

SOUTH AMERICA - COLOMBIA IN DEPTH



INTRODUCTION


From exciting cities to traditional towns and from majestic mountains to the Caribbean coastline, Colombia is as diverse as it is charming.

This 21-day itinerary highlights the culture, history and scenery that define Colombia. Come along and experience one of South America's most inspiring countries for yourself!

ITINERARY

DAY 1: Bogotá

Arrival into El Dorado airport in Bogotá on an intercontinental flight. Reception and transfer to the hotel.

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DAY 2: Bogota - City Walking Tour

After breakfast, half day visit to the historic centre known as La Candelaria. This antiquated barrio is of great architectural and cultural heritage and is made up of old “stately homes” or large Spanish colonial buildings with iron windows, thick and sturdy wooden doors, balconies and internal patios with beautiful yet hidden gardens. Visit the Plaza de Bolivar, where a statue of the great liberator Simon Bolivar is located. This Plaza, originally called the Plaza Mayor, was used for civil and military purposes, as a marketplace, a bullring and a gallows. The Cathedral, on the eastern side of the plaza, is constructed on the remains of the first church built in Bogotá in 1539 and houses an important collection of religious artefacts such as textiles and artwork that has built over four centuries. The Capitol, built between 1847 and 1926, shows its renaissance and neoclassical influences with its carved stonework and tall columns and, it is the first republican piece of civil architecture. Around the Plaza de Bolivar are the Palacio de Justicia, the Mayor of Bogotá’s offices called the Edificio Liévano, the oldest school in the county called San Bartolome and the Casa de los Comuneros who participated towards the end of the XVII Century in some of the first movements towards independence from Spain and the formation of the Republic. The visit continues with the Museo Botero, a colonial house filled with works of art done by and donated by Fernando Botero in addition to artwork from his own personal collection that includes pieces by Picasso, Renoir, Dalí Matisse, Monet and Giacometti. Next is the Museo del Oro which has a permanent exhibition of some 32,000 pieces of gold, 20,000 stones, ceramics and textiles all precious to the Quimbaya, Calima, Tayrona, Sinu, Muisca, Tolima, Tumaco and Magdalena cultures. The Museo del Oro is considered as one of the most important museums of its type internationally and it has been functioning since 1939. In 2007 it underwent a complete overhaul to make this an interactive museum that would awake senses to the objects on display. Free afternoon for individual activities (we recommend visiting the city’s various museums).

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DAY 3: Bogotá - Zipaquirá - Villa de Leyva

After breakfast, departure from Bogotá, north towards Zipaquirá. Travelling through the Sabana de Bogotá you pass scenery full of greenhouses used for the cultivation of carnations and roses. Flower production is an important industry for the hundreds of horticulturalists that live in this region. After a journey of roughly 1.15 hours, reach the impressive Salt Cathedral, a true feat of engineering. The name Zipaquirá refers to Zipa, the leader of the Muisca tribe and the overlord of these rich salt mines. The trip will begin in a tunnel that passes the fourteen Stations of the Cross and continues on to a dome. This dome is lit in such a way that it allows one to contemplate the universe and the relationship between man and nature. Later, reach an enormous cross carved into the rock and finally the three naves of the Cathedral that represent the birth, life and death of Christ. In the central nave is the main altar, above which is a cross measuring 16m in height and 10m in breadth, made by the Colombian artist Carlos Enrique Rodriguez, the largest cross made from salt in the world. Next visit the mine where there is an excellent auditorium that can seat two hundred people and host film screenings and more diverse events such as fashion shows. The trip ends at a mirror of water where you will experience the amazing visual effects of water on carved saline rock. Continue on a 2 hour trip to Villa de Leyva in the afternoon. Arrival and hotel check-in. Villa de Leyva, one of the area's most beautiful towns, was founded in 1572 by Hernàn Suárez de Villalobos who named it after Andrès Días Venero de Leyva, the first president of Nueva Granada. In colonial times, Villa de Leyva played a central role and the Viceroy and his entourage spent much time here. Today, the city is a well-preserved colonial jewel with an enormous plaza of 14,000 sq. metres surrounded by Spanish style houses, small alleys, cobblestone streets and the XVII century parochial church. Visit Museo El Fósil, founded in 1977 and located 5.5 km away from Villa de Leyva. The museum was built exactly where a kronosaurus was found, a marine reptile more than 120 million years old and 20m in length. Return to the hotel and overnight stay.

