the most important attractions of this place, it is possible to mention, of course, the peculiar architecture, the landscapes, the hot springs, the archaeological deposits, the Independence War fields; as well as the precious arts and crafts and the religious festivals.

Toro Toro. Toro Toro is located to the north of Potosí. It covers 166 square kilometers. Its altitude varies between 2,000 and 3,850 meters above the sea level. The principal festivity of Toro Toro takes place on July 25th. Also, many celebrations are carried out in honor to Santiago (a local and miraculous saint). It was declared National Park in 1989. It contains many beautiful landscapes; its most significant attractions are the biggest caves of Bolivia where it is possible to observe thousands of dinosaur footprints, as well as fossils and important archaeological remains. The landscape of Toro Toro is full of mountains, all size stones and running waters. The standard temperature is 18° C in winter and 26° C in summer.

TOURIST ATTRACTIONS:

Toro Toro National Park. It is one of the most beautiful national parks in Bolivia. It is an ideal place to practice paleontological excursions and cultural researches because of its fossil and dinosaur remains. Inside the park, there are more than 1000 kinds of plants. Its varied fauna presents a combination of Andean and Occidental animals;

Caves. The caves are one of the main attractions of Toro Toro National Park. Just eleven caves have been explored by different researchers; there are 35 caves yet unexplored;

Humajalanta. It means “water that disappears on the soil”. It is located 8 Km away from the village. It is one of the biggest caves of Bolivia since it covers 7 kilometers. Visiting the cave is a great adventure. It presents many obstacles; it is necessary to carry a torch, a rope; as well as adequate clothing and shoes. Potential explorers should not be afraid of darkness;

Chiflón. This cave is ideal for people who love adventure tourism because inside it, you will have to cross subterranean waters. There is an amazing view of stalactites and stalagmites that present impressive shapes;

Vergel. It is situated three kilometers away from the village. These precious waters are similar to waterfalls;

Batea Qoca. In this zone, you will be able to observe incredible Rupestrian paintings which reflect the Inca culture;

Stone House. It is also called the “Pachamama Wasi” (The Earth House). This is an interesting stone museum where creative works, made of local stones, are exhibited.

UYUNI. A dry zone covered by its great salt - pit plateau, whose altitudes vary from 3,660 to 4,500 meters above sea level. Traditionally this center is the joint of railways that communicate Bolivia, Chile and Argentina. The Uyuni salt flat that characterizes for the immense salt pit plateau that spreads all along the horizon; it is highly visit by foreigners. The Uyuni Salt flat is beauty, magic, adventure and much more, it is a place that invites us to touch in contact with the most rural in the nature, ideal for those that like of the photography and the adventure tourism. To continue trip to the National Park Eduardo Avaroa and the Laguna Verde and Laguna Roja it is advisable and almost obligatory. About the Salt treatment, mostly is prepared in the Southeastern side that is located just 2 km. of Colchani, this town is the main point of the process and commercialization of the salt to the different points from the country. Near the Colchani railway station is installed a plant for the treatment of common salt, enriched with iodine and other aggregates, with a capacity of processing of 18,000 tons/year for human consumption and 2,700 tons/year of mineralized salt for animal consumption. One the most visited places is Isla Incahuasi, call “Isla Pescado”, is an island located in the central part of Uyuni Salt Flat. It has a surface of 24.62 hectares, its surface is escarped. Here is located the giant cactus Trichocereus pasacana, that can be more than 10 meters of height. It is also a great tourist center because of its top the saline plain of Uyuni can be observed.

UNCIA. Its topography is composed by mountains. The climate is cold. The standard temperature is 7° C. The town maintains the traditional artisan techniques expressed in the making of precious typical knitting such as phullus and aguayos. Among the most important tourist attractions of this zone, it is possible to mention: the house and museum of The King or Baron of Tin, Simón I Patiño; and the Ayllus (traditional communities remains) of the Norte Potosí Ethnographic Museum. It is interesting to visit too the hot spring spas and the mining

fields; these last ones are abandoned; they represent the testimony of the tin period splendor.

VILLAZÓN. It is a town in southern Bolivia, on the border with Argentina. It sits directly across a river from La Quiaca in Argentina. The town is a busy trading hub, with large quantities of goods flowing north. It is also a heavily used transit hub for tourists passing into Bolivia. A train line connects Villazon with Tupiza, Uyuni and Oruro.

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