



Cartagena & Colombia Travel Guide & Safety Tips!

Dear Family and Friends,

We are thrilled to be celebrating with you in Cartagena! To help you make the most of your time here, we've put together this guide with information on must-see historic sites and fun things to do in the city. You'll also find suggestions for other places to visit in Colombia if you're planning to extend your trip, along with some general recommendations and safety tips.

Cartagena de Indias

Cartagena de Indias is a colonial town located in the center of the northeastern Caribbean coast of Colombia.

With easy access, whether by air, land or sea, it is visited every year by thousands of tourists who find it as the perfect place to relax or work.

This charming city has a diverse hotel infrastructure, with mostly bilingual (English - Spanish) staff.

The official currency is the Colombian peso, which fluctuates at a representative rate relative to U.S. dollar.

Its average temperature is 30 degrees Celsius (90° F), and the beaches keep warm waters all year round. This is a great reason to take it into consideration as an excellent tourist destination in any season.

Cartagena de Indias was founded June 1, 1533 by Spanish conqueror Pedro de Heredia.

Cartagena's historic center was declared National Patrimony by Colombia in 1959 and a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1984.



Reasons to Love Cartagena

Walk through the passageway of the Torre del Reloj for a majestic entrance into the historical part of town, full of colonial architectural gems, all encompassed by the city walls - a masterpiece.

The 11 kilometers-with of high city walls that protect Cartagena are immense, impressive, visible in the distance and so striking up-close.

The locals are warm, friendly, excellent hosts, and more than happy to show you your way around.

Things to Do in Cartagena

1. The Walled City (Ciudad Amurallada)

A UNESCO-listed gem full of colonial architecture, lively plazas, and vibrant street life. Discover more on the official [!\[\]\(de95854c7ee024cfadc48187bbb781b2_img.jpg\) Colombia Travel site.](#)

2. San Felipe de Barajas Castle

This 17th-century fortress offers underground tunnels and panoramic views, an essential stop for history lovers. Venture through the mysterious, hidden tunnels that run within this impressive fortress, built by the Spanish in the 15th century as a defense against the pirates. It'll leave you breathless. [!\[\]\(6059a5aa8b4ca7bb793408023d6c6e42_img.jpg\) More info.](#)

3. Palacio de la Inquisición:

This palatial building is one of the most historically notable constructions of the colonial era. Here is where enemies of the Catholic church were condemned, hence the many torture instruments, documents and paintings from the Inquisition on display.

4. Square Towns / Plazas

Each has its charm, inviting you to relax and watch tag world go by. Plaza de San Diego sits between Hotel Sofitel Legend Santa Clara and the Escuela de Bellas Artes and has a particularly unique and bohemian feel to it.

5. Cuartel de Las Bóvedas:



What were once a military barracks where soldiers stored ammunitions is now a diverse and colorful market brimming with handicraft and souvenirs. Located between the Santa Clara and Santa Catalina forts, the colonial mystique of these 17th century vaults is undeniable.

6. Torre del Reloj / The Clock tower

The BBC declared the Torre del Reloj as one of the “world’s most beautiful clock towers”, with due reason; this eminent structure, built in 1631, grants access to the historic city, known as the ‘walled city, the most charming part of Cartagena.

7. Getsemaní & Graffiti Tours

Cartagena’s bohemian neighborhood is known for its colorful murals, shops, restaurants, cafes, street art, and lively energy. [🔗 More info](#)

**** If you're interested in exploring these places, make sure to join the Walking City Tour we've organized for you on Monday,**

March 16.

****Please RSVP on our website****

8. Boat Tour to the Rosario Islands

Turquoise Caribbean waters, coral reefs, and sandy beaches like Playa Blanca make this a must-see.

As part of the wedding festivities, we're excited to head here together for our Beach Day & Catamaran Event on Wednesday,

March 18!

****Please RSVP on our website****

9. Sunset at El Baluarte

Perched on the old city wall, this iconic spot offers food, cocktails, and spectacular sea views at golden hour. It's a must-see, and it happens to be right across the street from **Hotel Charleston Santa Teresa**, our wedding venue!



Other Places to Visit in Colombia

Discover the ultimate bucket list best tourist attractions in Colombia

1. **Tayrona National Natural Park (Santa Marta region)**

One of Colombia's most iconic natural reserves, Tayrona offers a unique mix of lush rainforest, secluded white-sand beaches, and ancient archaeological sites once inhabited by the Tayrona people. Visitors can hike through jungle trails to reach stunning spots like Cabo San Juan and explore eco-habitats rich in biodiversity. It's a true escape into nature.