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DAY 4: Transfer Villa de Leyva - Bogota

After breakfast, return to Bogotá. On the way, take a break in the Convento del Santo Ecce Homo. Founded by the Dominicans in 1620, this was an important point of evangelization in a region populated by infidel Indigenous communities. Arrival at the hotel in Bogota. Overnight stay.

DAY 5: Bogotá - Neiva - San Agustín

Transfer to the local airport for flight to Neiva. Arrival at Neiva airport and immediate transfer to San Agustín. This scenic journey provides views of the extensive floodplains of the Magdalena River valley from 700masl all the way up to 1730masl and in balmy temperatures of 20oC just as in San Agustín. After a journey of roughly 5 hours arrive at San Agustin, check into the hotel. Overnight stay.

DAY 5: Arrival at Neiva and transfer to San Agustin

Arrival at Neiva airport and immediate transfer to San Agustín. This scenic journey allows enjoying views of the extensive floodplains of the Magdalena River valley from 700masl all the way up to 1730masl and in balmy temperatures of 20°C just as in San Agustín. After a journey of roughly 5 hours arrive at San Agustin, check into the hotel.

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DAY 6: San Agustín Archaeological Park

Morning visit to San Agustín Archaeological Park, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1995. See these enormous stone statues close up with your own eyes. The raised plateaus are manmade and have been created specifically for the stone monuments, making where you are treading, holy and sacred ground. You will walk on to the ceremonial Fuente de Lavapatas before heading up the hill to the Lavapatas terrace from which you can enjoy a remarkable view over the surrounding countryside. Also visit the small Museo Arqueológico. In the afternoon, visit the wonderful Colombian massif and the source of the Magdalena River, a spectacular rocky gorge that forces the river to pass through only 2.20 metres. Drive back to San Agustín and short visit to the town. Return to the hotel, dinner and overnight stay

DAY 7: San Agustín - Isnos - San Agustín

After breakfast, set off for the rural town of Isnos to see further Archaeological Parks such as the Alto de los Ídolos and the Alto de las Piedras where there are some well-preserved tombs that still show some of the original paintwork and some of the largest stone figures found so far. Moving between these sights gives you the breathtaking view of the Macizo Colombiano and the incredible waterfalls of Salto del Mortiño (180m) and Salto de Bordonos (320m). Return to San Agustín. Overnight stay.

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DAY 8: San Agustín - Popayan - Half day walking tour

After breakfast, leave on a 5 hour drive on unpaved roads to Popayán, the capital of the department of Cauca located 91km away. Arrival at Popayán and check-in. In the afternoon, half day visit to the historic centre of the town founded in 1537, concentrating on Parque Caldas. Around the Parque Caldas are the main religious and government edifices, as well as the city's original buildings such as the Torre del Reloj, considered one of the symbols of the city, built between 1673 and 1682 and set in 1737. Continue towards the Puente de Humilladero, built in 1873 to facilitate access from the city centre to El Callejón (currently barrio Bolívar) up a steep rise, particularly for those pilgrims making the journey on their knees. Visit the Iglesia de Santo Domingo, a baroque style church designed by the Spanish architect Antonio García and commissioned by the Arboleda family, the Iglesia de San Francisco, considered the most beautiful baroque church in town, and the Panteón de los Próceres. Visit the Museo de Arte Religioso, which houses an interesting collection of religious art, and the Casa Museo Mosquera, the Settecento style house that belonged to General Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera.

DAY 9: Popayán - Cali

Today transfer to Cali, arriving after approximately 3 hours, and check-in at the hotel. Cali is the third largest city in Colombia. Officially known as Santiago de Cali, this is the capital of the department of Valle del Cauca and is a city that enjoys a warm climate, as well as being known for its exciting salsa and warm hospitality due to its friendly and good natured citizens. Free afternoon and overnight stay.

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DAY 10: Cali - Half Day City Tour - Coffee Triangle

Half day visit to the most important historic and cultural sights in the city such as the Teatro Municipal Enrique Buenaventura, built in the XIX century and known as being of a creole yet classic design with a capacity for 1200 spectators; the Casa Proartes; the Centro Cultural; the Museo de Oro Calima, known for its fine golden ceremonial ornaments created by the Calima people in pre-Hispanic times; and finally the viewpoint in Cali's historical San Antonio district for a breathtaking view of the city and to visit the antique church of the same name. The Iglesia San Antonio houses some well preserved and interesting artwork and wooden sculptures from the Escuela de Quito. The visit continues also to the Iglesia Sebastián de Belalcazar and the Iglesia de la Ermita. Continue to other interesting sights of the city such as the architectural complex of "la Merced", the first construction in the city; the Plazoleta de San Francisco, striking with its Mudejar style tower; the Plaza de Caycedo, the city's main square; La Tertulia Museum; and the monument to Cristo Rey on the Cerro los Cristales. Then, transfer to Armenia. After approximately 3 hours, arrival and check-in.

