



Baroque Music in the Bolivian Missions

Santa Cruz, La Paz and a jungle journey

17–28 April 2026 (MM 927)

12 days • £7,520

Lecturer: Dr. Barbara Hoos de Jokisch

Attend the International Festival of American Renaissance and Baroque Music held in the Jesuit Mission churches of north-east Bolivia.

World-renowned musicians perform alongside local school and university groups; repertoire is from Bolivia and beyond.

Exquisite colonial architecture in remote locations.

Further exploration of native instruments and Bolivian dance in La Paz.

The six UNESCO world heritage-site Chiquitos Indian mission stations are one of Bolivia's great cultural riches. Located north-east of Santa Cruz in Bolivia's lowlands, part of the Amazon basin, these remote colonial churches are simple, barn-like constructions of wood and adobe, gloriously painted inside and out with swirling floral patterns, angels and saints in modest shades of ochre and tan. Spiralling columns are crafted from entire tree trunks, and exquisitely carved retables and confessionals abound. Every two years they provide an extraordinary backdrop and context for the performance of Baroque music.

The biennial festival of American Renaissance and Baroque Music is based in Santa Cruz but spreads through this precious chain of enchanting jungle churches and attracts performers and scholars from the Americas, Europe and the Far-East. All are eager to join the proud and friendly local musicians and communities who are passionate about their musical heritage, a legacy from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which saw the fusion of European and Indian cultures. The inspiration flows in both directions, with concerts in these vast cathedrals full to capacity (the locals leave just a few rows at the front free for visitors such as ourselves) creating a magical and unique atmosphere, seemingly frozen in time and yet flourishing and alive.

Musical traditions in these settlements go back over four hundred years but much of the distinctive local Baroque sacred music was found in the 1990s during a restoration process which uncovered over twelve thousand manuscripts. The music, mostly anonymous, but written by European - notably Dominico



Photograph: San Javier, Jesuit Mission. ©Jess Kraft/shutterstock.

Zipoli - and indigenous composers, is lively, energetic and colourful with the joy and freshness of a young Vivaldi. Instrumental accompaniments appear simple on the page but inventories show a lavish musical resource was available including many harps, woodwind of various kinds, harpsichord, organ and strings including tromba marinas. Texts are mostly liturgical and in Latin but also feature native languages.

Further evidence of the inherent rich musicality of Bolivians throughout the ages, as well as their great dance traditions that dominate regular festivals, can be witnessed in the museums of La Paz. Pre-hispanic instruments such as giant pan-pipes and bamboo violins sit alongside colourful masks and vivid textiles, brought to life with dramatic displays.

Itinerary

Day 1 (17 April): travelling day. *Flights from London are not included - see Practicalities. We recommend Air Europa from London Gatwick via Madrid, departing at c. 5.30pm and arriving at c. 5.00am on 18 April.* You may check into the hotel in Santa Cruz from 2.00pm today. The tour begins on day 2 with a talk in the hotel at 12.00 noon.

Day 2 (18 April): Santa Cruz. A transfer is provided from Santa Cruz airport to the hotel, coinciding with the arrival of the flight from Madrid at c. 5.00am. The day is mostly free to recover, with an introductory lecture to prepare for the journey ahead. Evening concert in either the chapel of the former school of arts or the 19th cent. church of San Roque. Overnight in Santa Cruz.

Day 3: Santa Cruz. A morning excursion to Biocentro Güembé provides an insight into Bolivia's flora and fauna with 24 hectares of exotic plants and animals, a butterfly dome and an aviary. Afternoon visits in the centre of the city include the folklore museum and cathedral. Evening concert in either the chapel of the former school of arts or the 19th cent. church of San Roque. Overnight in Santa Cruz.

Day 4: San José. Drive from Santa Cruz to San José (c. 4½ hours), founded in 1696. Dominating one side of the huge and dusty main square is the mission complex, a defensive compound that housed the Jesuit college behind the elegant Baroque stone façades of the church, chapel and bell tower. Evening concert in the church. Overnight in San José.

Day 5: San Rafael, Santa Ana, San Ignacio. Drive to San Rafael (c. 3 hours) where the wooden church was completed in 1749 by Swiss missionary Fr. Martin Schmid, whose music

Baroque Music in the
Bolivian Missions

continued

usually features on festival programmes. The church at Santa Ana was probably constructed entirely by the indigenous population after the expulsion of the Jesuits between 1770 and 1780 and overlooks a grassy square where donkeys and chickens roam. Evening concert in the cathedral of San Ignacio, a reconstruction of the original mission church but still home to the original Baroque altarpieces. Overnight San Ignacio.

