

EXPLORE!



Contrasts of Colombia

Colombia is currently one of South America's most exciting destinations, with a rich cultural heritage, many areas of outstanding natural beauty and a notoriously friendly and welcoming population. Join us in our discovery of the country that is \magical realism\ personified, through the colonial cities of Cartagena, Bogota and Popayan, the beautiful wax palms and coffee farms of Armenia, and the blossoming cultural hub of Medellin.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Cartagena** - Explore Latin America's colonial gem on the Caribbean Coast
- ★ **Coffee Region** - Lush green landscapes with coffee plantations
- ★ **Silvia Market** - Travel back in time to this local market run entirely by the indigenous Guambiano people
- ★ **Bogota** - Visit its superb pre-Colombian gold museum and the historic streets of La Candelaria
- ★ **Medellin** - Discover innovative design and development in this diverse modern city

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:**Moderate**

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

GROUP SIZE:**10 - 16**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join tour in Bogota

Bogota is set at an altitude of over 2600m with the high ranges of the Cordillera Mountains lying to the east. The city's name comes from the Muisca indigenous people who inhabited the region before the arrival of the Spaniards in 1538, and the remnants of not only the Muisca empire but of Colombia's many other indigenous cultures can be found in the city's impressive Gold Museum. Bogota boasts grand colonial churches alongside futuristic architecture and a lively cultural scene. Arriving today we check-in to our hotel.



Accommodation: Hotel BH Bicentenario (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - In Bogota; city tour. Visit to Paloquemao local market

This morning we spend time exploring the city, first delving into local life by a visit to the flea market at Usaquen. Walking down the charming cobbled streets, this market is set in a traditional residential area of the city and is a beautiful place to wander and witness Bogota's artistic side. We also visit the farmers' market at Paloquemao, with its overwhelming array of smells and colours. Colombia is the world's second biggest producer and exporter of flowers, and as well as being an important source of local produce, the market's selection of flowers is enormous and enchanting. In the afternoon, we head to the colourful colonial streets of La Candelaria for a tour of the city. Walking under the balconied houses from where local residents often observe the comings and goings below, we'll cross the vast Plaza de Bolivar encountering some excellent examples of colonial architecture, such as the Catedral Primada de Colombia and San Bartolome College. The visit continues with the Museo Botero, a colonial house filled with works of art by the Colombian artist and sculptor Fernando Botero, famous for his abstract portrayal of people with large, exaggerated proportions. Finally, we will visit the Gold Museum, which is regarded as housing the finest collection of gold from Pre-Hispanic times.



Accommodation: Hotel BH Bicentenario (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 3 - Cable car up Monserrate; flight to Popayan

This morning we head out of Bogota and take the cable car up Mount Monserrate for magnificent views of the city. On top of the mountain there is a church, whose statue of Senor Caido, the 'Fallen Christ', has become a pilgrimage location for the locals. If weather conditions allow you should be rewarded with fine views across the city and the countryside beyond. In the afternoon we fly to Popayan, often referred to as the 'White City', due to the prevalence of white-walled homes, buildings and churches in the historic centre. Founded in 1537 by Spanish Conquistador Sebastian de Belalcazar, it played an important role during the colonial period as it was the mid-point of gold in the journey between Lima, Quito and Cartagena on its way to Spain. As result of its colonial importance, Popayan's historic centre is one of the most beautiful and well-preserved in Colombia. There are stunning churches such as the San Francisco, Santo Domingo, San Jose and La Ermita. In 2009 Popayan's Easter celebrations were declared by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. On arrival, our Leader will provide an orientation tour on foot.



Accommodation: Hotel La Plazuela de Popayan (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Visit Silvia local market and countryside haciendas

This morning we drive to the weekly Silvia indigenous market, run mainly by the indigenous Guambiano people. This is an opportunity to witness the interactions between the local communities that have largely maintained their traditional way of life. We will see open backed vans and lorries bringing locals from the high mountains down to the town to trade at the market - this is a sight in itself as they are using every inch of space, hanging off the back of the bus, pouring out of the doors or riding on the roof with their wares. The market is not geared towards tourism, and local produce, farming supplies and hand-spun textiles dominate the stalls. We leave with the impression of having been transported back in time. After returning to Popayan we have a free afternoon, where we may visit some of the town's art and history museums or alternatively take a trip to visit two of the old 18th century haciendas in the countryside surrounding the city. These historic buildings housed some of the country's most important figures, being built and inhabited by the Mosquera family, one of the most traditional and revered families in Colombia and a producer of two respected ex-presidents. The remarkable architecture of the haciendas is unchanged since colonial times.



