



Colombia Discovery

Go Beyond Tour | 17 Days | Physical Level 1

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)
- All accommodation
- Meals as stated
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escort (if your group is more than 10 passengers) or 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.

Go Beyond Tour:

Venture off the beaten track to explore fascinating destinations away from the tourist trail. You will discover the local culture in depth and see sights rarely witnessed by other travellers. These tours take you away from the comforts of home but will reward you with the experiences of a lifetime. These tours include:

- Walking through classic sites
- Unique cultural experiences and encounters
- Off the beaten track destinations
- More evenings at leisure for independent exploration

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.

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 1 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 will 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.

Country Profile: Colombia

Colombia is a nation emerging for international travellers after years of instability. It is one of South America's most fulfilling destinations. You will find a vibrant treasure-trove of remarkable landscapes, dotted with the vestiges of ancient civilisations and pleasant colonial influences in Cartagena. There is a fascinating cultural mix of Latino and Caribbean and the coffee is second-to-none.

Joining Your Tour

The tour is 17 days in duration including international flights.

Travellers booked on a 'Land Only' package, the price includes your arrival/departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour. Please advise your international flight times to reservations.

Join the tour on Day 1 in Bogota and end the tour on Day 15 in Cartagena. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

Itinerary Changes

It is our intention 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 maintaining the integrity of your trip.

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. On arrival, you will be welcomed at the airport by your Wendy Wu representative and transferred to your hotel. Transfer time is 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 two 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.



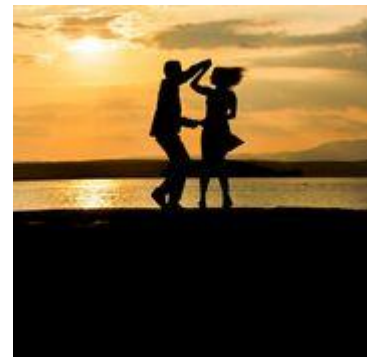
Destination Information

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. Enjoy a lunch of empanadas and tropical fruit juice in a local market. Your tour of Cali will last approximately four hours. This afternoon, get your dancing shoes on for an exciting two 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 four hours to a hacienda in Colombia's lush coffee region of Armenia 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 one hour to your hotel to check in for a two 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. La Colina Iluminda is a wooden lookout tower that 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 2,400 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 will also 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.



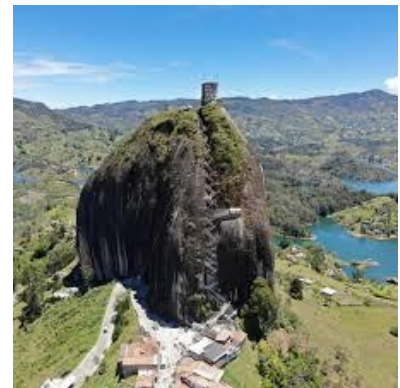
Destination Information

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

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 five 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 retains 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 1700s 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 17th 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 two 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. Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back into Australia. To stay up to date with the latest visa requirements, visit www.smartraveller.gov.au

Insurance

We strongly recommend that you take out a policy as soon as you pay your deposit. Wendy Wu Tours cannot in any way be made liable for any additional cost incurred by the customer on any tour due to the customer not having adequate travel insurance.

We also encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the original.

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 utilise 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 are in. In some places you will 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 will 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 *ajiaco*, 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.

Those with dietary requirements will be well catered for - just make sure to inform your booking agent of any specific requirements well in advance of your trip. Please be aware however that restaurants may not always be able to accommodate these. Gluten-free food may not be as readily available as in Australia.

All the restaurants we visit will be researched and inspected regularly to ensure that they follow the strictest health, cleanliness, and safety guidelines. All waiting staff will wear face masks and gloves and self-service buffets will be avoided in favour of à la carte dining, waiter-served meals, or waiter-assisted buffets. Hand sanitiser will be provided to the group before and after every food and beverage service.

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 Colombia. 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.

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

Local tipping is customary in Latin America. However, this can often lead to awkwardness in knowing when it is appropriate to tip and how much, as well as ensuring you have a suitable amount of change available at the time. For your convenience, with years of experiences in providing the best customer service, Wendy Wu Tours operates a kitty system on our Group Tours so your National Escort will look after this aspect of your trip for you. It also ensures that the amounts paid are reasonable for you but still fair for the local people. The amount is stated on each Group Tour page will be advised again on your final documentation. Tipping is in US Dollars and will be collected by your National Escort on arrival and distributed throughout the tour on your behalf. Any additional tipping on any of our tours is welcomed at your discretion. Further guidance for tipping contributions will be outlined in your final documentation.

We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy, but we do recognize that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour, we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour.

Packing list and Climate

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.

Please refer to our website or brochure for detailed temperature charts.

You will find a complete packing list and a helpful climate chart in the 'Suggested Packing List', which will be included in the pre-departure information link sent within your deposit documentation. Seasonal weather patterns can be quite unpredictable. Up to the minute information on worldwide weather can be found on www.weather.com

Luggage

All travellers 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.

Exchanging Cash

The unit of currency in Colombia is the Colombian Peso (COP). US Dollars can be easily exchanged provided notes are new and undamaged. We suggest exchanging your money before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be limited. Try and keep some small notes and coins on you, as on street stalls and in small shops they may not have the change to break up a high denomination note. If you decide to use US dollars, make sure they are in a good state (not ripped, etc.) or they will not be accepted. ATMs are common across Latin America and we recommend using an ATM inside a bank where possible. Please note currently there are restrictions on how much cash you can withdraw from ATMs in Argentina. Most major credit cards are widely accepted across the continent, please bear in mind the charges of your provider. Debit cards are also widely accepted but may have a limit to the amount of cash you can withdraw so consult your bank about this before travelling.

Personal Expenses & Optional Activities

Personal Expense - You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of AU\$250 per person, per week should be sufficient; however, for those that can't resist a bargain or may wish to participate in all of the optional excursions, consider allocating a higher amount.

Optional tours may be offered in each city you visit during your tour at an additional cost. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide

Vaccinations and Your Health

We recommend that you contact either your GP or Travelvax (1300 360 164) for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Travelvax has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful www.travelvax.com.au

Before You Leave

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with www.smartraveller.gov.au as in the event of an emergency, Australian Consular assistance will be more readily available. You can also access the Australian Government's travel advisory service for up to date information about your destination on the same website.

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.

Last updated: September 2020