

Colombia

With its dream Caribbean beaches, exuberant Amazon rainforest and three majestic mountain ranges traversed by winding roads that connect bougainvillea-shrouded villages and vibrant cities, Colombia reveals to the world a tropical cocktail of attractions. It is a country of passion, the land of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, 1982 Winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, and of the great artist Fernando Botero whose sculptures are found all over the world. Colombia offers varied landscapes for all forms of adventure tourism, from hiking and canyoning to Scuba diving. The main fascination of the country however relates to its generous, joyful and enthusiastic people, a fascinating racial mix of Indigenous, Africans and Caucasians that keep their traditions and culture alive.



Cartagena



Bogotá

Colombia's capital situated at an altitude of 2600m is a busy, cosmopolitan city where modern buildings and avenues contrast with colonial churches and stately houses. With an intense and vibrant cultural, intellectual and social life, Bogotá also hosts the world's best Pre-Colombian art collection and a visit to the Museo del Oro is a must on every itinerary.

Cartagena de Indias

The walled city of Cartagena, jewel of the Caribbean Coast, is legendary both for its history and its beauty. Declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, visitors go back in time when they stroll through the narrow streets, framed by picturesque colonial mansions, cloisters and castles. Immortalised in countless books and paintings, this fascinating city comes alive at night, with numerous bars, exquisite restaurants and live Caribbean music. The nearby tropical Islas del Rosario make for a great day excursion.

The Coffee Triangle

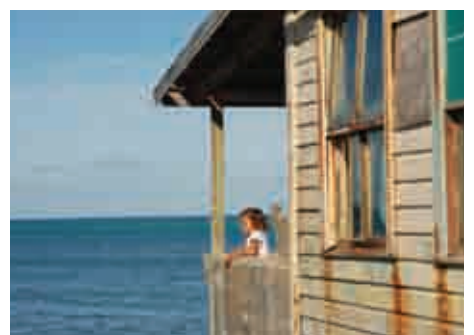
In the fertile soils of the central mountain range near the towns of Pereira and Armenia, Colombia's high quality coffee is cultivated. Travelling through lush green valleys you can observe traditional villages, colourful architecture, the spectacular Los Nevados National Park and endless coffee plantations from the midst of which emerge traditional coffee haciendas - the ideal base from which to explore the lush green coffee valleys and become passionate about Colombia's traditional drink.

Tayrona National Park

Unspoilt forest-lined beaches, coral barriers, the turquoise Caribbean Sea, mangroves and mountains, this is the stunning Tayrona National Park situated 34km from Santa Marta and the majestic coastal Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta with the country's tallest peaks of up to 5755m. Nearly deserted, the park is home to a few Indigenous communities as well as a unique eco-system with numerous species of mammals, birds and reptiles.

Colombia Travel Tips

- **Time:** GMT -5.
 - **Flying Time from UK:** Approx 14 hours to Bogotá.
 - **Language:** The official language is Spanish. English is spoken in most of the larger hotels and tourist areas.
 - **Currency:** Colombian Peso (COP) £1 = COP 3,474.
 - **Visa Requirements:** Visa not required by UK passport holders for tourist stays of up to 90 days.
 - **Festivals, Events & Busy Times:** Numerous local events and national holidays occur throughout the year including the International Music Festival and Hay Festival in Cartagena (Jan), Barranquilla Carnival (Feb), Flower Fair in Medellín (Aug), National Beauty Contest in Cartagena (Nov). Christmas, New Year and Easter are the main holidays in Colombia.
 - **Departure Tax:** US\$30 for int. departures from Bogotá and US\$42 from Cartagena, subject to change.
 - **Tourist Office:** Contact Colombian Government Trade Bureau, 2 Conduit Street, 6th Floor, London W1S 2XB, Tel: 0207 4913535, <http://www.travelingcolombia.com/>
- For more useful information, see pages 96-97.



Tours for Independent Travellers

Essential Colombia - Coffee and Caribbean Coast

12 Days from £1349 (excludes flights). Private Tour.

9 Days from £939 (excludes flights). Private Tour without coffee triangle.

Highlights Include

- Visit Bogotá's colonial La Candelaria district and the world's most amazing Gold Museum
- Explore Colombia's coffee triangle and the wonderful traditions of coffee farming
- Wander through cobbled streets and past colourful houses in picturesque Cartagena, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Experience the stunning Tayrona National Park with its white-sand Caribbean beaches

Departures: Daily

Day 1: Arrive Bogotá

On arrival at Bogotá airport enjoy a private transfer to your chosen hotel for a two-night stay.

