

PAISADVENTURE

Colombia Essentials (15 Days)

Dig into some of the most exciting places Colombia has to offer and learn about the biological and cultural diversity of this wonderful country.

Starts: Bogotá
Ends: Santa Marta

Highlights:

Explore the vibrant capital city of Bogotá. Sample the world's best coffee. Hike among the iconic wax palms of Valle de Cocora. Explore the traditional coffee town of Salento. Witness firsthand the stunning transformation of Medellín. Climb the imposing El Peñol. Get lost in the walled city of Cartagena. Relax on a tranquil Caribbean beach. Experience the breathtaking nature at Tayrona National Park.

Itinerary:

Day 1:

Arrive in Bogotá any time. You'll have free time to enjoy the city after checking into your hotel. A trip orientation will be held in the evening.



Day 2: BL

Spend the morning in the historic district of La Candelaria. Enjoy a traditional ajiaco for lunch. In the afternoon you have the option to go on a bike tour, graffiti tour, or visit the Museo del Oro and Monserrate.



Day 3: BL

Take a day trip to Zipaquirá to see the incredible Salt Cathedral, then head back to Bogotá and fly to Pereira. Continue to Salento for the night.



Day 4: BL

Our first stop is the impressive Quindío Botanical Garden in Calarcá where you'll take a guided tour to learn about Colombia's biodiversity. After the tour, become a coffee expert, learning about the coffee cultivation process from seed to cup while immersing yourself in the colorful Paisa culture.



Day 5: BL

Head to Valle de Cocora to get up close and personal with the tall and majestic wax palms, a symbol of Colombia. Hike the full loop trail (about 6 hours), take an optional tour on horseback, or just relax and enjoy the views. Have a traditional lunch in the valley, then spend the rest of the day exploring, shopping, and sampling local specialties in Salento.



Day 6: B

Sleep in or enjoy a couple hours in Salento in the morning, then fly to the City of Eternal Spring, Medellín. The rest of the day is yours.



Day 7: BL

Visit Comuna 13, once considered the most dangerous neighborhood in Colombia, to see some colorful graffiti and learn more about the city's miraculous transformation. Take a short walking tour of the city center and have a traditional lunch.



Day 8: B

Take a day trip to climb the 700+ steps of the giant El Peñol for sweeping views of the countryside or save your lungs and relax in its shadow. Check out the zócalos in the town of Guatapé with a tour in a tuk-tuk. Do some souvenir shopping or take an optional boat ride.



Day 9: B

Fly to Cartagena in the morning. The rest of the day is free to wander through the streets of the UNESCO World Heritage listed walled city. You can also visit Castillo San Felipe (the strongest Spanish fort ever built), the former slave quarter of Getsemaní, and sample street food and fresh exotic fruit juices.



Day 10: B

Another free day to explore more of the city. You can also choose an optional excursion, such as the mud volcano and mangroves, National Aviary and Playa Blanca, Bazarro Market, or Rosario Islands.



Day 11: BL

Take an excursion to Isla del Encanto. The private island resort features a beautiful beach with crystal-clear water and a variety of optional activities.

Day 12: BL

Our transfer to our lodge near Tayrona National Park will pick us up in the morning. We'll make a stop in Santa Marta for lunch and a quick city tour.



Day 13: B

A day of hiking and beaches awaits at Tayrona National Park. A 2-hour hike takes you to the popular Cabo San Juan, or you can opt to get there on horseback instead. Restaurants are located within the park to satisfy your appetite for lunch.



Day 14: B

Spend the day relaxing at the lodge, which boasts its own private beach, or take an optional excursion in the area. You can visit an indigenous village to learn about the local culture or another spectacular natural place like Quebrada Valencia or Buritaca.



Day 15: B

Transfer to the airport for your flight home.