Accommodation: Hotel La Plazuela de Popayan (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Drive from Popayan to Armenia via sugar cane mill

Setting off early from Popayan we head towards Armenia, the capital of the Quindio department and an important coffee growing centre, where we will spend the next three nights. During our 7 hour drive, we will visit an old sugar cane mill in Palmira, near Cali. This well- preserved 18th century mill has been converted into a museum and presents a fascinating look at how sugar production contributed to the development of the region. After our visit we continue to the countryside around Armenia, where we overnight in an old hacienda with views out to the Quindio River Valley.



Accommodation: Hacienda Combia (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 6 - Full day exploring surrounding mountains and valleys

After breakfast, we spend time exploring the beautiful rainforest and creeks of the valley with the opportunity to see the multitudes of towering wax palms peppering the mountainsides, along with other flora and fauna. We will also visit the charming town of Salento to see the very characteristic architecture of this coffee growing region and enjoy a typical lunch. Smoked trout is particular to the area, usually served with plantain and rice, but you may also find yucca and arepas, a type of cornbread eaten by locals throughout the country. We finish the day off with a spectacular view of the landscape at sunset from the Mirador of Salento before returning for dinner at our accommodation.



Accommodation: Hacienda Combia (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 7 - Full day visit to coffee farm

This is one of the most attractive parts of the country and today we will take a full day out to a local coffee farm. During the visit you will learn about the whole process from the planting of the beans all the way through the picking and roasting process, finishing off with trying the fresh coffee. The coffee in this region tends to be planted in rows extending up the mountainside, and we will be amazed by the physical work undertaken by the pickers in hauling their loads up through the coffee plants. After our visit to the coffee farm we take time to explore Pijao, a local town set atop the mountainside with astounding panoramas around the Andes. This town is integral to the history of coffee in the region, with many plantation owners or coffee vendors having come here to settle and build their homes. Now it is the perfect place to soak up the relaxed atmosphere and taste the product of the region.



Accommodation: Hacienda Combia (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 8 - Fly to Medellin; explore on foot and by cable car

Transferring to the airport early, we catch a morning flight to Medellin, where we arrive in time for lunch. Medellin has had a colourful history, yet since the death of its most infamous resident, Pablo Escobar, in 1993, the city has gone through comprehensive urban and cultural development. After many years in which the city was considered to be the most dangerous in the world, it now has a reputation for innovation and creativity and is representative of the country's social transformation, with growing industry and projects of social integration. Part of this innovation lies in the building of a cable car system allowing the residents of the poorer neighbourhoods on the steep mountainsides surrounding Medellin to easily commute into the city to work and trade. This has undoubtedly had a huge social impact on the city, and our stay in Medellin is an opportunity to learn more about Colombia's recent, and fascinating, history. In the afternoon, we discover the mountainous barrios on the cable car, as well as visiting Espana library park, which is part of a series of Of urban-social regeneration projects in Medellin.



Accommodation: Hotel Poblado Plaza (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 9 - Full day trip to colourful Guatape town

Today we drive out of the city to the picturesque lakeside town of Guatape, where the houses are painted in glorious pastel shades. The town is known as 'Pueblo de Zocalos' for the intricate paintings of animals, musical instruments, flowers and birds found on the lower half of almost every building in the centre. After discovering the cobblestoned streets and lakeside cafes, we visit the enormous rock of El Penol. This monolith is Guatape's most visited site, and the 650 step climb to the top is well worth it for the astounding views over the town, the lake and the mountains before us. After taking a breather on the top, we descend and return to Medellin, taking a stop at San Antonio de Pereira, a quiet town known for its confectionary and desserts. Although there is not much to see, the 'dulce' (sweet) shops and stands are well worth a visit to sample some of the local specialties, with flavours from orange and aguardiente to caramel and yucca.



