

EXPLORE!



Contrasts of Colombia

COLOMBIA - TRIP CODE BCO

DISCOVERY

Why book this trip?

Colombia is the country where 'magical realism' comes to life. Rich in culture, with an enormous biodiversity and a notoriously friendly and welcoming population, a journey through this eclectic country is packed with standout moments. Not only do we visit the Caribbean coast and the lush, green coffee region, but we contrast the modern city of Medellin with the more traditional Andean culture found in Bogota.

- **Bogota** - Visit its superb pre-Colombian Gold Museum and the historic streets of La Candelaria
- **Salento** - The cobbled streets of this quaint town are found in the beautiful Andean foothills, where hummingbirds fly between giant wax palms
- **Medellin** - Discover how this diverse modern city has transformed its reputation through innovative design and development
- **2020 departures** - We are running an altered trip from 2020, please read on for the detailed itinerary



INCLUDED MEALS

Breakfast: 12
Lunch: 4
Dinner: 1



TRIP STAFF

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



TRANSPORT

Bus
Flight



ACCOMMODATION

12 nights
comfortable hotel



TRIP PACE:

Moderate



GROUP SIZE:

10 - 16

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Join trip in Bogota

Set at an altitude of over 2,600m, Bogota sprawls out from the high ranges of the Cordillera Mountains, blanketing the Andean peaks with an eclectic mix of historic buildings and modern, urban architecture. 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.

Arriving today, we check into our hotel. If arriving in the early morning, La Candelaria is a good place to orientate yourself in the city, where a wealth of museums, bars and restaurants are dotted in between colonial convents and churches.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel Casa Deco (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE





MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Taste the fruits at Paloquemao farmers market; explore the city on foot and by cable car

This morning we spend time exploring the city, first delving into local life with a visit to the farmers market at Paloquemao, with its overwhelming array of smells and colours. Our Tour Leader will introduce us to some of the tropical fruits on offer here, as we speak to some of the different sellers.

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. 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.

To round off a busy day of exploration, we take a birds eye view of the city as we ascend the pilgrimage site of Mount Monserrate by cable car.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel Casa Deco (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & LUNCH

DAY 3 - Fly to Armenia in Colombia's coffee country

Today we fly to Armenia on a one hour flight from Bogota, but before doing so we will visit Bogota's Gold Museum - an impressive collection of Pre-Hispanic gold. We aim to book an afternoon flight, with departure to the airport in the late morning, although schedules are, of course, subject to change.

Armenia is the capital of the Quindío department, an important coffee growing centre in the foothills of the Andes range. Immediately on leaving the airport, we'll drive to our hotel located about 30 minutes away. This old, characterful hacienda has views out to the Quindío valley, which we will be exploring over the next 2 days. On arrival, the rest of the day is free to relax and explore the surrounding area.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hacienda Combia (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 4 - Full day exploring the wax palms of the Cocora Valley; traditional lunch in colonial Salento

After breakfast we take a drive to Salento, where we climb aboard an immaculately restored vintage Willys jeep and drive into the Cocora Valley. We're in the foothills of the Andes here, hiking amongst a multitude of towering wax palms that pepper the mountainside like pins in a cushion. These countryside walks are on undulating terrain with well-trodden paths and the leisurely pace gives us plenty of time to enjoy the mountain views.

On our return to Salento, we'll have a typical lunch in this charming town, its colourful architecture so characteristic of this coffee growing region. Trout is particular to the area, usually served with plantain and rice, but you may also find yuca and arepas too.

Our final stop of the day is at the Acaime Nature Reserve, just 5km from Cocora. This paradise for hummingbird watching takes us through leafy rainforest and wooded trails, a contrast to the open mountain scenery of this morning. The walks are leisurely, concentrating more on exploring the cloud forest landscape than strenuous hiking.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hacienda Combia (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & LUNCH

cable car.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Poblado Plaza (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 7 - Visit colourful Guatape town

We drive out of the city to the picturesque lakeside town of Guatape, where the houses are painted in glorious pastel shades, and where we will visit the enormous rock of El Penol. This monolith is Guatape's most visited site, and the 700 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 to the town of Guatape, 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. The cobblestoned streets are alive with colourful architecture and locals going about their daily business. In the late afternoon we will return to Medellin.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Poblado Plaza (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 8 - Flower Festival day in Medellin

