

SOUTH AMERICA · HISTORY · CULTURE · OFF THE BEATEN PATH · WILDLIFE



Paraguay

Paraguay is South America's quiet heart: the UNESCO-listed Jesuit missions of Trinidad and Jesús see few visitors, Mennonite colonies farm the vast Chaco, and the Itaipu dam spans the Paraná. It is one of the continent's least-visited and most affordable countries, where tereré is shared on every street corner.

i Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Paraguay and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 21 January 2026.

📍 CAPITAL Asunción	💰 CURRENCY Paraguayan guaraní (PYG) £1 ≈ PYG 7,664	🗣️ LANGUAGE Spanish, Guaraní	📅 BEST TIME May–Sep
👛 DAILY BUDGET £30–£140 ££ Moderate	🔌 PLUGS Type A, C 220V · adapter needed	✈️ FLIGHT FROM LONDON 17h 30m via Madrid or Sao Paulo ~£900–£1,500 return	🕒 TIME ZONE UTC-3 standard time

Landlocked Paraguay divides neatly along the Paraguay River. The eastern half holds nearly all the people: Asunción, the farmland and lakes around it, and the south, where the 18th-century Jesuit reductions of Trinidad and Jesús are the country's star sights. West of the river lies the Chaco, a vast thorn-scrub wilderness home to indigenous communities and the Mennonite colonies around Filadelfia. A first trip usually runs Asunción, Encarnación and the missions, then Ciudad del Este for the Itaipu dam and the Monday falls, with an easy hop across the border to Iguazú.

Paraguay is cheap and unhurried, with few foreign tourists and little tourist infrastructure beyond the main towns — which is exactly the appeal for many. Buses are frequent and inexpensive, hotels are good value, and the main expense is time. Summer heat is fierce and can top 40°C, so winter is the comfortable season. Visitors are often struck by how widely Guaraní is spoken, the national obsession with tereré, and the friendliness of people unused to outsiders. It suits slow travellers, history buffs and birdwatchers.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

HISTORY

Jesuit missions of Trinidad and Jesús

Two UNESCO-listed 18th-century Jesuit reductions where Guaraní communities lived and worked: Trinidad's carved red-sandstone church and plaza, and Jesús de Tavarangue's unfinished church nearby. Stay for Trinidad's evening light-and-sound show.
- 2

ARCHITECTURE

Itaipu Dam

One of the world's largest hydroelectric dams, shared with Brazil and nearly 8 km long. Guided tours from the Paraguayan visitor centre near Hernandarias take in the spillway and the colossal dam wall.

3

NATURE

Salto del Monday

A broad, roaring curtain of waterfalls around 40 metres high on the Monday river, just south of Ciudad del Este, with walkways, viewpoints and few crowds compared with Iguazú.

4

CULTURE

Filadelfia and the Chaco

Drive the Trans-Chaco highway to Filadelfia, heart of the Mennonite colonies, for German-speaking towns, a colony museum and dairy farms amid dry forest rich in birdlife, armadillos and, rarely seen, jaguars.

5

CULTURE

Areguá and Lake Ypacaraí

A hillside town above Lake Ypacaraí, under an hour from Asunción, known for its ceramics stalls, elegant old summer villas, hilltop church and roadside strawberries in late winter and spring.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Asunción

≈ 2.2 million people

One of South America's oldest cities, founded in 1537: see the Palacio de López, the Panteón de los Héroes and the riverside Costanera, then eat well in the Villa Morra district.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Ciudad del Este

≈ 554,000 people

A frenetic cross-border shopping hub on the Brazilian frontier, best used as a base for the Itaipu dam, the Monday falls and day trips to Iguazú Falls.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Encarnación

≈ 123,000 people

A tidy riverside city facing Argentina across the Paraná, with summer beaches along the Costanera, Paraguay's biggest carnival and the Jesuit missions 30 km away.

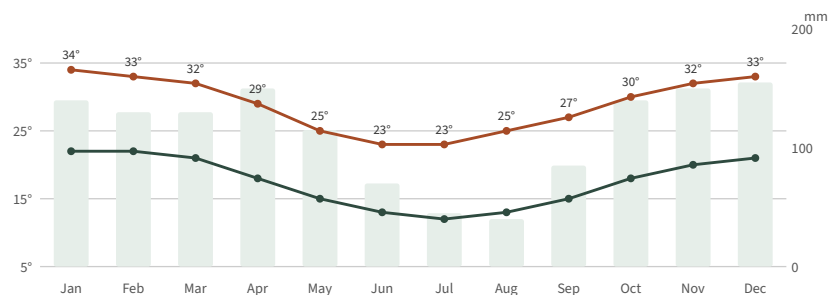
Populations are for urban agglomerations (2022 census): Greater Asunción includes Luque, San Lorenzo and Capiatá, which would otherwise rank among the largest municipalities.

