



## Colombia Discovery

Latin America Flexible Tour | 17 Days | Physical Level 2

Bogota – Cali – Armenia – Medellin – Santa Marta – Cartagena

Colombia is Latin America's rising star, a charismatic country full of passion! Explore its treasures, from coffee and colonial splendour to Caribbean beaches and all that's in between on this exciting tour.

- Visit the unique Salt Cathedral
- Learn to Salsa dance
- Tour a coffee hacienda with tasting
- Hike the Caribbean coast of Tayrona Park
- Delight in colonial Cartagena
- Soar over Medellin via cable car



### Colombia Discovery inclusions:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- Accommodation as stated
- Meals as stated
- Touring with National Escort and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking Local Guides
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Safe and secure with AFTA, CATO and IATA

*The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, tipping, early check in or late checkout and other items not specified on the itinerary.*

### Latin America Flexible Tours:

Latin America tours are run in similar fashion to other Wendy Wu Tours in that you have a national escort travelling with the group for the entirety of the trip. Due to the distances covered and the specific guiding expertise needed for each individual place visited, you will also be accompanied by our dedicated and professional local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

The cost of your tour includes most meals, however on occasion you will have the opportunity for some free time around meal times to experience the local restaurants for yourself. At these times meals will be at your own expense. The meals which are included in your tour are clearly stated on each individual day of the itinerary below.

Our Latin America tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of this continent on an excellent value group tour whilst travelling with like-minded people. We are sure you will have a wonderful time - prepare to be immersed in the authentic charm of the countries you will visit.

### Physical Level 2:

All our tours feature a physical rating to help you select the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights. 'Colombia Discovery' is rated 2 on the physical level scale. A reasonable level of fitness is required but it's more about spending time on your feet rather than covering large distances. You'll be getting on and off coaches and boats, walking around the sights and climbing some steps.

- There will be sightseeing on foot for both short and extended periods of time
- Sightseeing will involve climbing quite a number of steps, often without handrails

Of course, our National Escorts and local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary. If you require any more information about the pace of our tours, please contact our reservations team who will be happy to answer your questions.

## Itinerary – Colombia Discovery

### Day 1: Fly to Bogota

Meals included: Dinner

Fly from Australia to Bogota, Colombia's vibrant capital, arriving the same day due to crossing the International Date Line. You will be met at the airport and transferred approximately an hour and half to your hotel. Enjoy a welcome dinner this evening.



### Day 2: Explore Bogota

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Explore the sights of the city. Enjoy a morning tour of the Candelaria neighbourhood, with a visit to the Gold Museum, one of the most fascinating museums in Latin America due to its 55,000 strong collection of gold pieces from Colombia's major pre-Hispanic cultures. Next, visit the historic centre at the Plaza de Bolivar with its impressive Cathedral. Have lunch in a local restaurant trying the local delicacy. This afternoon you will ride the cable car to Monserrate monastery, where you can enjoy spectacular views of the surrounding landscape.

#### Destination Information

**Bogota** - Colombia's beating heart, Bogota is an engaging and vibrant capital. The cultural epicentre is La Candelaria, home to museums, galleries, historic homes, churches and convents; nearly all of Bogota's traditional attractions are based here.

**Monserrate** - Monserrate is the hill that looms over Bogota and has been considered sacred since pre-Colombian times.

### Day 3: Salt Cathedral to Cali

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

This morning you will be transferred approximately 2 hours through La Sabana de Bogota to the town of Zipaquirá. Tour one of Colombia's most unusual attractions; the Salt Cathedral of Zipaquirá. Built 200 metres below ground in a salt mine and beautifully illuminated, this cavernous space is considered an outstanding example of modern Colombian architecture. This afternoon transfer to the airport for your flight to Cali, the hub of Colombia's salsa dancing scene. The flight is approximately 1 hr and 15 minutes, and on arrival you will be transferred an hour to your hotel.

#### Destination Information

**Cali** - Founded in 1536 by Sebastian de Belalcazar, Colombia's third largest city is known for its sugarcane, coffee, cotton and soybean production. Cali is also rich in Afro-Colombian heritage and is nicknamed among Colombians as The Branch of Heaven.

