

# To La Paz and Back: How Does a Diplomat's Wife Travel in the Andes?

Visiting quinoa farms at more than 12,000 feet; an electric teapot for coca tea

By Frederick Dreier • June 9, 2015 11:38 a.m. ET



Ingrid Hirstin Lazcano walks with her travel bag outside the restaurant Trattoria Amici in Glendale, Calif. *Photo: MICHAL CZERWONKA FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

Tourists arriving in Bolivia often require several days of rest to acclimatize to the Andean country's soaring altitude. But when Ingrid Hirstin Lazcano touches down in La Paz (altitude 11,975 feet) from her home in Glendale, Calif., (altitude: 522 feet) her busy schedule rarely allows for relaxation.

The wife of retired Bolivian consul general Fernando Lazcano Dunn, Ms. Hirstin Lazcano must accompany her husband to official state functions and social events. The two meet with Bolivian politicians whom they regularly entertain in Los Angeles.

Ms. Hirstin Lazcano is also a food entrepreneur, and her company, Andean Dream, imports products made from the grain quinoa. So when her diplomatic duties are over, Ms. Hirstin Lazcano visits the processing plants and kitchens that produce her quinoa-based cookies, pasta and soups.

The trip from Los Angeles to La Paz takes a full day, and Ms. Hirstin Lazcano typically flies through Atlanta and Lima, Peru. On most trips, Ms. Hirstin Lazcano takes a two-hour flight from La Paz to the smaller city of Cochabamba to visit her quinoa factory. On rare occasions, she boards a small plane for Bolivia's arid altiplano plateau, where a daylong jeep drive after the flight takes her to the quinoa farms, which sit well above 12,000 feet above an expansive salt flat.





The contents of Ingrid Hirstin Lazcano's travel bag: She brings coca tea, herbal tea, a water purifier, samples of her company's cookies and pasta, B-12 vitamins, a blackberry, a camera, and a flashlight. *Photo: MICHAL CZERWONKA FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

“It’s a very remote region and it’s not easy to get there,” says Ms. Hirstin Lazcano, 58. “It feels like a once-in-a-lifetime trip.”

That being the case, Ms. Hirstin Lazcano travels with items designed to cope with Bolivia’s altitude. She brings altitude sickness pills, called sorojchi pills by the locals. She also brings an electric teapot to heat decaffeinated herbal tea, which is a popular remedy for altitude sickness in the Andean region.

“The tea takes the edge off of the buzz from the sorojche pills,” she says.

She always brings a camera and pashmina shawl on her Bolivian trips, as well as samples of her company’s products.

If a trip takes Ms. Hirstin Lazcano to the altiplano, she packs eucalyptus oil to alleviate the aches and pains from the long trip, as well as a water purifier to clean the tap water.



Ingrid Hirstin Lazcano with her travel bag at Trattoria Amici in Glendale Calif. *Photo: MICHAL CZERWONKA FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

She leaves her newer smartphones at home in favor of an older [BlackBerry](#) model. “For some reason, it functions really well in remote areas of South America,” she says. “I was in the middle of a salt lake and could update my [Facebook](#) page.”

Ms. Hirstin Lazcano has a background in talent management. In the 1980s she coordinated contestants for the game show “Jeopardy!” before pursuing her

own music management company.

Ms. Hirstin Lazcano met her husband in 2005 at a diplomatic function in Los Angeles. After the two married, she quickly adapted to the blended life of diplomat's wife and food entrepreneur.

“When I wasn't going back and forth to Bolivia for my company, I'd be at home helping [Fernando] host,” she says. “It helps that we're tied to the same country.”