

Letter from (South) America

by
RUSS PEARCE



Living the high life in Bolivia

IT'S been a week of catching up and saying goodbye. My wife, Trish arrived on Sunday and since then I have continually had to say goodbye to friends who are returning to the UK.

Most of the week has been spent revisiting places around Santa Cruz and introducing Trish to life in Bolivia.

Now, though, we are staying at Copacabana, on the shore of Lake Titicaca. It is the highest navigable waterway in the world, and the altitude is taking a bit of adjusting to.

We began by flying from Santa Cruz to La Paz, the highest international airport in the world at over 4,000 metres. The flight was uneventful, unlike one of my friends who was left stranded at the airport when her flight was cancelled because of the hurricane in Miami.

From La Paz we took a bus for just under four hours travelling through some incredible scenery. We have seen snow-capped mountains, herds of sheep and cattle, the occasional llama or alpaca and spectacular views of the lakes.

Then, to cap it all, we travelled across part of the lake on a small boat, while the bus went on a separate raft!

Here in Copacabana, we are staying in a hotel with a fabulous view of the lake. Wandering around the town, we have already witnessed one of the more unusual local customs here - the blessing of the buses.

Outside the church, lots of minibuses are lined up, bedecked in floral displays, and the priest blesses them with holy water while guitars, accordions and panpipes are played!

If you can't bring your vehicle here, it is possible to buy small plastic replicas of your bus, and have that blessed instead!

We have a hectic couple of weeks ahead now trying to see as much of Bolivia as possible, before returning home at the end of September. I will be giving a presentation about my time in Bolivia on Wednesday, October 13 at the Hi-Tide Inn in Porthcawl.

Anyone interested in coming along, should give Denise Pugh a call on 01656 773060 for details. The cost is £6.50, including a lasagne supper.