What's Included:

- 14 breakfasts, 6 lunches
- Bottled water throughout the tour
- All transportation and airport transfers
- Internal flights to Pereira, Medellín, and Cartagena
- All accommodation (11 nights in hotels, 3 nights in a lodge)
- Excursion to Zipaquirá
- Admission to Quindío Botanical Garden in Calarcá
- Coffee experience in Calarcá
- Admission to hiking trail at Valle de Cocora
- Comuna 13 tour in Medellín
- Admission to climb El Peñol
- Tuk-tuk tour in Guatapé
- Excursion to Isla del Encanto from Cartagena
- Excursion to Tayrona National Park
- Personal travel insurance
- Accompaniment by the owners throughout the trip and local guides where applicable

What's Not Included:

- International flights
- Horseback riding and mud boots at Valle de Cocora
- Horseback riding at Tayrona National Park
- Optional tours, excursions, and activities not covered in the itinerary
- Admission to museums and attractions not covered in the itinerary
- Wine and mixed alcoholic drinks during meals included in the itinerary
- Minibar consumption in hotels
- Excess checked luggage fees
- Personal expenses
- Tips for local guides
- Allow at least \$400 for meals not included

Sustainable Tourism:

- We aim to minimize our impact on the environment, including conserving water, not removing flora and fauna, staying on designated trails, and not littering.

- We are committed to supporting local businesses in Colombia as often as possible. This includes hotels, restaurants, transportation providers, and small local vendors.
- We ask our guests to respect the cultural and religious traditions and customs of the people they meet on their tour.
- We encourage our guests to do their shopping at local markets and shops rather than large commercial stores, and to purchase locally made goods as gifts and souvenirs rather than imported items.
- Our guests are responsible for complying with our sustainable tourism policy in order to protect the natural and cultural heritage of Colombia.
- For more detailed information, please read our sustainable tourism policy at www.paisadventure.com.

Accommodation:

- We've hand-picked our favorite B&Bs and boutique hotels at each destination. Because availability is limited at these hotels, we'll confirm them with you after they've been booked. In some places, we'll stay in basic hotels.
- We book double or triple rooms depending on the number of guests on the tour. If anyone in your party would like a private room, please notify us ahead of time and we can give you the additional pricing for a private room.
- We understand how important it is to stay connected during your trip, whether it's for business or personal reasons. We do our best to make sure good Wi-Fi is available in each hotel. In a few places (especially in rural areas), the signal will be weak, or Wi-Fi is completely unavailable.

Transportation:

- The majority of the trip will be in a private vehicle. Other transportation methods may be used, including public buses, metro, taxis, jeeps, and the occasional motorcycle.
- Some of the roads we travel on will be on winding roads high up in the mountains. If you are prone to travel sickness, it's a good idea to bring travel sickness pills with you. They can also be readily purchased in any pharmacy in Colombia.
- International flights are not included. If you need assistance with your flights, we can book them for you at an additional cost.

Meals:

- Sampling different food is one of the most exciting parts of traveling. Our goal is to make sure each traveler gets to sample the delicious Colombian traditional dishes that are available in different regions of the country.

- For all meals included in the itinerary, travelers can choose anything off the menu. For drinks, you can choose from a variety of fruit juices, soft drinks, and even beer is included.
- Wine and mixed alcoholic drinks are not provided during meals included in the itinerary and must be purchased separately.
- When meals are not included, travelers have the choice of eating wherever they want. Generally, the food in Colombia is reasonably priced, even at more upscale restaurants.
- We can suggest local restaurants when meals are not included, and our guests are more than welcome to join us for these meals.
- We must be notified of all special meal requests before departure. This way, we can accommodate any dietary requirements.

Money:

- The currency of Colombia is pesos. Other currency is generally not accepted.
- We can help find the best places to change money once you arrive in Colombia.
- ATMs can be found in just about every city and town. If we're going to a place where there are no ATMs, we'll let you know ahead of time.
- Credit cards are widely accepted in cities, but many vendors in smaller towns and rural areas only accept cash.
- Some guests have had issues using their debit cards in Colombia. Have a backup if you plan to use a debit card.
- Don't forget to call your bank and credit card issuer to let them know your travel plans.
- Carry enough cash with you for souvenirs, meals not included in the itinerary, and personal expenses. Usually, a few hundred thousand pesos will do.

Tipping:

- Generally, it's customary to leave a 10% tip in restaurants. Some restaurants will automatically add 10% service to your bill, and some will ask if you would like to include the service charge.
- In hotels, if anyone helps with your bags or shows you to your room, you can tip them a few thousand pesos.
- We encourage our guests to tip the local tour guides if they're happy with their tours. Many guides work as volunteers and depend on tips to make a living. For a short tour, COP\$5,000-\$10,000 per person is a good tip. For a longer tour lasting a half or full day you can give COP\$15,000 to COP\$25,000 per person.
- It's not necessary to tip taxi drivers, bartenders, or fast-food servers.