Distance from Cartagena to Santa Marta: ~5 hours by road [!\[\]\(23d9fc146e83b5c3013cfa32c784f8d5_img.jpg\) Learn more](#)

2. **Ciudad Perdida (The Lost City)**

An epic adventure for trekkers, Ciudad Perdida (Teyuna) is an ancient city hidden deep in the Sierra Nevada mountains. Built around 800 CE, centuries before Machu Picchu, it can only be reached by a multi-day guided hike through rainforest, rivers, and Indigenous territory. It's physically demanding, but unforgettable. Only accessible by multi-day guided hike starting from Santa Marta (2-3h hours jeep ride) [!\[\]\(ec9132f1d27c8919987d92907322654d_img.jpg\) More info](#)

3. **San Andrés Island**

A Caribbean paradise known for its crystal-clear "Sea of Seven Colors," coral reefs, and laid-back island vibe. Ideal for snorkeling, diving, and beach hopping, San Andrés offers a mix of Creole culture, fresh seafood, and duty-free shopping.

Approximately 1.5-hour direct flight from Cartagena. [!\[\]\(dd161862f9164df98f62b726e9846241_img.jpg\) More Info](#)

4. **Coffee Region – Manizales, Pereira, Armenia, Salento & Filandia**

Rolling green hills blanketed with coffee plantations, cloud forests, and colorful colonial towns make up Colombia's Coffee Cultural Landscape, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Wander through the vibrant streets of Salento and Filandia, explore lively cities like Manizales, Pereira, and Armenia, and step into traditional fincas to learn the craft behind Colombia's most famous export. Between coffee tastings, soak in thermal hot springs, hike misty valleys dotted with wax palms, or simply take in sweeping views of the Andes.

[!\[\]\(626ce8ac21792b9405bfddfea8e0c96a_img.jpg\) Learn more](#)



5. **Medellín**

This is Juliana's hometown! Nicknamed the “City of Eternal Spring” for its wonderful weather year-round. Set in a lush valley surrounded by mountains, Medellín has transformed into one of Latin America's most dynamic cities. This City has reinvented itself as a hub of innovation, culture, and resilience. It features cable cars with mountain views, a thriving restaurant scene, and vibrant public art, especially in Comuna 13, where local murals and music tell stories of transformation. [!\[\]\(2e897e890e69d81eae4503a8342c36b0_img.jpg\) Discover more](#)

6. **Bogotá**

Colombia's capital is a lively blend of history, art, and modern city life. Explore La Candelaria's cobbled streets, visit the world-famous Gold Museum with its pre-Columbian treasures, and ride the funicular up Monserrate for sweeping views of the Andes. Bogotá also offers excellent cuisine, world-class galleries, and a growing nightlife scene. [!\[\]\(e2376d476d06eb31946dc01a69a4403a_img.jpg\) Visit Bogotá](#)

7. **Villa de Leyva**

Step back in time in this beautifully preserved colonial town, known for its massive cobblestone plaza, one of the largest in Latin America. Surrounded by mountains and wineries, Villa de Leyva offers boutique hotels, artisan shops, and nearby attractions like fossil museums and desert hikes. It's peaceful, romantic, and full of character. [!\[\]\(0aff635c4179ba9e710b00f4b01d3b20_img.jpg\) More info](#)

Travel Tips & Safety in Colombia

Colombia is a vibrant and welcoming country, and it's currently considered safe for tourism, especially in well-known destinations like Cartagena, Medellín, Bogotá, and the Coffee Region. Millions of international travelers visit every year to enjoy its culture, landscapes, and hospitality.

That said, as with any major tourist destination, it's important to stay aware and make smart choices. Here are a few recommendations to help you feel comfortable and confident during your trip:

Be mindful of your belongings

- Use a cross-body bag or backpack that zips closed.



- Keep your phone and valuables out of sight in crowded areas.
- Avoid leaving your belongings unattended at the beach or in restaurants.

Be cautious with unsolicited offers

- Politely decline street offers for massages, tours, or souvenirs if you're not interested.
- Be wary of people offering currency exchange or asking for donations on the street.

Use trusted transportation

- Use registered taxis (via hotel or apps like **Uber**, **Cabify**, **DiDi** or where available).
- Avoid hailing taxis off the street late at night.

Stay connected

Have WhatsApp installed.

****We'll use WhatsApp to share important information throughout the week, like times, transportation details and pick-up/drop-off times. Make sure to download the app so you don't miss any updates.**

- Consider getting a local SIM card or eSIM for data and maps.

Dress casually

- Avoid flashy jewelry or expensive-looking bags.

Payments

- Credit and debit cards are widely accepted. Carry a small amount of cash (Colombian pesos) for tips or local vendors.
- ATMs are safe to use inside banks or malls, avoid withdrawing on the street. Use the buddy system, have someone watch the surrounding area while you withdrawal.



Explore with awareness

- It's safe to walk in most tourist areas during the day.
- At night, stick to well-lit, busy streets or travel in groups.

Stay hydrated and cautious with food

- Stick to bottled or filtered water, especially when visiting beach destinations. The tap water in major cities is safe to drink.
- To avoid stomach issues, it's best to skip street food on the beach. If you do try street food in the city, stick to popular spots with lots of locals and high turnover for fresher, safer options.

If you're ever unsure, trust your instincts! Ask hotel staff or please reach out to us for any questions. Colombians are incredibly friendly and happy to help!

We hope you have an awesome time in Colombia!

With Love,

Juli & Todd