As one of the largest flower producers in the world (second only to the Netherlands), Colombia puts all its heart into this annual festival, bringing some of the country's biggest growers together for weeks of events and celebrations. Today we will be watching the final event of all - the Silleteiros Parade - where the local flower growers march around the city carrying unique flower arrangements on their backs. The name 'Silleteiro' derives from the Spanish for chair - it what people used to call farmers and countryside dwellers who strapped wooden chairs on their backs and would carry goods from one village to another. The very heart of the festival lies in celebrating these 'campesinos' as they parade through the streets of Medellin, with thousands of people cheering them on, all carrying enormous, colourful and intricate designs on their backs in the hope of winning the accolade of most beautiful flower arrangement. We'll watch the parade from a comfortable location, and in the evening will have a celebratory dinner in the city.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Poblado Plaza (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 9 - Fly to Santa Marta on the Caribbean coast

Driving to Medellin airport this morning, we take our flight to Santa Marta. There are limited direct flights daily, but we do aim to get one of these. In case of low availability or schedule changes, the flights will go via Bogota.

Located on the Caribbean coast, Santa Marta is a hub for people seeking Colombia's northern beaches, and it is a jumping off point for the myriad trekking routes around the Lost City and in Tayrona National Park. From our arrival this afternoon we'll be free to explore the charming colonial city, and the waterfront is located just a couple of blocks from our hotel. Time permitting, you may be able to take a taxi to Rodadero, one of the larger beaches actually in the city itself, or visit the gold museum which has a series of jewels from the Tayrona civilisation. Alternatively, go people-watching on the Paseo el Camellon - the city's sea front.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Santa Marta Real (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 10 - Full day visit to Tayrona National Park

Tayrona National Park is home to some of the most outstanding beaches on Colombia's northern coast, their pristine golden sands being protected by a large swathe of hilly rainforest. Today we will have a leisurely hike to explore some of these gems, walking for approximately two hours through rainforest paths and past rugged beaches including Arrecife and La Piscina. The coast up here is wild, with reefs and rocks creating strong waves and currents along some of the shoreline. Cabo San Juan, however, is the best swimming beach in the national park - a haven of luxurious emerald water and outstanding views of the tropical rainforest behind us.

We walk back the way we came. There is no vehicle access into the national park, so the only way to arrive and depart is on foot.

Please note that in February, the Tayrona National Park is closed. During this month, we will instead be visiting Seviaka, a Kogi indigenous community hidden in the jungle of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. This trip involves approximately four hours of trekking (moderately paced, but with some steep slopes and muddy paths), as the community is not accessible by vehicle - it's a real experience for people who want to learn more about the culture and traditions of ancient Colombia. Your visit also includes a contribution to the community, by way of agricultural items like tools and seeds.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Santa Marta Real (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 11 - Drive to colonial Cartagena

There is an approximately five hour journey between Santa Marta and Cartagena, as we travel hugging the coastline for much of the journey. We skirt around Barranquilla, the city that hosts Colombia's annual Carnival - the second biggest in the world after Rio de Janeiro - before continuing along the

Caribbean to Cartagena.

This afternoon we are at our leisure - Cartagena has a fantastic nightlife, and the cobbled streets are perfect for exploring in the evening.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel Don Pedro De Heredia (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 12 - Explore Cartagena on foot; free afternoon

Cartagena's beauty is well documented throughout history. In recent times the writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez put it at the fore of Colombian culture by using it as the setting for many of his novels, including the famous 'Love in the Time of Cholera'. The massive fortified walls around the old city, dating back several hundred years, helped with the designation of the city as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Today we will visit the ancient plazas and churches of the city with our Tour Leader, exploring the narrow cobblestone streets and colonial convents that seem to be straight out of a filmset. As well as the popular walled city, we also visit the charming Getsemani district and the seafront.

We have a free afternoon with plenty of options, including a canoe 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)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel





SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL 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

Trip information

Country information

Colombia

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	Plugs	Religion	Language
-5	2 Pin Flat	Roman Catholic.	Spanish.

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Medellin - Half Day Flower Experience in Santa Elena - US\$115 (depending on numbers); Half Day Street Art Experience: US\$40-\$86 (depending on numbers).

Cartagena - Half day National Aviary US\$56-\$166 (depending on numbers); Boquilla Canoe Ride US\$ 70 (min 3 pers); Salsa classes: US\$37 (Plus cost of translator between group US\$50)

All tours include a local guide aside from the salsa class.

Clothing

For this trip you will need to pack for all weathers, as you travel through several different climatic zones. In the Andes (Bogota 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, particularly in Tayrona National Park.

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. Don't forget your swimming things.

