



# THE Nation. TRAVELS

## COLOMBIA ITINERARY | AUGUST 2017

### *Colombia: A Country on the Rise*

[CONTACT](#)[WEBSITE](#)[DETAILS & PRICING](#)

#### DAY 1: BOGOTÁ

**R**

- Arrive in Bogotá and transfer to the Sofitel Bogotá Victoria Regia for check-in.
- Bogotá, Colombia, is a city of the future with a troubled past. It was born of conquest in August 1538 by the conquistador Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada—who arrived in pursuit of El Dorado, the mythical city of gold—developed under colonialism, reborn in revolution, and tried by political uncertainty, corruption, and strife. Yet since around the year 2000, Bogotá has emerged from a difficult past as an innovative city with a robust economy. Indeed, *The Economist's* 2013 global-livability report shows Bogotá with the sharpest rise in livability of any other city in the world. It's a time of peace and reconciliation in Colombia, with Bogotá leading the way to the future.
- We'll have an early-evening reception for fellow travelers to meet, followed by a light dinner.

#### TRIP DATES:

AUG 24–SEPT 4, 2017

**B: BREAKFAST**  
**L: LUNCH**  
**D: DINNER**  
**R: RECEPTION**

#### DAY 2: BOGOTÁ

**B, L, D**

- We'll attend a morning meeting with historian Alberto Leon, who will offer us a framework for understanding Colombia's recent history.
- After the briefing, we'll depart the hotel and drive to the Paloquemao market, which is recognized as the Mecca of food sites in Bogotá, bringing together suppliers of meat, vegetables, fruits, packaged goods, seafood, and flowers from all over the country. We'll experience the multitude of colors and the rich smells of a wide variety of produce. The market is a must-visit for fruit lovers who wish to delve into the full range of exotic produce Colombia has to offer.
- We'll then head back into the heart of Bogotá, to the La Candelaria neighborhood, where the city was founded, and walk through its cobbled streets. Here, the city's rich history is ever-present, exemplified by La Candelaria's many colonial churches, squares, and convents.

## DAY 2: BOGOTÁ

B, L, D

- We'll enjoy lunch at the Hotel de la Opera before beginning our walking tour of the area. We'll visit the Catedral Primada de Colombia, a spectacular example of 16th-century Spanish architecture and the city's most recognizable symbol. Close by is the Centro Cultural Gabriel García Márquez, which opened in 2008 and is named after Colombia's national hero, the Nobel Prize-winning author of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The center features an exhibition room, an auditorium, a bookstore, a coffee shop, and classrooms and spaces for cultural events and lectures. We'll continue on to the Museo Botero, which houses 208 works donated by the Colombian master artist Fernando Botero—123 of his own works and 85 works by international artists such as Joan Miró, Max Ernst, Salvador Dalí, Marc Chagall, and Pablo Picasso. We'll stroll by Plaza Bolívar, where a bronze statue (the first public monument in the city) pays tribute to the great *libertador* Simón Bolívar, who led the fight for Latin America's independence from Spain. We'll also stop at the Plaza de Chorro de Quevedo, where oftentimes storytellers can be found regaling crowds with creative accounts of the country's history.
- We'll end the day by taking a cable car 1,600 feet up to the Cerro de Monserrate, where we'll visit an important pilgrimage site. After enjoying panoramic views of the Río Bogotá and La Candelaria, we'll head to a nearby mansion that was given to Bolívar in 1820 in gratitude for liberating Colombia from the Spaniards. The home is filled with beautiful period pieces, including one of his swords.
- We'll enjoy dinner this evening at Tabula, which was featured on Anthony Bourdain's *Parts Unknown* in 2013.

