

COLOMBIA HIGHLIGHTS TOUR ITINERARY



HIGHLIGHTS OF COLOMBIA

DAY BY DAY ITINERARY:

Day 1 – Arrival in Bogota



Colombia's pulsating capital is a nine-million-metropolis that stretches over 40 km from north to south and 20 km from east to west. Located centrally in the country and on 2650 meters above sea level, Bogotá indeed is the raised and rising economic and industrial powerhouse of the country. The national legislature, the Supreme Court of Justice, and the residence of the President of the Republic (Casa de Nariño) reside here, surrounding the grand Plaza de Bolivar in Bogotá's picturesque historic center. Here in "La Candelaria" colourfully painted colonial buildings house excellent museums and galleries, libraries and cafés, all set against the spectacular backdrop of the Andean mountains east of the city. The Monserrate Church and the Virgin of Guadalupe reside up here on the mountain tops and watch over Bogotá. They offer the best views across the maze of buildings, buses and barrios, showcasing the eclectic mix of historic and modern and an increasingly cosmopolitan city.

 **Private transfer from Bogotá airport (BOG) to hotel - with Bilingual guide**

 **Hotel de La Opera (3 nights)**

Room type: Standard Room Colonial

Meals: Breakfast included

Day 2 – Bogota Sightseeing

(B)

 **Full Day City Tour Incl. Gold Museum, Monserrate & Zipaquirá - with Bilingual guide**

This guided tour takes us on a journey through time from Bogotá's colonial era to modern day urban life. Starting at the grand Plaza de Bolivar and the surrounding government buildings we continue to La Candelaria, Bogotá's historic quarter, and to Bogotá's oldest church, the Iglesia de San Francisco. At the world-famous gold museum, we go back in time even more, admiring over 30.000 exhibits of pre-Columbian gold artifacts (closed on Mondays). We then seek higher grounds with an exhilarating cable car ride to Monserrate Hill, which offers spectacular views of the nine-million-metropolis and the surrounding high plains. Our excursion continues by leaving the big city behind to visit a true masterpiece of ecclesiastical "architecture": the unique salt cathedral of Zipaquirá. This impressive cathedral of was carved out of a salt mine 120 meters below the ground in the fifties. We finish our visit with a stint to the village of Zipaquirá itself. Located about 50 km north of Bogotá it offers enchanting sights as we walk across its main square.

Attention: On Sundays Monserrate is very busy and there might be long queues. Alternatively, the guide will take you by private transport to the mountain Guadalupe, at 3.300 m or to the Calera, where you get to enjoy the view of Bogotá.

Half Day shared Walking Tour Graffiti of Bogotá - with Bilingual guide

Bogotá is considered one of the world's 'graffiti-capitals'. The megacity's old town La Candelaria teems with facades covered with graffiti from different artists. The dominant socio-critical topics are represented within the scope of the so-called APC-themes 'Animals, Power, Culture' and tackle several socially controversial issues including human rights, animal rights, unequal power relations or current political and social themes in conflict regions across the world. This graffiti tour is a fascinating way to get to grips with South America's vibrant street art scene and the different techniques. The tour also shines a light on a variety of historical and societal topics and should be appealing to many - not just to the younger audiences. The SIB tour starts every day at 10am and 2pm. The meeting point is the 'Parque de los Periodistas' in the centre of Bogotá.

*B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner, FB=Full Board



Colombia is famous for its coffee, but nowhere is the prized bean more important than in the departments of Caldas, Risaralda and Quindío, which together make up the heart of the Zona Cafetera, also called the Eje Cafetero (Coffee Axis). Here you'll find jeeps packed with mustachioed coffee pickers; poncho-wearing senior citizens gossiping in cafes; and, of course, endless cups of piping hot arabica. Many working fincas (coffee farms) have embraced tourism and welcome visitors onto their plantations to learn all about the coffee-growing process. It is particularly interesting to visit during the harvests (April to May, October to December) when the farms are a hive of activity. The "Coffee Cultural Landscape", inscribed on the World Heritage List by UNESCO in 2011

 **Private transfer from hotel to Bogotá airport (BOG) - with Bilingual guide**

 **Private transfer from Pereira airport to hotel in Pereira - with English speaking guide. Transfer time aprox. 20 min.**

 **Hotel Movich Pereira (2 nights)**

Room type: Standard Room **Meals:** Breakfast included

Important: Triple rooms may contain 3 single beds or 2 beds (either 2 double beds or 1 double bed and one single bed) and Quadruple rooms may contain 4 single beds, 2 double beds or 2 single beds and one double bed.