Tipping

Explore leader

Tipping isn't compulsory, and we work hard to ensure that our leaders all receive a fair wage. However, you might want to recognise a leader that's done a great job or really added to your trip by giving them a tip. We're often asked about the recommended amount. It's a tricky one, and down to personal preference, but we'd recommend between £15 to £20 per person per week as a guideline

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, your leader may organise a group's tips kitty for included activities and meals and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Accordingly, you should allow US\$ 40, approx. 134'000 Pesos for group tipping

For all non-included services and meals on your trip please tip independently at your discretion. 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

International Departure Taxes

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

Colombia

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	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£5	£10	£1.6	£0.4

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Colombian Peso (COP).

Recommended Currency For Exchange

You can choose to either change your money in advance or on arrival at the airport. Here you will find both ATMs and Bureau de Change. The exchange rate with the COP is approximately COP 4'200 to the British Pound. We recommend you take some emergency cash in USD as the GBP exchange isn't very good. Notes should be in good condition otherwise they may not be accepted. Please check on line for up to date information

Where To Exchange

Your tour leader can also advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability

ATMs can be found in the major towns and cities for cash withdrawals in COP. Always have some cash back up as they are not always reliable

Credit Card Acceptance

Credit card are widely accepted in many shops and restaurants but some may be subject to a service charge

Travellers Cheques

We do not recommend Travellers Cheques

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Boat, Flight

Accommodation notes

We aim to stay in perfectly located properties that allow us to make the most of our time in these diverse areas of Colombia. In Bogota we're located near the La Candelaria area, near the Gold Museum and the other attractions of this district. In Cartagena we stay within the walled city, and in Armenia our hotel is located in the countryside, away from any towns or cities, to best appreciate the rolling landscape of the Andean foothills.

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.

Price Guarantee

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 and Passport Information

Colombia: 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 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 be able to apply 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.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

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 complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

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, Polar, 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. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. 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.

Ability to swim

An ability to swim is essential for your safe enjoyment of the water based activities on this trip. If you wish to participate in these activities then we insist that you are able to swim.

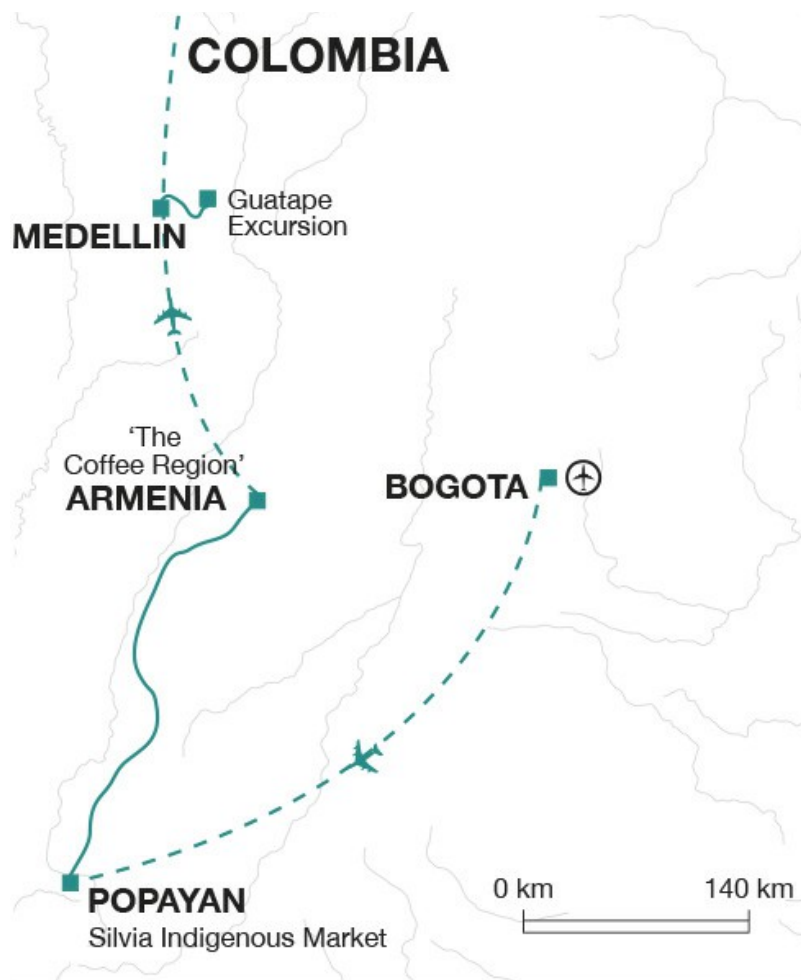
Colombia

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. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. 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 Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

Additional Information





Extend your trip in Tayrona National Park

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 small colonial towns of Guatape and Salento.

Reviews



**AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS**



**PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE**



**AIRPORT
TRANSFERS**