Standard: Hotel Casa de la Botica

Superior: Hotel Del La Opera

Day 2: Bogotá City Tour

Today, embark on a half day private tour of the historic center known as La Candelaria. The ancient quarters are formed by grand houses of profound Spanish influence with iron windows, thick wooden doors and internal patios that hide beautiful gardens. The tour includes a visit to Plaza Mayor, Capilla del Sagrario, the city's religious and architectural jewel, and the Capitolio. Continue to the fabulous Museo del Oro considered the most important collection of its kind worldwide with nearly 34,000 gold objects and 20,000 in stone! The afternoon is at leisure. We recommend an optional excursion to the impressive Zipaquirá Salt Cathedral to explore the enormous salt stalactites and the various halls with water mirrors (not included). (B)

Day 3: Bogotá – Armenia

This morning transfer to the airport and fly to Armenia (not included) in Colombia's famous coffee farming region. En route to your homely hacienda and overnight stay, visit the Quimbaya Museum which houses an interesting collection of gold, ceramic and wooden objects. (B)

Standard: Hotel del Campo

Superior: Hacienda Bambusa

Day 4: Armenia – Valle del Cocora – Pereira

Your guide will pick you up today for an all day private visit to a typical village of Filandia, famous for its 'antioqueño' architecture as well as for basket weaving. Continue to the beautiful Valle del Cocora (Nevados National Park) where on a short walk you can admire the 60m high palm trees. Numerous bird species inhabit the area and roads are lined with brightly-coloured 'finca's, typical coffee growing farm houses built with local wood, tiled roofs and mud walls. Transfer to Pereira for a two-night stay. (B)



Ecohabs, Tayrona National Park

Standard: Hacienda Malabar

Superior: Hotel Sazagua

Day 5: Coffee Plantation & Farm

Private excursion to one of the area's coffee farms set on steep hills to see the plantation and production system, including the harvest, sun drying and processing (main seasons are May, Jun & Oct). Visit to a 'trilladora' after lunch to observe the manual selection process of the coffee grains as well as the tasting to insure good quality flavour. (BL)

Day 6: Pereira – Cartagena de Indias

Private transfer to the airport for your flight (not included) to the picturesque, colonial town of Cartagena. Check-in to your hotel located in the old town, just a short walk from the Caribbean Sea. The rest of the day is at leisure to enjoy the architectural beauty and the many exquisite restaurants and bars. (B)

Standard: Hotel Casa la Fe

Superior: Hotel Bovedas de Santa Clara

Day 7: Cartagena City Tour

After breakfast, start your half-day private tour with a panoramic view of the city from the monastery and church of La Popa and continue to the stunning fortress of San Felipe de Barajas on San Lázaro hill. Cartagena's colourful history becomes most evident by just walking through the picturesque alleys and streets of its well-preserved old town where you will visit the convent of San Pedro Claver and the artisan center in Las Bóvedas. Free afternoon. (B)



Day 8: Cartagena at Leisure

Free day for individual activities. We recommend an optional excursion to the Caribbean Archipiélago del Rosario, a stunning national marine park enclosing a group of beautiful coral islands surrounded by crystal clear seas (not included). (B)

Day 9: Cartagena - Tayrona National Park

This morning, enjoy a 4-5 hour private transfer to Tayrona National Park, comprising of stunning, white-sand Caribbean beaches and a lush mountain landscape on the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, home to hundreds of animal and plant species. Check-in to your resort for the next three nights built into the side of a jungled cliff overlooking the sparkling sea. The secluded, ecologically-friendly Ecohabs are pleasantly decorated and feature private bathrooms, plasma TV, mini-bar and hammocks, as well as a restaurant. (B)

Standard & Superior: Ecohabs

Days 10-11: Tayrona National Park

Spend two days in one of the most biologically diverse regions on earth. Observe the monkeys, toucans and red squirrels, relax at the remote beach, swim in the clear waters of the Caribbean Sea, enjoy day excursions such as hiking to the Indigenous village of Pueblito, or go snorkelling or horseback riding (not included). (B)

Day 12: Tayrona - Santa Marta - Bogotá

After breakfast, private transfer to Santa Marta airport for your flight to Bogotá where an assistant will help you to your international onward/homeward flight. (B)

If opting for the 9-Day tour, fly directly from Bogotá to Cartagena on Day 3, continuing your itinerary with Day 6.

Prices Include

- Accommodation as shown in itinerary
- Meals as specified (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch)
- Transfers & touring on private basis as detailed
- Services of an English-speaking driver/guide

Prices Exclude

- All flights and locally paid airport taxes
- Gratuities and items of a personal nature

Tour Prices		Essential Columbia			
		Standard		Superior	
Prices per person, in £'s from		Twin	Single	Twin	Single
9 Days					
01 Jan 09 - 31 Dec 09		939	1845	1049	1989
12 Days					
01 Jan 09 - 31 Dec 09		1349	2565	1509	2849



Coffee farm