#### Day 4: Salsa Dancing in Cali

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Cali has a rich Afro-Colombian heritage and, as a city, exudes a lively, passionate atmosphere. Begin the day exploring the Sebastian de Belalcazar monument and the quirky El Gato del Rio park, before admiring the Baroque Cathedral and colonial stucco La Merced Church. Also visit Plaza de Caycedo, the Gobernación and others. Your tour of Cali will last approximately 4 hours. This afternoon, get your dancing shoes on for an exciting 2 hour salsa class, where you'll learn the basic moves of this classic Latin American dance.

##### Destination Information

**Sebastian de Belalcazar monument** – A monument to the city's founder, the statue overlooks the city of Cali.

**Salsa in Cali** – The salsa style in this region has become very popular worldwide and Cali is now known as the capital of Salsa as the World Festival of Salsa takes place here every year.

#### Day 5: Cali to Armenia

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Depart Cali this morning and drive for around 4 hours into Colombia's lush coffee region, to a hacienda for a half day coffee tour. With a welcome cup of java in hand, learn all about growing and processing of coffee. Enjoy an introductory talk, exercises in tasting and smelling coffee, and a tour of the factory. At the end of the tour, you'll not only have a greater appreciation for coffee but also a farewell brew to sip on. Later transfer approximately 1 hour to your hotel to check in for a 2 night stay.

##### Destination Information

**Armenia** - Named the 'miracle city' for its high growth and urban development in a brief period, Armenia is a familiar city surrounded by beautiful landscapes and interesting museums.

#### Day 6: Cocora Valley

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Travel one hour to the quaint agricultural town of Filandia. The tower viewpoint gives spectacular views over the surrounding countryside. Drive in Willys Jeeps for approximately 30 minutes into the beautiful landscapes of Cocora Valley. An eco-guide will introduce you to the Cocora Natural Reserve and lead you through the cloud forest, full of a diverse range of flora and fauna – keep an eye out for palma de cera, Colombia's national tree. Later, transfer to the quaint town of Salento, where you will have a walking tour to see the typical paisa architecture and visit the workshops of craftsmen and artisans. This day is at altitude of 2400 metres.



##### Destination Information

**Cocora Valley** – Located in the central cordillera of the Andean mountain, the valley is part of the Los Nevados National Park and is famous for its wax palms.

### Day 7: Armenia to Medellin

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Start the day amongst the beautiful blooms of Romelia orchid farm, which itself is set in a magnificent natural landscape. There are also plenty of tropical plants (some carnivorous!) to admire and colourful birds to spot. You'll also be able to enjoy a lovely lunch here before flying to the hillside city of Medellin.

### Day 8: Sightseeing in Medellin

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Set in a valley and backed by mountains, Colombia's second largest city is a leafy, progressive and creative metropolis. Have a full day tour here starting with a journey via cable car to Cerro Nutibara for a wonderful view over the city. Next, admire the sculptures of Colombian artist Fernando Botero. Visit the Metropolitan Cathedral before embarking on a fascinating walking tour of the comunas to see some of the city's street art.

#### Destination Information

**Medellin** – Nicknamed the City of Eternal Spring due to its year-round spring like climate, Medellin is the capital of the Antioquia province. The city boasts a cable car system that is modern and efficient, and locals commuting to work often find themselves sharing a car with tourists eager to get a glimpse of the city's impressive skyline. Medellin is also well known for its colourful street art, with certain neighbourhoods being decked in elaborate patterns and colours.

### Day 9: Explore Medellin

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Travel out of the city to explore the surrounding region. Stop at La Piedra El Peñol, a towering rock monolith that was once worshipped by the local indigenous community. The 700-step climb to the top is optional, but those who do it will be rewarded with views across a huge reservoir created by a hydroelectric dam built in the 1970s. Continue to the town of Guatape where you'll wander the streets lined with vividly coloured buildings. Return to Medellin for dinner this evening.



#### Destination Information

**La Piedra de El Peñol** - A towering rock monolith, La Piedra de El Peñol was once worshipped by the local indigenous community.

**Guatape** – Famous for its colourful buildings, cobbled streets and picturesque lake, Guatape is a town that is full of character and charm. Popular as a day trip with both locals and tourists alike, it is all too easy to fall in love with this lakeside town getaway.

### Day 10: Medellin to Santa Marta

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Depart Medellin and fly to the Caribbean seaside city of Santa Marta, in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains. You have a short orientation tour before check-in, and some time at leisure. You will have dinner in a local restaurant.