When to go to Paraguay

Best time: **May–Sep.**

**Average climate in Asunción**

— High °C — Low °C — Rain (mm)

**Festivals & events**

Jan–Feb

Carnaval Encarnaceno

Paraguay's biggest carnival takes over Encarnación's sambódromo on weekend nights through January and February, with Brazilian-style floats, drummers and feathered dancers.

Jun	Fiesta de San Juan Around 24 June, towns light bonfires and play fire games — walking on embers, kicking a flaming ball — and eat traditional maize and cassava treats.
Dec	Virgin of Caacupé On 8 December hundreds of thousands of pilgrims, many walking from Asunción, converge on the basilica at Caacupé for Paraguay's biggest religious gathering.

How much does Paraguay cost?

SHOESTRING £30 per person / day ≈ PYG 229,932 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £65 per person / day ≈ PYG 498,187 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £140 per person / day ≈ PYG 1,073,018 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Sopa paraguaya

Despite the name, not a soup but a dense, savoury cornbread baked with cheese, onion and milk — the classic partner to an asado.

Chipa

Chewy ring-shaped rolls of cassava starch, cheese and egg, sold warm from baskets at bus stations and on roadsides for breakfast or a snack.

Tereré

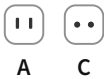
Paraguay's national drink: yerba mate steeped in iced water, often with crushed medicinal herbs, sipped through a metal bombilla from a shared cup.

Getting around

Long-distance buses are the backbone, running frequently from Asunción's main terminal to Encarnación, Ciudad del Este and across the Chaco to Filadelfia; companies such as NSA and La Encarnacena run comfortable services. There are no regular passenger trains. In Asunción, Bolt and Uber work well, while hiring a car makes the missions and smaller towns easier.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



220V — bring a UK-to-A/C adapter

DIALLING CODE

+595

TAP WATER

Varies — bottled or filtered is safer

TIPPING

Around 10% in restaurants, sometimes added to the bill as 'propina'; round up for taxis and tip guides.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Ambulance: **141**

Fire: **132**

Police: **911**

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

TIME ZONE

UTC-3 (standard time)

DRIVING

On the right

ETIQUETTE

If offered tereré, accept and pass the cup back to the server, not your neighbour; saying 'gracias' signals you've had enough. Expect slow afternoons during siesta hours.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Silvio Pettrossi International Airport (ASU), Asunción; Guaraní International Airport (AGT), Ciudad del Este

Visas & entry for Paraguay

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You do not need a visa to visit Paraguay. You will normally get permission to stay for 90 days on arrival.

If you want to stay for another 90 days, check with the Paraguayan Immigration Department (in Spanish).

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations

See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

- Hepatitis A
- Tetanus
- Typhoid

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

- Chikungunya
- Dengue
- Hepatitis B
- Rabies
- Tuberculosis
- Yellow fever

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter. There is a risk of yellow fever in parts of the country — vaccination may be advised.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Paraguay

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Tue 8 Dec 2026	Caacupe Virgin Day
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Mon 1 Mar 2027	Patriots Day
Thu 25 Mar 2027	Maundy Thursday
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Sun 28 Mar 2027	Easter Sunday

Sat 1 May 2027	Workers' Day
Fri 14 May 2027	National Holiday
Sat 15 May 2027	National Independence Day
Sat 12 Jun 2027	Chaco Armistice Day
Sun 20 Jun 2027	Constitution Oath Day
Sun 15 Aug 2027	Asuncion Foundation's Day
Wed 29 Sep 2027	Boqueron Battle Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Spanish

ENGLISH	SPANISH	SAY IT
Hello	Hola	<i>OH-la</i>
Thank you	Gracias	<i>GRAH-see-ass</i>
Please	Por favor	<i>por fa-VOR</i>
Excuse me	Disculpe	<i>dees-KOOL-peh</i>
How much is this?	¿Cuánto cuesta?	<i>KWAN-toh KWES-ta</i>

Know before you go

Iguazú Falls lie across the border in Argentina and Brazil. Crossing from Ciudad del Este, make sure you get exit and entry stamps — buses won't always stop at immigration.

Learn a couple of Guaraní words — mba'éichapa (how are you?) and aguyje (thank you) — for instant goodwill, especially outside Asunción.

From October to March temperatures regularly pass 35°C; plan outdoor sightseeing for early morning, carry water, and expect smaller towns to shut down after lunch.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.