Accommodation: Hotel Poblado Plaza (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 10 - Free morning in Medellin, fly to Cartagena and the Caribbean

This morning, we have some free time to explore the city. We have the opportunity to learn about graffiti's artistic, cultural and political context in Medellin and interact with some of the local artists in a street art tour, or visit an organic flower farm in the town of Santa Elena, just outside the city. Alternatively we can remain in the city, perhaps discovering the eccentric Barefoot Park, a zen-inspired public park where children and adults alike are encouraged to wander and play barefoot. Later this afternoon we'll fly to Cartagena, hailed as one of the most fascinating colonial cities in Latin America. Located on the Caribbean coast, Cartagena de Indias was one of the first cities to be founded by the Spanish in South America and today is famed both for its history and beauty. Our hotel is in the heart of the old-town, surrounded by the city walls and the perfect spot from which to wander to one of the city's many fine restaurants and bars. Music and nightlife is at the heart of Cartagena, and our Explore leader can point us towards one of the many popular salsa bars, where bands are often found playing their lively music to locals showing off their moves on the dancefloor.



Accommodation: Hotel Don Pedro de Heredia (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 11 - In Cartagena; walking tour; optional trip to Colombia National Aviary

Considered by many as one of the world's most beautiful cities, Cartagena was founded in 1533 by Spanish conquerors as a main port to transport people and their goods into South America, and export gold, silver and all sorts of plants, animals, minerals and handicrafts from all over the continent across the Caribbean and on to Europe. The city quickly became a major trading port, particularly for precious metals. Gold and silver from the mines in New Granada and Peru were loaded in Cartagena on galleons bound for Spain via Havana. It was also a slave port, a business which necessitated the construction of defences and massive fortified walls around the old city, now designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Today we will take a half day tour with our guide around the old town visiting, among other things, the San Felipe Fort, Convent de la Popa and the Convent de San Pedro Claver. There are plenty of things to do this afternoon, including a boat trip to the fisherman's village La Boquilla, or a visit to Colombia's National Aviary. Here we have a chance to explore the different ecosystems of Colombia, and discover the varied birdlife in each one, such as the harpy eagle, the Caribbean toucan, the pink flamingo and many other species.



Accommodation: Hotel Don Pedro de Heredia (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 12 - Free day; optional trip to the Rosario Islands

Today, we have more time to explore this city. Alternatively, we can take an optional boat trip to the Rosario Islands. This archipelago has some great snorkelling, nice beaches and beautiful Caribbean views. This evening there is the chance to take a relaxing horse drawn carriage ride round the beautiful and historical colonial district of Cartagena.



Accommodation: Hotel Don Pedro de Heredia (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 13 - Trip ends in Cartagena

Our trip ends today in Cartagena. The flight back to the UK (via Bogota) generally leaves in the evening, and as such there will be a final opportunity to soak up the atmosphere in Cartagena's cobbled streets before departing.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



Why book this trip

This trip is one of the more comprehensive overviews of Colombian diversity. Not only do we visit the popular Caribbean coast and colonial Bogota, but we also contrast the modern city of Medellin with the indigenous Andean populations near Popayan.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 12
Lunch: 4
Dinner: 3



Transport

Bus
Flight



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

12 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

Colombia Trips

Climate

The dry season in Colombia roughly runs from December to March/April and also a slightly 'drier' period from July to September. These are among the best times to travel, although visits outside of these months are very manageable. The Caribbean coast is very

hot and humid all year round (always around or above 30°C), although the offshore breeze between December and March makes this a more popular time to visit. Due to the high altitude locations of places like Bogota, Manizales and Armenia temperatures here can be quite cool during 'winter' months (Nov to Mar/Apr) and the nights are cool to cold at anytime of the year. The coffee harvest seasons are March to May and September to November; it is during these periods that it is possible to see the red coffee beans and watch the whole process of coffee production.

Time difference to GMT

-5

Plugs

2 Pin Flat

Religion

Roman Catholic.

Language

Spanish.