Day 5 – Full day sightseeing

(B)



Full Day Cocora Valley and Salento with coffee tour El Ocaso - with English speaking guide

The mystical valley of Cocora is considered one of Colombia's most stunning valleys and often listed among the country's must-sees. Certainly, unique are the up to 60-meter-tall wax palms of the region, which are towering into the eerie cloud forest. We can explore the valley on foot before our trip to nearby Salento, one of the coffee region's most picturesque villages. Browsing its cafés and boutiques we find ourselves among merry colors, textures and artisanal crafts. Just outside of Salento and nestled into fertile hillsides we reach Finca El Ocaso, a traditional coffee finca. Here we learn all about the coffee production process from seed to cup.

Note: Lunch (payable locally) is taken at a typical comedor in the Salento area.

Day 6 - Cartagena

(B)



In Cartagena de Indias colonial chic meets Caribbean flair, old city walls and fortresses bear witness to gold treasures and pirates, and cobbled alleys, green plazas and colorfully painted facades carry us away and right into the novels of Gabriel Garcia Marquez. The perfectly restored historic town, an UNESCO world heritage site, is best explored on foot, by horse carriage or by bicycle – in any case slowly and delightfully. From the top of the city walls, let your gaze wander over the sea of terracotta roofs on one side and the Caribbean Sea on the other. The nearby Rosario Islands seem to come straight from a postcard. Their white sandy beaches and crystal clear Caribbean Sea offer the picture-perfect backdrop to relax.



Private transfer from hotel to Pereira airport (PEI) - with English speaking guide. Transfer time approx. 20 min.



Private transfer from Cartagena airport (CTG) to hotel - with English speaking guide. Transfer time approx. 15 min.



Half Day City tour Cartagena, San Felipe & La Popa - with English speaking guide

You start your fascinating half-day tour to the sights of Cartagena at the convent of La Popa (the highest point of the city – around 140 m high) and the Fort of San Felipe de Barajas, the biggest military construction ever built by the Spanish in their colonies. During the visit of approx. 1 hour we can appreciate this masterpiece of military architecture in coral stone and get a good idea about the defense strategy of the city in front of pirate attacks in the 17th and 18th century. Afterwards, we are heading to the historical center and walk approx. 2 hours to the most beautiful squares, churches and streets. The eclectic mix of colonial architecture, gastronomy and culture make Cartagena deserve the title of UNESCO World Heritage Site and an unforgettable destination.

Hotel Movich Cartagena (2 nights)

Room type: Superior Room **Meals:** Breakfast included

Important: Triple rooms may contain 3 single beds or 2 beds (either 2 double beds or 1 double bed and one single bed) and Quadruple rooms may contain 4 single beds, 2 double beds or 2 single beds and one double bed.

Day 7 – Full day excursion – Isla del Encanto (B,L)

Full Day Excursion Isla del Encanto - group excursion - Transport by boat roundtrip and lunch included

Our departure takes off in speed boat from the "Muelle de La Bodeguita" towards "Barú" and Isla del Encanto at 09:00 aprox. Now we have time to swim or relax on the small island with white sandy beaches awaits you. After lunch (buffet: Fish, meat or chicken, fresh vegetables, Coconut rice, 1 non-alcoholic drink and a great dessert is served) we will have more time to relax, swim or snorkel. In the afternoon we return to Cartagena. (Trip will be conducted in the company of an international group of tourists, under the supervision of a bilingual guide). Please note that there´s no individual tour guide on board just a general one for the whole group.

DEPARTURE TIMES IN SPEED BOATS TO THE HOTEL ISLA DEL ENCANTO:

- * Meeting at La Bodeguita Pier: 08:00 - 08:30 a.m.
- * Departure to the Island: 09:00 - 09:10 a.m.
- * Return from the Island to Cartagena: 03:00 - 03:30 pm

Important information regarding the boat transfer:

- *Avoid the consumption of seafood in places other than the Hotel or from the hands of natives. The Island does not have a hospital for medical attention or emergencies, in case of any emergency (intoxication or allergy), the response time will be subject to the attention of the coastguards.
- *The boat trip will take approx. 1 hour one way. Especially on the way back in the afternoon the sea can rough, causing movements in the boat. The boat trip is not allowed for pregnant women. Also you might get wet during the boat trip.
- *If you have any health condition, which may be affected by this movement, do not take this tour. Neptuno / the Hotel does not assume responsibilities in case of health impairment.