#### Destination Information

**Santa Marta** – In the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains, whose peaks can be seen from the beach, Santa Marta was founded in 1525, making it one of Latin America's oldest cities.

### Day 11: Tayrona National Park

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Explore the exotic coastline of the Parque Nacional Natural Tayrona today, winding through tropical forest before arriving at the *Sea of the Seven Waves*, a natural viewpoint from which to enjoy the natural landscape. Walk a short way alongside stretches of golden sand and lush rainforest to reach the boat which will take you on a cruise over to Playa Cristal, a beautiful beach where you can take a refreshing dip.



#### Destination Information

**Tayrona National Park** – From the foothills of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta to the Caribbean coast, the national park is packed with rainforest and rich biodiversity.

### Day 12: Santa Marta to Cartagena

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Travel 5 hours by road to the Caribbean port city of Cartagena, where the afternoon will be spent exploring the local area on a delicious street food tour.

#### Destination Information

**Cartagena** - Declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1984, Cartagena encapsulates all the charm of Spanish colonial architecture, with the old town being a joy to explore. Cartagena is also rich in history, with the British Royal Navy's attempted invasions between 1739 and 1748 ultimately ending in failure (thus forming a key turning point in Colombia's history). Nowadays, the city is a Caribbean tourist hub yet still retaining its colonial splendour.

### Day 13: Discover Cartagena

Meals included: Breakfast

Cartagena is Colombia's most popular destination. Vibrant and colourful, located on the Caribbean coast and home to a beautifully preserved UNSECO World Heritage-listed old town, it's easy to see why. This morning, your city tour will include stops at Bolivar Park, where you will learn of the history of the Inquisition Palace, the torture chambers and the many heretics who were imprisoned here. Also stop at San Felipe Fortress that was used to defend the city from piracy. Finally, visit the Convent and Church of San Pedro Claver in the *Ciudad Vieja* (old town).



#### Destination Information

**Inquisition Palace** – The museum’s grand façade is in sharp contrast to its history, having been used since the early 1700’s by the Holy Office of the Spanish Church to bring to persecute non-Catholics.

**San Felipe Fortress** – Having been sacked in 1586 by Francis Drake, the city made the decision to construct the iconic city walls and fortress to defend itself from future attacks from piracy and foreign powers.

**Museum of San Pedro Claver** – The museum houses information about San Pedro Claver, who was an advocate for the fair treatment of slaves in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and archaeological finds from the area.

#### Day 14: Rosario Islands

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Today you have an optional day tour to one of the dreamy islands that make up the coral archipelago of Rosario. Here you can relax on a stunning beach or, for the more active, kayak or snorkel (at your own expense) to explore its beauty further. You are free however to stay in Cartagena and continue exploring at your own pace.



#### Destination Information

**Rosario islands** - Part of the Corales del Rosario National Park, this archipelago is not only made up of 30 islands, but contains stunning Caribbean beaches and is under special government protection due to its protected status.

#### Days 15 - 17: Depart Cartagena

Meals included: Breakfast

Transfer to the airport according to your flight time and fly to Australia. Arrive home in 2 days due to crossing the International Date Line once again.

## Colombia Discovery Travel Information

### Visas

Australian passport holders currently do not require a visa to enter Colombia. Your passport needs to be valid for at least six months beyond your intended return date to Australia. Wendy Wu Tours does not provide a visa service for Worldwide tours. To stay up to date with the latest visa requirements, visit [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au)

### Important Information

Please be aware that when passing through immigration upon entering Colombia, you must state that your purpose of visiting the country is for tourism. You will then be marked as exempt from paying certain taxes at your hotels. Many hotels will also ask for a voluntary security tax upon check in, however this is discretionary.

### Insurance

It is a condition of booking with us that you take out suitable travel insurance. You must provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24-hour emergency contact number when you book with us or as soon as possible thereafter. These details will be available to your local guides should they be required. Wendy Wu Tours will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

### Altitude

On this tour you will be spending one day at altitude – in the Cocora Valley up to 2,400 metres. At this altitude, Altitude Sickness is a risk. Symptoms may include dizziness, fatigue, nausea and shortness of breath. It is recommended that travellers utilize their first day in high-altitude destinations to acclimatise. To help you acclimatise we have designed our tours to be at a slower pace with more convenience stops and more free time, during the first few days. Staying hydrated, eating light meals and following a very light schedule will all help. We recommend that any symptoms that are unusual should be brought to the attention of your guide. Your guide will be extremely well-trained in dealing with its effects – taking it easy and taking some time to acclimatise are the best ways to prevent and combat it. Serious cases, meaning that you must descend immediately, are rare. We have adapted the itinerary to make sure that your time at these heights is as relaxed and easy as possible.