Day 6: San Miguel, Concepción. A morning excursion to San Miguel where, once more, the 1721 mission church shines in its humble surroundings. Visit a workshop producing elaborate cedar carvings in the Baroque style. Continue to Concepción (3½ hours) whose church is the most lavishly decorated with much gold leaf. A substantial musical archive was uncovered here and a museum documents its discovery, along with the restoration of the mission churches. Evening concert and overnight in Concepción.

Day 7: San Javier, Santa Cruz, La Paz. Drive back to Santa Cruz via San Javier, the first mission town to be established in the region. The carved retablo of the church depicts the Jesuit missionaries at work. Fly from Santa Cruz to La Paz in the early evening (Boliviana de Aviación, BOA). First of four nights in La Paz.

Day 8: La Paz. The sprawling city of La Paz overflows from its mountainous basin 3,500m above sea level and is best traversed and viewed from an excellent network of cable cars. Morning visit to the National Museum of Ethnography and Folklore with its fascinating collection of carnival masks as well as ceramics and textiles. An afternoon walk through the historic centre takes in the Witches' Market, a hub of herbal medicine and magical cures, and the main square with cathedral and presidential palace. A demonstration at the Museum of Musical Instruments is followed by a private show of Bolivian dance (*subject to confirmation*).

Day 9: La Paz. San Francisco is the city's finest colonial church and houses an interesting exhibition of religious art and furniture. The National Museum of Art, housed in an elegant baroque palace, contains an extensive collection of sacred, colonial works. Free afternoon. Dinner is at Gustu, ranked number 38 on San Pellegrino's list of 50 best restaurants in Latin America – and the only entry for Bolivia.

Day 10: Tiwanaku. Morning visit to the archaeological site of Tiwanaku, once home to an impressive civilisation, established around 1200 BC, that by 400 AD controlled the entire Titicaca basin. Excellent museums display ceramics and monoliths excavated from the site.

Day 11: La Paz, Santa Cruz. Free morning in La Paz, then take an afternoon flight back to Santa Cruz. Overnight Santa Cruz.

Day 12 (28 April). Make your own arrangements for returning home. *We recommend the Air Europa flights to London Gatwick via Madrid, departing c. 12.30pm and arriving 29th April at c. 9.00am. A transfer to Santa Cruz airport is provided to coincide with this flight.*

Lecturer

Dr Barbara Hoos de Jokisch studied theology, music and German literature at the Berlin University of the Arts. She began her career as a concert and oratorio singer with a wide-ranging repertoire from Renaissance and Baroque to Classical, Romantic and contemporary works. For many years she lived in Mexico with her family, where she worked as a professional singer and founded the KAIROS ensemble, which specialised in Latin American Baroque music. She has a doctorate in music education and has given numerous speeches and seminars in her field at international conferences all over Europe as well as in Mexico, the USA and South Africa.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £7,520. **Single occupancy:** £8,320

Included: 2 domestic flights with BOA (Boeing 737); travel by private coach or jeep; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts; 9 lunches and 8 dinners with wine (where available), water, coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer, tour manager and local guide.

Flights: international flights between London and Bolivia are not included in the price of the tour. The cost of an economy seat with Air Europa, via Madrid, at the time of publication is c. £1,100. Transfers will only be provided around the flights that we recommend.

Music: the full programme is announced in early 2026. We will endeavour to include as many concerts as possible by both international professionals and local amateurs. This may involve adjusting our itinerary for days 4–7.

Accommodation. *We book the best available hotels in the mission towns, which are 2–3 star by European standards.* **Hotel los Tajibos, Santa Cruz** (lostajiboshotel.com): 5-star resort hotel with comfortable rooms, good restaurants and a pool. **Hotel Villa Chiquitana, San José** (hotellavillachiquitana.com): friendly, family-run with simple rooms. **Hotel la Misión, San Ignacio** (hotel-lamision.com): an attractive hotel on the town's main square. **Gran Hotel Concepción** (granhotelconcepcion.com): a converted colonial house, with well kept gardens and simple rooms. **Suites Camino Real, La Paz** (camino-real.com.bo): modern, reliable 5-star chain hotel with large rooms, located in an upscale area of La Paz. *Single rooms throughout are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? This is a strenuous tour and a good level of fitness and stamina are essential. It begins with an overnight flight and has a number of hotel changes. There are some long drives, often on unpaved, bumpy roads with little opportunity for comfort stops. While there is not a huge amount of walking, uneven ground is standard. La Paz is 3,500m above sea level. It can take time to acclimatise and anyone with heart or respiratory problems should seek advice from their doctor before booking. Additional travel insurance cover may be required. Average distance by coach per day: 75 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.

Baroque Music in the
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continued

Tour extension: Uyuni, Potosí, Sucre

27 April–2 May 2026 (MM 927)

Extra 4 nights • £2,870

Led by a Bolivian national guide

An extension to *Bolivian Baroque*, remain in the country and explore further the cultural and natural heritage.