Port Taxes -

Private transfer from La Bodeguita deck to Hotel - with English Speaking guide

Meeting point Door N. 2

Day 8 - Departure (B)

Private transfer from hotel to Cartagena airport (CTG) - with English speaking guide. Transfer time approx. 15 min.

- END OF SERVICES -

ACCOMMODATION				
Area	Hotel	Website	Room type	Category
Bogotá	Hotel de La Opera	www.hotelopera.com.co	Standard Room Colonial	First Class ****
Pereira	Hotel Movich Pereira	www.movichhotels.com	Standard Room	First Class ****
Cartagena	Hotel Movich Cartagena	www.movichhotels.com	Superior Room	First Class ****

SERVICES INCLUDED

- Accommodation per itinerary
- All transfers and transportation in good, well-equipped vehicles: automobiles, vans and buses
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary
- Bilingual local travel guides
- Sightseeing and excursions per itinerary
- Personal travel documents and useful welcome gifts
- 24 hours emergency service
- Entrance fees
- Domestic flights – Bogota-Pereira-Cartagena

SERVICES NOT INCLUDED

- International
- Personal expenses such as telephone calls, laundry and tips
- Services not mentioned in the program
- Departure taxes

COLOMBIA TRAVEL TIPS

Colombia is no longer a destination for just daredevils, this extraordinary country has battled decades of civil turmoil to emerge as one of South America's hottest new destinations. It is jammed with unspoiled mountains, coastline and jungle, not to mention stunning archaeological sites and vibrant culture.

Ten years ago, Colombia was famous only for its drug dealers, left-wing guerrilla groups and paramilitaries. But with the militant groups now at their weakest point in decades, this beautiful country is enjoying a travel renaissance with more and more tourists emboldened to visit.

And they are finding much to explore. Natural attractions include rippling mountains, expanses of the Amazon Basin, large lakes, vast plains and a Caribbean coastline that twinkles with azure water. Meanwhile man-made wonders include lost cities, fabulous pre-Columbian sculpture and colourful colonial houses adorn the towns.

Until now, Colombia has received relatively few travelers in comparison with other South American nations, and visitors can expect an unfeigned welcome and genuine curiosity from its people.

Geography

Colombia is situated in South America, bordered by the Caribbean and the Pacific Ocean, Panama, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela and Brazil. The Andes Mountains extend into the country in three ranges running south to north, dipping finally into the lowlands of the Caribbean coast.

Along the southern Pacific coast run marshy lowlands and rugged low mountains. The south western coastal lowlands extend in a trough running from the port of Buenaventura to the Caribbean. East of this rise the slopes of the Western Cordillera which, with the Central Cordillera range, runs north to the Caribbean lowlands from Ecuador. Further north lays the fertile Cauca Valley, which becomes a deep gorge running between the Cordilleras to the Caribbean lowlands.

The Eastern Cordillera, the longest range, rises north of the Ecuadorian border and runs north then northeast towards Venezuela. Flat grassy prairies in the east along with the jungles and towering rainforests of the Amazon make up over half the country's area. Colombia also claims two small islands, San Andrés and Providencia, located 700km (430 miles) north of the coast.

Bogotá

The capital, founded in 1538, is the largest city and situated almost in the center of the country at an altitude of 2600m (8600ft). Bogotá reflects a blend of Colombian tradition and Spanish colonial influences. Many historical landmarks have been preserved, such as the Capitol Municipal Palace and the cathedral, the Capilla del Sangrario, on the main square, the Plaza Bolivar.

Bogotá also contains the Gold Museum, with its unique collection of over 100,000 pre-Colombian artworks. Around 50km (32 miles) south of Bogotá lies Zipaquirá, an area well-known for its many salt mines, one of which contains the famous Salt Cathedral (capable of accommodating 8400 people). Guatavita, a two-hour bus drive from Bogotá, is best known for its Laguna de Guatavita, the ritual center and sacred lake of the Muisca Indians.

Cordillera

Medellín

Colombia's second city is the capital of the state called Antioquia and has over 1.5 million inhabitants. The city lies 1300m (4264ft) above sea level in a narrow valley of the central mountain range. It is primarily industrial, and is the center of the coffee and textile trades. The region has acquired a reputation for violence owing to the war between the Government and the drug barons.

Cali

It is said to be the world's capital of Salsa and is the center of the principal sugar-producing region of the country, where modern technology blends with colonial tradition. Deposits of coal and precious metals are found in this area.

Barranquilla

A busy port and Colombia's fourth city, Barranquilla is located towards the mouth of the Magdalena River. It is the nation's main maritime port and is one of the country's primary commercial centers. There is a colorful market in a side channel of the Magdalena.