## DAY 3: BOGOTÁ

B, L

- We'll meet this morning with staff members of the National Historic Memory Center and discuss the Victims Law, which was passed in 2011 to address 20-plus years of paramilitary, guerrilla, and state violence, and to support reconciliation initiatives.
- After the briefing, we'll head east to Villa de Leyva, stopping en route at the Salt Cathedral of Zipaquirá, a Roman Catholic church built within the tunnels of a salt mine 650 feet underground near the town of Zipaquirá. This is an important religious center in which visitors descend underground, passing through 14 chapels representing the Christ's 14 Stations of the Cross. Carved entirely out of salt, it is one of only three similar churches in the world.
- We'll have lunch at Zipaquirá's Brasas del Llano restaurant.
- Next, we'll return to Bogotá to explore the Gold Museum, which provides an excellent understanding of the city's historical artistic soul. The museum features the largest collection of pre-Hispanic goldwork in the world, as well as pottery and other archaeological artifacts of the indigenous population. Myths that recur in so many forms of Colombian art can be found here—shamanic animal-men, jagged geometric patterns, and the origins of magical realism, which can be found in so much of the local art and craftsmanship.

### DAY 3: BOGOTÁ

B, L

- We'll end the day at Casas Riegner, a renowned art gallery that identifies its mission as "the promotion and dissemination of contemporary art within Colombia and abroad." Our group will meet with director's assistant Felipe Villada, who will talk about some of the emerging young Colombian artists the gallery represents.
- Dinner will be at your leisure this evening.



### DAY 4: SAN AGUSTÍN

B, L, D

- We'll take a morning flight to Pitalito and from there drive approximately 45 minutes to the newly opened **Hotel Monasterio de San Agustín**.
- This region was inhabited by two enigmatic indigenous cultures that created fantastic sculptures using volcanic rocks approximately 5,000 years ago. They lived in the adjacent river valleys of the Magdalena and the Cauca. Divided by impassable peaks, the two rivers were these peoples' transportation system. San Agustín, where the rivers joined, was where the two tribes met to trade, bury their dead, and worship. A now-extinct volcano close by left volcanic rock, from which local tribe members used to carve towering statues. These statues were used as part of funerary rituals, and, today, statues in the forms of pumas, snakes, and warriors still loom over the lush green hills surrounding San Agustín.
- This afternoon will start with a visit to the Archaeological Museum



## DAY 4: SAN AGUSTÍN

B, L, D

of San Agustín, which provides an excellent introduction to the site and the area's culture. We'll continue on to the San Agustín Archaeological Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site, where 130 monuments are displayed, as well as the Fuente de Lavapatas, a ceremonial fountain where images of serpents, lizards, and human figures are carved in a labyrinth of ducts in the rocky bed of a stream. Archaeologists believe the baths were once used for ritual bathing and the worship of aquatic deities.

- From here, we'll walk to the Alto de Lavapatas, the oldest archaeological site in San Agustín, where imposing statues guard ancient tombs. The prehistoric site also offers a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside.
- After lunch at a local restaurant, we'll visit a number of less-known sites, including the Alto de las Piedras, which features tombs made of rock slabs with signs of red, black, and yellow coloring. Doble Yo is one of the most famous statues, which, on closer examination, is actually composed of four separate statues. Nearby, at La Chaquira, divinities are carved into the mountainside and overlook the stunning gorge of Rio Magdalena.
- We'll have dinner at the hotel in the evening.



## DAY 5: POPAYÁN

B, L, D

- This morning we'll head northwest toward Popayán, stopping at the Parque Nacional Natural Puracé, which lies within the territory of the Puracé indigenous people and is a geothermal land of waterfalls and a snow-capped, inactive volcano.

## DAY 5: POPAYÁN

B, L, D

- We'll arrive in Popayán, known as the "White City" due to its chalk-white buildings, and check into the Hotel Dann Monasterio.
- This graceful colonial town, located at the midpoint in the journey that gold would make between Lima, Peru; Quito, Ecuador; and the Colombian port of Cartagena on the Caribbean on its way to Spain. Its historic center is one of the most beautiful and well-preserved in Colombia. We'll admire Popayán's stunning churches, which were built in the 17th and 18th centuries.
- We'll end the day with a meeting with a local woman who is working to ensure that the indigenous communities in the region have their rights recognized by the government.