DAY 10: Transfer Cali to Armenia

Then, transfer to Armenia. After approximately 3 hours, arrival and check-in.

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DAY 11: Armenia - Valle del Cocora - Armenia

In the morning leave for the Valle de Cocora which is located in the central mountains of the department of Quindio. This makes up part of the Parque Nacional de los Nevados and is the ideal place to marvel at the “Quindian wax palm” (Ceroxylon quincense), the national tree of Colombia. This tree can reach a staggering height of 60m. Around here a great number of species of birds live, in particular several species of hummingbird and the orejiamarillo or the palm parrot (Ognorhynchus icteroti) which is endangered. On arrival in the valley, either hiking or on horseback (not included), head into the cloud forest to enjoy the biodiversity of flora and fauna. On the return journey, cross the River Quindio while walking along an ecological pathway that takes you past the tallest wax palms in the world. Learn why the indigenous people here worshipped this tree. Stop at a trout farm and then enjoy a traditional meal of smoked trout. Enjoy some free time here. In the afternoon, continue 10km towards the traditional town of Salento to enjoy a city tour that visits the Plaza de Bolívar with its colourful balconies, the calle real, the handicrafts shops and the Cocora viewpoint. Overnight stay.

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DAY 12: Armenia – Half day coffee process - Armenia

Half day visiting the coffee plantations along the steep hills typical of this area. On a secondary pathway view the green carpet of coffee plants that spread out as far as the horizon interrupted only by fincas and heliconia flowers. Visit Hacienda San Alberto, one of the coffee estates typical of the region and located near the town of Buenavista Quindío. The tour begins with a visit to the main house where you will be able to appreciate local typical architecture and history while at the same time enjoying an introductory chat about coffee, its preparation, toasting, the characteristics of quality and the properties that allow for such a variety of coffees in the world. The route continues through the plantations, appreciating the work of the coffee pickers as well as understanding the famous humid coffee that is characteristic of Colombian coffee. Walk through the coffee plantations and learn about the production system in minute detail, including the harvest, the drying of the sun and treatment in this land of volcanic terrain along the Central Andes Mountain Range, declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO and offering the perfect climatic conditions for coffee growing. Free remainder of the afternoon for individual activities. Overnight stay.

DAY 13: Armenia - Medellín

After breakfast, transfer to Medellín, a journey of approximately 6 hours. Arrival and check-in. Overnight stay.

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DAY 14: Medellin - Half Day social transformation tour

Half day tour to visit those places that best represent the social transformation that has taken place in Medellín. The tour will show the symbolic areas of Medellín from the 1980s, when the city was one of the most dangerous in the world, up to today with the many projects that fostered the city's change. Start the tour by visiting the Monaco building in the Poblado district, in the south-east of Medellín, where Pablo Escobar once lived until there was a terrorist attack against him. Continue to Pablo Escobar district known also as "Medellín sin Tugurios". Here there are approximately 700 houses donated to the poor by the notorious capo, who thanks to his charity work, won popular approval but changed the language and culture of both Medellín and the country in a violent way. Continue to barrio Santo Domingo Savio, which used to be one of the most unsafe suburbs of Medellín. Located some 7km from the city centre, it is a clear example of the social transformation that has taken place in the last few years. Arrive here by the metro cable car that joins the north-east area with the city centre, and which has been life changing to many of the inhabitants of Medellín. Santo Domingo Savio houses the Biblioteca España Park, inaugurated in 2007. It is one of a series of 30 urban and social regeneration projects that helped transform the urban, social and cultural landscape of Medellín; a city with new spaces for culture, knowledge and lifestyle. The library is a space of social inclusion, cohabitation and access to a world of information. It is located on the border of Santo Domingo hill with an open view of the city, and comprises three box-shaped buildings, each one housing a different part of the library, the community services, and auditorium. Behind the library stands a mural painted by the local inhabitants in commemoration of the victims of the violent past, symbolized by a new birth for everybody. Continue to La Plazoleta located in the city centre, in an area that fell into decline in the 1980s and today houses around twenty three Botero sculptures donated by the artist in the year 2000. Since that time, the city has undergone a social and cultural transformation around these works placed in a public space Overnight stay.

