

# Bolivia to require visas for U.S. tourists soon

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## Story Highlights

- U.S. citizens will fall under Bolivia's most highly regulated migratory category
- Starting in December, a 30-day tourist visa for Americans will cost \$134
- U.S. tourists now need only fill out a small form upon entering Bolivia
- President Evo Morales calls Bolivia's new policy "a matter of reciprocity"

**LA PAZ, Bolivia (AP)** -- Bolivia announced Tuesday it will require visas for U.S. tourists beginning December 1, following through on a pledge to treat Americans much like they treat Bolivians entering the United States.



Bolivian leader Evo Morales, left, with U.S. envoy Philip Goldberg in May, has had strained ties with the U.S.

Foreign Minister David Choquehuanca said U.S. citizens would fall under Bolivia's most highly regulated migratory category. A 30-day tourist visa will cost \$134, an amount similar to fees paid by Bolivians applying to enter the United States.

U.S. tourists now need only fill out a small form upon entering Bolivia, which grants them 30 days' stay with the chance to apply for up to 90 days.

The new category requires proof of "economic solvency," proof of hotel reservations for the entire planned visit or a notarized invitation from a Bolivian citizen as well as a small passport photo taken against a "red background," though Choquehuanca hinted the process might be simplified.

"We are working to not hurt the flow of foreign tourists," Choquehuanca said. U.S. visitors "will be able to obtain a visa at the point of entry, either on the border or right there in the airport."

The Bolivian Tourism Chamber says one in five tourists visiting Bolivia is from the United States, and more than 70,000 Americans visited in 2005, the last year for which figures were available. Americans spend an estimated \$40 million a year in South America's poorest country.

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President Evo Morales has called Bolivia's new policy "a matter of reciprocity." The U.S. government requires Bolivians to obtain visas to enter the United States, charging \$100 for each visa, plus a \$14 fee per family to begin the application process.

"That's expensive for us, but it's cheap for them," Choquehuanca said.

U.S. ties to Bolivia have been tense since Morales took office last year. The United States is wary of Morales' friendship with Presidents Fidel Castro of Cuba and Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, while Morales has recently accused the United States of using its aid to support his conservative opposition.