## DAY 6: PEREIRA

B, L, D

- We'll depart early this morning and drive to the mountain town of Silvia. Every Tuesday, the indigenous Guambiano people come to the town's market to sell their produce. The Guambiano, one of the most traditional indigenous groups in the country, practice basic farming methods and still maintain their own language and traditional dress.



- Guambiano men and women dress similarly. Both wear hand-woven blue scarves or ponchos with pink fringe, and both wear bowler hats—the men's are typically black, the women's dark brown.
- We'll continue on to Cali, the region's capital city, for lunch at a local restaurant. Salsa music echoes through Cali's streets, and after lunch we'll enjoy a dance class and show before continuing on



## DAY 6: PEREIRA

B, L, D

to the heart of the country's so-called *eje cafetero*, or “coffee axis”—the best coffee-growing region of Colombia, if not the world. This beautiful landscape is dotted with coffee farms and poncho-clad coffee workers.

- We'll arrive in the late afternoon at the newly opened **Hotel Boutique Casa San Carlos**.
- We'll have dinner at La Trattoria restaurant.

## DAY 7: PEREIRA

B, L, D

- Colombia is the world's third-largest producer of coffee and the only country that grows Arabica beans exclusively. The bean was brought to Colombia in the early 18th century by Jesuit priests from Venezuela. The land around Pereira is perfect for the cultivation of coffee bushes: rolling overgrown hills between two mountain ranges with rich volcanic soils and great rivers like the Quindío. The heavy rainfall in the winter usually means that there are two coffee harvests each year. All beans are handpicked by farm workers who travel around the region working at different locations as the harvest matures. The fruit around the bean is removed before drying, which removes much of the acidity.



- We'll then travel south to the Hacienda San Alberto, where we'll learn about the coffee industry, including exporting and all the steps involved from growing to brewing. We'll sample coffee brewed with different methods while gazing out on the coffee groves that blanket the countryside.
- We'll lunch today at a scenic local restaurant.
- In the afternoon, we'll travel to Salento, a quaint town with colonial



## DAY 7: PEREIRA

B, L, D

architecture that will be our base for travel to the Cocora Valley. We'll take a gentle walk in the valley, which is filled with native wax palms, the tallest palm trees in the world.

- Bird life is a big draw in Colombia, which has more species (almost 1,900) than any other country, and the Cocora Valley is a perfect area for bird-watching. While we're here, we'll likely see motmots, which have tails like a pair of badminton racquets and brilliant turquoise eyebrows, plus bright-green jays and plenty of toucans.
- We'll return to Pereira for dinner.

## DAY 8: MEDELLÍN

B, L, D

- This morning, we'll take an early flight to Medellín, located deep in the fertile Aburrá Valley in the Andean highlands. Flying in to Medellín, we'll see the heart-stopping beauty of the city, which is nestled among rolling, verdant mountains. Surrounding towns and villages perch atop sheer slopes—some wooded, others carpeted with steep meadows. The heart of Medellín dates back to 1616, when Spanish colonists built the region's first houses in the El Poblado district in the southern part of the city. From there, the city spread north through the Aburrá Valley as it expanded. Historic buildings dot city center, including colonial gems like the La Veracruz, La Candelaria, and Saint Ignatius churches.
- Upon arrival, we'll drive a short distance to Comuna 13, formerly Medellín's most dangerous barrio. These days, Comuna 13 is an internationally renowned example of how innovative urban-regeneration projects can be used to transform and revitalize communities. Most recently, Medellín finished installing a series of outdoor escalators in the neighborhood to connect the hilly neighborhood with the rest of the city and provide safer, more efficient public transportation. Since the installation of the escalators, violence has practically vanished in this area due to a so-called "electric escalator" cease-fire between gangs in the area.
- We'll learn how public transit has transformed the Santo Domingo neighborhood, a once-blighted area that has come alive, in part thanks to a new aerial tramway. We'll transfer from the subway to the Metrocable at Acevedo station and admire the shiny black Biblioteca España along the way. We'll then switch to a faster, longer gondola line at Santo Domingo, where we'll soar over farms and eucalyptus and pine forests on the way to our destination, Parque Arví.
- After lunch, we'll drive to the Botanical Garden—the city's green lung. This 35-acre garden showcases Colombia's fauna and flora, with hundreds of plant species grouped into themed spaces like tropical forest, vertical garden, and an "Orquideorama," an architecturally dramatic space with over 400 orchid plants.