Ethereal landscapes of Uyuni's salt flats.

The whitewashed city of Sucre has some of South America's finest colonial architecture.

In the hands of a trusted national guide, and our tour manager should numbers permit, we offer the opportunity to remain in Bolivia and discover more than its musical history.

The imposing Cerro Rico, ('rich mountain'), that overlooks Potosí is a constant reminder of the prosperity of the seventeenth-century silver rush but also the millions of indigenous people that perished in appalling conditions to fuel the wealth of the Spanish Empire. Even today miners chew coca leaves to suppress the side-effects of working underground. Much of the silver passed through the Imperial mint, creating the world's first true global currency. Although now slightly crumbling, an abundance of fine colonial buildings in Andean Baroque style are the legacy of these boom years.

The fortunes of Potosí also endowed Sucre with a beautifully preserved historic centre and rich museum collections. Seat of an important university, it was here that liberal thinking sparked ideas of independence, eventually declared in 1825, establishing Sucre as the nation's capital.

Some would say a visit to Bolivia would not be complete without glimpsing the vast, bleached expanse of the Uyuni salt flats. Formerly a series of huge lakes, water still exists deep beneath the surface, causing honeycomb-shaped cracks to form as liquid continuously saturates the crust and dries. With a surface area of around ten thousand square kilometres, it is easy to escape the crowds and feel very far from the jungles of the north-east.

Itinerary

Day 11 (27 April): La Paz, Uyuni. Early morning flight to Uyuni (3,656m above sea level). Excursion by jeep on Bolivia's dramatic salt flats. See abandoned steam trains that once



Photograph: Uyuni Salt Flat, Bolivia ©Amy Rollo.

carried ore from the mines here, and visit one of the few families permitted to extract and process the salt. Lunch is on the flats, while a short uphill walk (and then downhill: c. 1 hour total) on the cactus-studded Incahuasi island provides more panoramic views. Overnight at a salt hotel on the edge of the flats.

Day 12: Potosí. Drive through the highlands (4 hours) to Potosí at 4,100m above sea level. The beautiful, 17th-cent. Carmelite convent of Santa María was occupied by the daughters of wealthy Spaniards and mine owners who paid handsomely for the privilege, donating an extraordinary collection of art and other treasures. Overnight in Potosí.

Day 13: Potosí, Sucre. Morning visit to the Casa Real de la Moneda, the former royal mint, providing insight into coin production using the silver of the nearby Cerro Rico mines. Displays include machinery and a fine collection of art and archaeological finds. Drive in the afternoon to the miners' market where the tragic consequences of the city's prosperity live on. Continue to Sucre (4 hours) at 2,810m above sea level. First of two nights in Sucre.

Day 14: Sucre. The cathedral displays a range of architectural styles from Baroque to Neoclassical; see also the adjoining art museum. The Bolivian Act of Independence was signed in the Casa de la Libertad, which now houses a history museum. Continue to the treasury museum with an overview of the different metals, minerals and semi-precious stones and the mining process. The convent of La Recoleta documents the work of Franciscan missionaries with a substantial collection of art and artefacts, while the museum of indigenous art displays beautiful weavings.

Day 15: Sucre, Santa Cruz. Morning flight from Sucre back to Santa Cruz for your final night in Bolivia.

Day 16 (2 May). Make your own arrangements for returning home. We recommend the *Air Europa flights to London Gatwick via Madrid*, departing c. 12.30pm and arriving 3rd May at c. 9.00am. A transfer to Santa Cruz airport is provided to coincide with this flight.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £2,870. **Single occupancy:** £3,260

Included: 2 domestic flights with BOA (Boeing 737); travel by private vehicle; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts; an additional 2 lunches and 3 dinners with wine (where available), water, coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of a local guide.

Tour leader. This extension is led by a Bolivian national guide. Should numbers reach 10, the tour manager of *Baroque Music in the Bolivian Missions* will also accompany the group.

Accommodation. Hotel Luna Salada, Uyuni (lunasalahotel.com.bo): a hotel constructed entirely from salt. Comfortable rooms and a good restaurant. **Hotel Coloso, Potosí** (potosihotel.com): a traditional hotel with oxygen available in case of altitude sickness. **Hotel Parador Santa María la Real, Sucre** (parador.com.bo): an attractive hotel in a converted 18th-century mansion with traditional and antique décor.

How strenuous? This extension involves a lot of walking in town centres, where coach access is restricted, and a lot of standing in museums and churches. Walking shoes would be appropriate for the visit to the salt flats and Incahuasi island. Altitude remains an issue, particularly in Potosí at 4,100m above sea level. Average distance by coach per day: 80 miles.

Group size: between 3 and 22 participants.