Caribbean Coast

The main tourist resorts on Colombia's 1600km- (1000 mile-) long Caribbean coast lie near Santa Marta, one of the first major cities founded by the Spanish in South America. Its modern hotels, white beaches and proximity to fashionable beach resorts now make it a popular base for visitors wishing to explore the coast. The Tayrona National Park, some 35km (22 miles) south of Santa Marta, is one of the country's most popular parks. Its major attraction is its deep bays, shaded with coconut trees, beautiful beaches and several coral reefs. Cartagena, an ancient walled fortress city on the north coast, is also worth a visit, particularly for its fascinating Old Town. Tourist facilities have been considerably developed in recent years, particularly at El Laguita, an L-shaped peninsula, now packed with hotels and expensive restaurants. Some 35km (22 miles) west lie the Islas del Rosario, an archipelago of about 25 small coral islands now declared a national park. Cruises and tours are widely available and can be booked in Cartagena. Easily reached from Cartagena, by plane or boat, are the islands of San Andrés and Providencia, nearly 500km (300 miles) north of the Colombian coast. San Andrés was once the headquarters of the English pirate Captain Henry Morgan, the scourge of the Caribbean. The islands are duty-free, and consequently often crowded, but there are still several less spoilt parts. Popular excursions include visits by boat to Johnny Cay and the Aquarium.

The Amazon Basin

Almost one-third of Colombia's territory is covered by the Amazon Basin, an area of thick tropical forest in the southeast, with no roads and inhabited mostly by Indians. The most popular base for tourists wishing to explore the area is Leticia, a small town with well-developed tourist facilities, located on the banks of the Amazon River and close to the border with Brazil and Peru. Jungle trips, notably to the nearby Amacayu National Park, are widely available and often include visits to Indian tribes.

Elsewhere

Colombia has much to offer those interested in archaeology. San Agustín Archaeological Park contains a great number of relics and massive stone statues. The traditional city of Popayan is the birthplace of many of Colombia's most illustrious statesmen. As well as containing many fine colonial houses and churches, it is also noted for its Holy Week procession. Tierradentro, in the southwest of the country, has beautiful manmade burial caves painted with pre-Colombian geometric patterns. In the same region, Silvia is a beautiful Indian town. The country also contains much unspoiled countryside; the Guajira Peninsula is home to more than 100,000 nomadic Indians.

Climate

The climate is very warm and tropical on the coast and in the north, with a rainy season from May to November. This varies according to altitude. It is cooler in the upland areas and cold in the mountains. Bogotá is always spring-like, with cool days and crisp nights.

Required Clothing

Lightweight waterproof clothes during the rainy season in coastal and northern areas. Medium- to heavyweights is needed in upland and mountainous areas.

Food & Dining

Restaurants offer local and international cuisine. Local dishes are varied and tasty, with a touch of Spanish influence. Colombian wines are generally of poor quality. Chilean and Argentinean wines are available in restaurants at reasonable prices.

Things to know: Table service is the norm. Colombians rarely drink alcohol (except lager) with meals. Gaseosa is the name given to non-alcoholic, carbonated drinks. There are no licensing hours.

National specialties:

- Ajiaco (chicken stew with herbs, different potato varieties, cream, corn and capers).
- Arepas (hard corn pancakes, eaten with savoury toppings).
- Bandeja paisa (meat with avocado, rice, fried plantain and red beans), typical to Medellín.
- Mariscos (seafood) is a specialty on the Caribbean coast - lobsters in particular.

National drinks:

- Tinto (small black coffee) - but this term is also used to describe red wine or vino tinto.
 - Aguila beer.
 - Aguardiente (a fiery aniseed-flavored spirit). Canelazo (rum-based cocktail taken hot or cold).
- Legal drinking age: 18.

Tipping

A 10% tip is usual in restaurants.

Nightlife

The hot-blooded Colombian people are known for their vibrant nightlife, with busy restaurants, numerous parties and nightclubs filled with dancers twisting hips to the beats of salsa, cumbia and merengue. The busiest nights are Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Bogotá in particular offers ballet, opera, drama and music, as well as casinos.

Visa

Nationals will be issued with an entry stamp on arrival which will be valid for up to 90 days (nationals are often only given 30 or 60 days); extensions for up to a further 120 days are available from the Department of Administration and Security in Colombia; all nationals are permitted to stay for a maximum of 180 days in any 12-month period.