There is medication that can help treat and prevent altitude sickness. Consult a doctor before taking any of these medications, before engaging in strenuous activity at high altitude and regarding any necessary vaccinations in plenty of time before travelling.

### Eating in Colombia

Colombian cuisine is extremely diverse and will vary depending on the region you're in. In some places you'll find delicacies like cooked ants or guinea pigs, whilst in others, you may come across dishes with less adventurous ingredients like rice, beans, plantain and tomatoes. Whilst most dishes do feature meat, there are plenty of vegetarian options. Along the coast, you'll find a great variety of seafood like fish and lobster, prepared with coconut milk sauces. Breakfast is quite important in Colombia and will consist of lots of juices made from all the fresh fruit available throughout Colombia – there are so many varieties that you most likely haven't heard of many yourself! A typical main meal is *ajjaco*, a chicken soup with a special herb *guasca*, partnered with *arepa*, a bread made from cornmeal, the traditional side dish to any meal. Whilst we strongly

recommend trying as many local dishes as possible, Colombia also has a wide range of international foods available.

Please note that Colombians eat later than you may be used to, with restaurants often only opening around 8pm or later. On occasion your evening meal may be organised for later than you would eat at home.

## Accommodation

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from business hotels to rainforest lodges. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality may exist between Australia and Latin America. All group tour hotels have private bathroom facilities and air conditioning where needed. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

## Clothing

On this tour, you will be travelling through various regions of Colombia with quite diverse climates especially in the Coffee Region – in Colombia you will experience all four seasons in one trip. An average moderate temperate in Bogota, humid and often damp in the Coffee region to the tropical climate in Cartagena. It is recommended to bring lots of layers including the following: T Shirts made of breathable materials, hiking trousers, with the option to turn into a shorts, a fleece jacket for colder parts and the evenings and a waterproof jacket as shell layer or a light rain jacket. The climate in Cartagena is tropical, humid and warm and we recommend wearing lightweight breathable clothing. A small back pack that fits into your main hand luggage to carry your daily essentials should also be taken.

## Transport

**Coaches:** Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers between destinations. Roads in Latin America have generally been improved over recent years, but please be aware traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. There may be sections of road where the surface may be comparatively bumpy but our drivers will do their utmost to lessen the impact.

**Planes:** Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines. Within Latin America flights are often changed multiple times before departure, both timings and flight numbers. The utmost care will be taken to ensure that your final documents will have the latest information, however your local guide will confirm this in destination. Boarding passes can be collected directly at the airport. The flights booked as part of your itinerary will always reflect the best timings to suit the touring itinerary, with direct flights wherever possible, however due to limited schedules some flights may require a fairly early departure or late arrival.

## Souvenirs

There are plenty of interesting bits and pieces to buy as souvenirs in Colombia, such as indigenous textiles, handicrafts and artworks, coffee and chocolate, carved wood and products made of alpaca wool, such as gloves, scarves and socks. There will be some opportunities during your tour to pick up souvenirs.

## Group Size

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more, there will usually be no more than 18 travellers in each Flexible group.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so.

## Tipping Policy

Tipping while on holiday is common in most parts of the world and Latin America is no exception. We will provide suggested tipping amounts with your final documents for your convenience, however tipping is entirely at your own discretion.

## Luggage

All travelers are limited to two items of luggage each, a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of five kilograms. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. Please note that authorities will only allow bottles onto the aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage may be confiscated.

## After your booking

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive an email with your confirmation invoice, along with a link to our website where you can find your visa information (if applicable) and other important information. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2 weeks prior to departure.

## Itinerary changes

It is our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate; in these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

## Optional Activities

Please note that any optional activities offered and booked in destination are not recommended or organised by Wendy Wu Tours and therefore should be undertaken at the customers' own risk. You may also be required to sign a waiver form before any of these such activities.

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