

SALT HOTEL: PLEASE, DON'T LICK THE WALLS



It is one of the most bizarre hotels in the world. Adventurers and backpackers from all over come to the Bolivian salt desert of Salar de Uyuni to admire the night sky, snow white dessert and a hotel made entirely of salt.

40,000 years ago, a giant prehistoric lake, Lake Minchin, used to extend over what is now the largest salt flat in the world. **It is one of Bolivia's key tourist attractions.** What once was the lake, eventually dried out and created two smaller lakes, Poopó Lake and Uru Uru Lake as well as **two salt deserts, Salar de Coipasa and Uyuni.** Even though it does not seem like a great idea to go wonder about a salt desert, many adventurers are lured by the strange beauty of the endless white flats.

Salar de Uyuni lies at the altitude of 3,650 meters in the Andes region. Salt mining is still a crucial activity for many locals, however, more and more tourists dare come here to admire the night sky, the unusual charm of a pristine white desert and the famous attraction - **the Salt Hotel** - opened four years ago.

The idea is not entirely unique, as its predecessor - the ice hotel in Sweden - has already stolen a bit of the glory. On the other hand, the Salt Hotel, now known as '**Salt Palace and Spa**' is almost entirely created from salt. The walls are made of the salt blocks, the furniture is carved out of salt, and that is including the beds. The only trace of modern materials are the toilets, roof and of course the lighting. The sun heats the massive blocks of salt so that while the surrounding temperatures drop massively during the night, the interior remains warm and cozy. Only one thing is not allowed: wall licking.

What may seem like a relatively plain area with not much to see, becomes quite a spectacle at times when a thin layer of water covers the flats and reflects the sky. Especially sun rise and sun set are most bewitching to watch here at Salar de Uyuni. Rare flamingoes are to be seen in the desert as well as a surprisingly large population of cacti. The salt desert is not exactly a leisure holiday destination, though it is a must see and a definite highlight of Bolivia.

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