## DAY 8: MEDELLÍN

B, L, D

- On our drive to the hotel, we'll stop to see more of the groundbreaking work being done in the city, including the eco-árbol, a tall, high-tech tree-like structure that purifies 22,000 cubic meters of air every hour by removing carbon dioxide and traffic toxins. The structure was built by the ConTreeBute company and developed with help from Italian engineers.
- We'll then check into the **NH Collection Royal Medellín** hotel.
- We'll enjoy a lovely dinner this evening at the Café Colombo.

## DAY 9: CARTAGENA

B, L

- This morning, we'll meet with urban-planning consultant Jorge Melguizo to discuss the history of the drug trade in Colombia and the radical urban transformation of Medellín. Medellín is considered by many to be the epitome of the "Colombian miracle." In 2013, the city was hailed as the most innovative city in the world by the influential nonprofit Urban Land Institute—beating New York City and Tel Aviv to the title. Melguizo served as the former secretary of culture in Medellín from 2005 to 2009 and was instrumental in the city's inspirational makeover in the late 2000s.
- We'll also make a stop at the House of Memory museum.
- Later, we'll again admire the work of artist Fernando Botero, known for his paintings and sculptures of figures of exaggerated volume. His works provide a useful commentary on Medellín's sense of self and the body. In the southwest corner of the central Parque Berrio is his *Torso Femenino*, a bronze sculpture of a very inflated female form nicknamed La Gorda (*The Fat Lady*) by locals. Botero gave the sculpture to the city in 1987—the first of many donations by Botero, who was born here in 1932. On nearby Botero Plaza are more of his bronzes—of men, women, a cat, and a Roman soldier.
- We'll then stop at a former steel mill, built in the 1930s, which has reborn as MAMM, or the Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín, in 2009. Its staggering exhibition spaces showcase contemporary Colombian artists like Beatriz González, Carlos Rojas, and the hometown expressionist Débora Arango with astutely curated exhibitions. Be sure to check out its great gift store!
- We'll enjoy lunch at Bonuar, a smart bistro serving dishes like leek-wrapped whitefish.
- Later, we'll depart Medellín for a one-hour flight to Cartagena, the jewel in Colombia's crown and one of the most exquisite colonial cities in Latin America.





## DAY 9: CARTAGENA

B, L

***“The city, his city, stood unchanging on the edge of time: the same burning dry city of his nocturnal terrors and the solitary pleasures of puberty, where flowers rusted and salt corroded, where nothing had happened for four centuries except a slow aging among withered laurels....”***

- So Gabriel García Márquez described Cartagena, his adopted city for much of his life, in his novel *Love in the Time of Cholera*. The description largely stands the test of time, just as the city itself. The 16th-century colonial city still perches, walled and turreted, on the Caribbean shore. The bougainvillea tumbling from the balconies in the narrow streets still “rusts,” the salt still corrodes, and the air is still full of solitary pleasures.
- Upon arrival, we’ll transfer to the **Hotel Ananda**.
- In the late afternoon, we’ll take a short walk along Las Murallas, Cartagena’s fortified walls—five miles of impressive walled defenses that encircle the old town. The walls were constructed over two centuries to defend the city against marauding pirates, who coveted the huge stores of looted native treasures that Cartagena held while waiting for the twice-yearly visits of the Spanish galleons. In the 16th century alone, the city endured five pirate sieges. In 1741, a massive English sea assault by Edward Vernon failed to break its defenses. Combine this with Cartagena’s early declaration of independence in the 19th century, and you can see why Simón Bolívar named the city La Heroica.
- Dinner will be at your leisure tonight.