Clothing and Laundry:

- Bring clothing and shoes that you will be comfortable in. We will do a lot of walking - sometimes in very hot and humid weather.
- Don't overpack! We suggest bringing a small to mid-sized suitcase or backpack along with a small daypack.
- Some of the hotels will provide laundry service at an additional cost. Self-service laundromats are not common in Colombia, but in some cities, there are places that will wash your clothes for you. We can help find a solution if you need to do laundry at any point on the trip.

Weather:

- The Caribbean region, especially Cartagena, can be hot and humid. Santa Marta has a milder and more comfortable climate but can also be hot and humid. It can be cooler in the evenings.
- Medellín and the Coffee Region can have hot days and cool evenings. Rain is common in some seasons, especially in the afternoon and in the evenings.
- Bogotá and Boyacá can have cool or hot weather during the day. Sometimes, a jacket is necessary in the evening.

Health and Safety:

- Colombia is much safer than the media makes it out to be! You should take the same precautions as you would anywhere else in the world but be a bit more cautious in big cities.
- In the big cities:
 - It's a good idea to wear a money belt to avoid pickpockets and other petty thieves. If you don't wear a money belt, keep your wallet in your front pocket.
 - Watch your bags at all times and keep them closed. If you're at an outdoor restaurant, keep your bag on your lap or somewhere it won't get snatched.
 - Don't wear expensive jewelry, don't keep your camera visible when it's not being used, don't pull out lots of cash in public, and be alert while using your cell phone.
 - Use your judgment to avoid areas that seem undesirable. During your free time, we can suggest places to avoid.
 - Take extra precautions at night, and always remember it's safer to use a taxi if the way to your destination passes through dark or unpopulated areas.
- The small towns we visit are very safe and you shouldn't feel uncomfortable in them. However, you are a visitor in a foreign country and should still take the necessary precautions to ensure your safety.
- It's safe to bring your computer, smart phone, and SLR camera.

- To prepare for the trip, we suggest walking at least 2 miles a day for a couple weeks before your departure.

Yellow Fever Vaccinations:

- Most areas tourists visit in Colombia have an extremely low risk of yellow fever. Vaccinations are recommended if you are traveling to certain areas of the country (see below) and must be applied at least 10 days before traveling to an affected area.
- Our guests have never been asked for proof of vaccination but it's better to be prepared just in case. We'll keep you posted on the current situation if you're traveling to any of the following areas:
 - High risk areas: Amazonas, Los Llanos, Chocó
 - Low to medium risk areas: Santa Marta, Tayrona National Park, La Guajira
- If you're arriving in or transiting through Bogotá, yellow fever vaccinations are applied free of charge to travelers at the Fontibón Hospital (departure level), typically between the hours of 7:00am and 6:00pm. The whole process from registration to application of the vaccine usually takes between 30-60 minutes.

Insurance:

As a courtesy, we provide complimentary travel insurance through Colombian insurance provider Colasistencia on all tours. If you prefer, you can decline Colasistencia's coverage and use your own trusted insurance provider.

Other important information:

- Drug use, sales, and/or possession is illegal in Colombia and the punishments by law enforcement are extremely strict. You don't want to end up in a Colombian prison! Therefore, it is strictly forbidden for any travelers to use or possess illegal drugs. Anyone caught using or possessing illegal drugs will lose their place on the trip and no money will be refunded. This is a zero-tolerance policy!
- Paisadventure complies with Law 679 of 2001 that prevents and counteracts exploitation, pornography, and sex tourism with minors. All tourists are warned that any sexual act committed against children or adolescents will be reprimanded and punished according to criminal legal regulations.
- We denounce discrimination against anyone based on race, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, citizenship, etc.

Itinerary Disclaimer:

- We will do our best to follow the itinerary provided. However, there is some flexibility built in. In rare cases, it's necessary to make changes to the schedule due to circumstances beyond our control, including inclement weather, flight delays and cancellations, unexpected museum and attraction closings, vehicle issues, labor strikes, passenger illness and emergency, etc.
- Group leaders, Paisadventure, and any supplier or tour operator in connection with this program are not responsible for any injury, illness, or loss to person or property, or any delay, inconvenience, or extra costs incurred due to delay or cancellations caused by weather or events beyond anyone's control.