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

Popayan - Half day excursion to Haciendas US\$90 (min 3 pers); Archdiocesan Museum of Religious Art US\$ 3; Natural History Museum / University of Cauca US\$ 5. Medellin - Half Day Flower Experience in Santa Elena - US\$50-\$100 (depending on numbers); Half Day Street Art Experience: US\$40-\$86 (depending on numbers). Cartagena - Full day boat trip to Rosario Island: US\$81-94 (depending on numbers); Half day National Aviary US\$56-\$166 (depending on numbers); Horse drawn carriage with dinner US\$81-\$108 (depending on numbers)

Clothing

For this trip you will need to pack for all weathers, as you travel through several different climatic zones. In the Andes (Bogota, Popayan and Salento), warm clothing is useful, particularly in the evenings when the temperature can drop sharply at night. Lightweight clothing is necessary for the Caribbean coast with long sleeve shirts and trousers ideal to provide protection from the sun and insect bites. A waterproof is essential as it can rain at any time of year.

Footwear

Comfortable hiking boots/trekking shoes, shoes and/or sandals.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

A torch, water bottle, good quality sunglasses, sun hat, insect repellent and high factor sunscreen are all essential. To climb El Penol you will also need some comfortable shoes - trainers are fine. Don't forget your swimming things and a small towel.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. In restaurants and hotels a 'voluntary' 10% tax for service is included on bills. On top of this, it is common to leave no more than a further 5% for good service. Also, some local staff look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly you should allow approx. US \$30 for gratuities for local staff.

International Departure Taxes

None for UK citizens, Canadian citizens have an entry tax of 68US\$.

Colombia Trips

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£5

Dinner price

£10

Beer price

£1.6

Water price

£0.4

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Colombian Peso (COP).

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Carry all your funds in US cash NOT Sterling or Travellers Cheques which are more difficult to exchange. We recommend to take a minimum of US\$400-\$500 of your total spending money in cash, in mixed denominations. Notes should be in good condition otherwise they might be difficult to exchange.

Where To Exchange

Your tour leader can also advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability

Available in Major towns. Always have some cash as back-up as they are not always reliable

Credit Card Acceptance

Most major hotels, restaurants and stores accept credit cards.

Travellers Cheques

Travellers Cheques can be awkward or expensive to change

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Flight

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click [here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click [here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check

requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

Columbia: Visas are not required for UK, New Zealand, Australian, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate. All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related issues with the relevant Embassy prior to departure. USA: (including those in transit) Citizens of the UK, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and passport holders from several EU countries can enter the United States without a visa under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) - where you apply for an ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorisation), which applies if you enter the country by sea or by air. This must be done on line - <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> no later than 72 hours prior to travel. Travellers who have not registered before their trip are likely to be refused boarding. You must have an electronic passport with a digital chip containing biometric information about the passport owner. UK passports which are biometric feature a small gold symbol (camera) at the bottom of the front cover. If you have visited Iraq, Syria, Iran or Sudan since 2011 or are dual nationals of these countries, you cannot travel with an ESTA and instead you will need to apply for a visa from the nearest US Embassy or Consulate. If you are unable to provide a valid visa before boarding flights to the US, or entering via another method, you may not be permitted to travel. Please note for your ESTA application you will be required to supply Point of Contact information. Explore's USA contact information will be listed on your final documentation which you will receive approximately 3-4 weeks before departure. If you are leaving for the USA before this, please call the Explore team to get this information. (Not necessary if in transit) For further information please check out the US embassy website. Visa applications - <http://london.usembassy.gov/niv/apply.html> Canada: An electronic travel authorisation (ETA) is required by British citizens transiting via Canada. For more information see the official Canadian government website: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/eta.asp> Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Non refundable permits**Colombia Trips****Vaccinations**

We recommend protection against malaria, Tetanus, Infectious Hepatitis, Typhoid and Polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. Please note many countries in Central America, South America and the Caribbean require a yellow fever vaccination certificates if travelling from infected areas. A detailed list of these countries can be found on the NaTHNaC website - <http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>. Also on the NaTHNaC site there is a list of Countries (and specific areas within a country) which are at risk of infection and a vaccination is therefore recommended.. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.