## DAY 10: CARTAGENA

B, L



## DAY 10: CARTAGENA

B, L

- We'll begin exploring the inner section of the Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage site, with a walking tour. We'll learn about Cartagena's colonial history and stroll through the immaculately restored colonial core of the city where the upper class lived. To the southwest is the large triangular Plaza de la Aduana, once the seat of power in colonial times. It is surrounded by stately colonial mansions, and a statue of Christopher Columbus presides in the center.
- Our walk will focus on Gabriel García Márquez, or Gabo as he is affectionately known. We'll stop at places that Gabo mentions in his works, including those that figure prominently in his novels *Love in the Time of Cholera*, *Of Love and Other Demons*, and *The General in His Labyrinth*. We'll also visit some of the places related to his own life, like his house in Cartagena and the university where he studied to be a lawyer, as well as the old offices of the newspaper where he commenced his career as a journalist. We'll also visit the Gabriel García Márquez Foundation offices to learn more about the foundation's work in supporting journalists.
- Later, we'll go to a private home to take a cooking class.
- After lunch, we'll visit the Castillo San Felipe de Barajas, the greatest fortress ever built by the Spaniards in any of their colonies. The original fort was commissioned in 1630 and was quite small. Construction resumed in 1657 on top of the 130-foot-high San Lázaro hill. In 1762, an extensive enlargement was undertaken, which resulted in the entire hill being covered over with this powerful bastion. It was truly impregnable and was never taken, despite numerous attempts to storm it. A complex system of tunnels connected strategic points of the fortress to distribute provisions and to facilitate evacuation. The tunnels were constructed in such a way that any noise reverberated all the way through them, making it







## DAY 10: CARTAGENA

B, L

possible to hear the slightest sound of the approaching enemy and also making it easy for internal communication.

- Dinner will be at your leisure.

## DAY 11: CARTAGENA

B, L, D

- This morning we'll visit the Bazarro market, which will afford us a glimpse into the day-to-day life of real *cartageneros*. Anthony Bourdain brought a small corner of the market to fame in his TV show *No Reservations*. It's not a trip for the fainthearted though—the smells and visual experiences are unique!
- We'll continue on to visit the City of Women, a drive about an hour from Cartagena. More than 6 million Colombians have been displaced from their homes since 1985, with more than half of them women, many of whom were widowed by the war and faced raising children alone. Patricia Guerrero, a lawyer from Bogotá, founded an organization called the League of Displaced Women. She successfully secured international funding for the organization to build a community known as the City of Women. It aims to restore the right to housing to some of the country's most vulnerable members and their families. This grassroots group is run by and for the women who are victims of the conflict between the government, right-wing paramilitaries, crime syndicates, and leftist armed rebel groups.
- We'll return to Cartagena for a free afternoon, and meet later to enjoy a lovely farewell dinner.

## DAY 12: DEPARTURE

- Transfer to the airport for flights to the United States.





## PRICING

- **DOUBLE (per person):** **\$6,390 + \$450 internal air**
- **SINGLE:** **\$7,590**

\*Rates are based on standard accommodations. Suites, superior rooms and other upgrades carry an additional fee.

## INCLUDED

- Accommodation, based on double occupancy, in hotels as listed
- Meals as listed in the itinerary, including bottled water
- Bottled water on the bus at all times
- All sightseeing and excursions in a private air-conditioned bus
- All private events and speakers (or similar) as listed
- All entrance fees listed
- Services of an English-speaking local tour manager who will travel with the group from the beginning to end
- Services of local guides in certain cities
- Cocktail reception at the hotel in Bogota
- Meeting rooms as listed
- Porterage
- Basic gratuity to tour manager, guides and bus drivers

## NOT INCLUDED

- International airfare to and from Colombia
- Internal airfare – listed as \$450
- Passport fees
- Excess luggage charges
- Travel insurance
- Items of a purely personal nature
- Any item not listed