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DAY 15: Medellin - Cartagena

After breakfast, transfer to the local airport for the flight to Cartagena. On arrival, transfer and hotel check-in. Overnight stay.

DAY 15: Cartagena

On arrival in Cartagena, transfer to you hotel (private car, bilingual guide)

DAY 16: Cartagena Half Day Panoramic City Tour

Start with a panoramic view of the city from the Monasterio and Iglesia de La Popa. Formerly known as the “Popa del Galeon”, it is famous for resembling the stern of a galleon. Constructed in 1606 the church and monastery are located at a height of 140masl from where one can enjoy 360o views of the city and the sea as well as the port zone, one of the most important in the Caribbean. Continue to the San Felipe Fortress, erected in honour of the poet from Cartagena, Don Luis Carlos López, made famous for his sonnet “A mi ciudad nativa”. It was built on San Lázaro hill to defend the city from pirate attacks. Walk around the fortress and learn how the castle was constructed, the engineering feats, the tunnels, underground galleries and passageways. Then continue on to the Ciudad Vieja (old city) to visit the Convent and Church of San Pedro Claver which was built in the middle of the XVII century and owes its name to the “apóstol de los esclavos”. Finally, continue to the handicrafts zone of the Bovedas, a collection of archways built into the city wall of Cartagena that were used until the end of the 1700s to house armaments and then later as a prison in the XIX century. Nowadays it’s an artisan centre where one can appreciate local handicrafts. Free afternoon for individual activities. Overnight stay.

DAY 17: Cartagena

Free day for individual activities.

DAY 18: Cartagena - Tayrona National Park

After breakfast, five hour transfer to Tayrona National. Arrival and check-in.

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DAY 18: National Park Tayrona Entrance Fee

Tayrona National Park Entrance Fee included.

DAY 19: Tayrona National Park


Free days to relax, for beach activities or to organize excursions such as a walk to Pueblito, snorkelling or horseback riding. Bike rentals are also available.

DAY 20: Tayrona National Park

Free days to relax, for beach activities or to organize excursions such as a walk to Pueblito, snorkelling or horseback riding. Bike rentals are also available.

DAY 21: Tayrona National Park - Santa Marta

Morning transfer to Santa Marta airport after breakfast.

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INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

Accommodation	Standard hotels with private facilities
Inclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private airport transfers Internal flights as indicated on itinerary Accommodation with breakfast daily Sightseeing with local English-speaking guide Other meals where stated <p>Exclusions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> International flights Visa and reciprocity fees (if applicable) Travel insurance Beverages Personal expenses Gratuities for tour guides/drivers Any items not mentioned as included
Difficulty Rating	2 (average fitness required)
Single Surcharge	Available upon request, contact us for more details.

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Notes	All entrance fees are subject to change without prior notice. This is a Tailor-Made itinerary which can be customised to create your own unique journey. Contact us to discuss your travel plans.
Price Dependent upon	Season and availability

SUSTAINABILITY

Being environmentally accountable is a crucial part of our organisation. Chimu is currently striving towards using less paper, taking several initiatives to do so and tracking our progress along the way. Our goal: A paperless organisation. For this reason, all information given to you will be sent electronically. We encourage those who choose to travel with us to support our aspirations and actions and ask that you reconsider printing out documentation. To view these documents, you can download them to your iPad or portable computer before and during your trip.

Chimu is passionate and dedicated to sustainability measures and understands the crucial part sustainability plays within the tourism industry.

We use local guides and office staff to both maximise local employment opportunities and minimise carbon footprint. Local guides also ensure you benefit from the intimate knowledge, passion and culture of the country you're visiting. Our guides are all highly qualified (most with university degrees) or equip with many years of experience and are paid above the standard wage. Whether it be our knowledgeable local guides, locally produced meals or the transport on tour, we do not use imported goods when local products are available. We aim to minimise our impact on the environment and give as much back as possible to the communities we work in.

While visiting the many national parks, heritage sites, museums and landmarks our travellers are encouraged to explore remain culturally aware and sensitive. We further encourage you to buy appropriate souvenirs and discourage the buying of anything wrongfully made or taken from the environment i.e. shells and endangered species products. Information on how you can be environmentally conscious, and travel responsibly will be made available in our Travellers Guides and provided during your travels by guides and staff.

For more information on our sustainability policies, including how we are striving towards being a paperless organisation, click [HERE](#)

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