Goods to look out for include gold jewelry, art, antiques and leather products. Colombia produces first-grade precious stones, and the emeralds are among the most perfect in the world. Bogotá has numerous large shopping malls as well as several distinct shopping districts.

Shopping hours

In colder cities such as Bogotá, typically Mon-Sat 1100-2100. In hotter cities, Mon-Sat 0900-2100.

Currency

The unit of currency is the Colombian Peso (COP), which is divided into 100 centavos. Banks have no fixed policy on exchanging cash and travelers cheques. Some provide the service, some not, and different banks can differ on this from day to day. Generally foreign exchange is only offered in the early morning. Cash can be exchanged at casas de cambio, or money exchange bureaux, located in cities and border towns. US Dollars are preferred for both cash and travelers cheque exchanges. Travelers cheques are difficult to exchange outside of Bogota. Visitors are warned to beware of fake US Dollars, which are printed in Colombia. Credit cards, especially Visa, are becoming more widely accepted and are welcome at top hotels and restaurants, travel agents and car rental agencies. In the main towns and cities ATMs are becoming more prevalent, but cards should be used with caution for security reasons.

Health Care

Health facilities in the main cities are good. In rural areas, services can be very limited. Visitors traveling to jungle areas are advised to carry first aid kits. Travelers are strongly advised to take out full medical insurance.

Overview

The following goods may be taken into Colombia by people 18 years of age and older without incurring customs duty:

- 200 cigarettes and 50 cigars and up to 500g of tobacco.
- Two bottles of alcoholic beverage.
- A reasonable quantity of perfume.

Prohibited Imports

Ammunition and firearms, unless prior authorization has been obtained, and item(s) are declared on arrival. Vegetables, plants or plant material; meat and food products of animal origin.

SECURITY CHECK

Colombia is as safe as the other Latin-American countries. Some precautions are recommended because the imagination of Colombians who pickpocket have no limit. Please adhere to the following general rules:

- ✓ Avoid dark and empty streets
- ✓ Don't show any jewelry and richness
- ✓ Please carry cameras, passports, moneybags, etc as discrete as possible. ✓ Discreet dress code is recommended
- ✓ Never leave your luggage unattended
- ✓ Avoid travelling at night
- ✓ If possible request taxis by phone called at your hotel
- ✓ Change money only in places where you can't be observed.
- ✓ Never accept any help changing money.
- ✓ Do have small money amounts in your pocket. Leave big amounts at home or in the hotel safe
- ✓ Don't be too trustful and confident with unknown people
- ✓ Use your human sense

Please make a copy of your passport, tickets and traveler's cheques. Normally you have to carry your passport always with you in order to show it if you get controlled. In the cities, but that's not officially, you can also show a copy of your passport.

The following tricks are commonly applied by Colombian swindlers:

1. Mustard or Ketchup-Trick

Without noticing you can get smeared with mustard, ketchup or a similar sticky fluid. A friendly, well-dressed person comes along and offers his help to clean you with a tissue. In that moment, they steal your belongings.

2. Show me your dollars- Echeverry-trick

245 Fairview Mall Drive, Suite 603, Toronto, Ontario M2J 4T1, CANADA
Tel: 416 391 0334 | Toll Free: 1800 263 2995 | Fax: 416 391 0986
Emergency Number: 416 301 1668 / 416 301 9328

A person appears, showing a faked police badge and asks you for your passport and cash dollars to check them because there are supposed to be many false dollars in circulation. A second "random" person voluntarily shows his/her ID and some dollars, then you also give your passport and money. The fake policeman disappears, arguing that he has to check them at his office that is supposed to be located around the corner, but he never comes back.

3. Chilean Package

Suddenly there is some money falling down on the floor. A friendly person asks if that money belongs to you. Then he proposes to divide that money between you both and to go to a hidden corner to do it, and there it is where the ambush begins.

RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Both in our daily lives and during a journey we all have the responsibility to avoid any bad impact and reduce negative effects in nature, environment and people, not forgetting about respecting the culture and ethnic traditions.

In your trip, whenever possible, local people will be realizing the activities and excursions in order to guarantee their own maximum benefit.

The purpose is to get to know the country's situation, support the protection of environment and nature. Here is some advice:

- ✓ Save electricity. Turn always off any electrical device and lights after its use.
- ✓ Save water. Close showers properly.
- ✓ Reduce emissions. Take public transportation or use alternatives whenever it's possible.
- ✓ Use and buy recyclable materials. Avoid the use of plastic bags.
- ✓ Don't destroy or damage environment and nature. Don't take anything with you, don't leave any garbage behind.
- ✓ Use rechargeable batteries.