

TOP 10 DESTINATIONS TO VISIT IN COLOMBIA



Colombia, famous for its Caribbean coast, spreads over one of the largest areas on the continent. It offers a plethora of fascinating destinations to visit. World-renowned beaches at the Caribbean Sea, cities with great historical heritage, and their traditional music filling the streets, there is not a single person that doesn't wish to visit Colombia at least once in their life. Tourism Review presents the top 10 must-see travel destinations in Colombia.

Cartagena

It is the quintessential tourist spot. Discover the famous ancient Walled City, beautiful beaches, islands within reach and spectacular sunsets. Declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, the city impresses visitors for the preservation of its colonial identity, with cobbled streets where time seems to have stopped, going from one square more beautiful than the other, and everything surrounded by colorful architecture.

Bogotá

Colombia's prosperous capital awarded the best destination in TripAdvisor's "Travelers' Choice Awards" under the "Top 25 Destinations - South America" category, captivates with its mix between modernity and history, where avant-garde design meet magical colonial architecture of the neighborhood La Candelaria. Dubbed as "The South American Athens", Bogotá surprises with its endless cultural offer and displays of artistic expression, being home to dozens of museums, art galleries, cultural centers, and massive free outdoor festivals.

Santa Marta

Among the beautiful landscapes of the Sierra Nevada and the Caribbean Sea, we find what is considered the oldest city in Colombia, and the second in South America, an enclave of history that still retains much of its colonial architecture. Ecotourism in national parks and paradise beaches are the greatest tourist attraction offered by one the most interesting destinations to visit, highlighting the Tayrona National Park, home of mangrove forests, seaweed meadows, coral reefs and some of the most beautiful beaches in the country.

Santa Fe de Antioquia

Declared a National Monument in 1960, it is another tourist place of Colombia that surprises with its historical wealth, captivating by its aspect of a city frozen in time, stone streets and old houses with exquisite balconies and decorated with wooden balustrades. The Puente de Occidente [Bridge of the West], built-in 1895, is one of its main sites of interest and admired by its impressive engineering for the time, which manages to connect Santa Fe with the neighboring city of Olaya, crossing the Cauca river through its 291 meters in length.

The Coffee Axis

The Colombian coffee growing axis or “The Coffee Axis” is a wonderful region of coffee plantations located between the departments of Caldas, Risaralda, Quindío and Tolima, characterized by its alpine landscapes, snowy peaks, green hills and agricultural valleys filled with dreamlike colonial towns and country estates where the main activities are rural tourism and coffee production. Salento is the city in the area with the most tourist activity, preserving part of its old colonial houses built using the traditional bahareque technique. Salento also leads to the spectacular landscapes of the Cocora Valley, a famous nature reserve, home of the tallest palm trees in the world.

Villa de Leyva

Also declared a National Monument, Villa de Leyva is considered one of the most beautiful villages in Colombia, mesmerizing travelers with its preserved colonial architecture, its huge Plaza Mayor, and centuries-old stone streets in an environment of mountain landscapes, lagoons and waterfalls. The colonial town is also treasured for its numerous paleontological discoveries, home of invaluable fossil finds that can be seen in the Paleontological Museum of Villa de Leyva. The museum has an impressive collection of more than 500 fossils, most of them approximately 130 million years old.

Popayán and the Tierradentro National Archeological Park

Known as “The White City”, Popayán is the capital of the Cauca department and another of the tourist destinations to visit in Colombia that is a must for history aficionados. The city is brimming with colonial architecture, and it is especially famous for the processions that take place during the Holy Week, a traditional celebration that has been declared intangible cultural heritage of humanity by UNESCO.

A must-see in Popayán is the Tierradentro National Archaeological Park, an archaeological treasure, home to huge stone sculptures and an extraordinary cluster of pre-Hispanic underground tombs built between 600 and 900 AD, with monumental enclaves such as the Aguacate, San Andrés, Segovia, El Duende, and El Tablon peaks.

Gorgona Island

Sailing from the municipality of Guapi one may reach Gorgona Island, a nature sanctuary declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO and considered one of the tourist places in Colombia with the most diverse flora and fauna. The landscapes offered by the island include wet forests, white sand beaches, and spectacular coral reefs – which are considered to house the greatest biodiversity in the Tropical Eastern Pacific. In addition to its natural beauties, Gorgona Island is a privileged destination to visit for birdwatching and marine wildlife watching, such as the famous humpback whales, which approach the coast from July to November to give birth.

Leticia

Leticia, entrance to the extraordinary beauty of the Amazon rainforest, is a multicultural city that technically connects with the Brazilian municipality of Tabatinga, home to numerous indigenous communities that manage and offer most tourist services of the region. It is possible to journey into the Amazon River from the city, entering the dense rainforest, a fascinating trip that crosses the most mega-diverse area in the world. On this tour, the fascinating stops are the Amacayacu National Natural Park, with its giant aquatic plants; and Lake Tarapoto, where tourists can see the unique

pink river dolphins.

Saint Andrew Island

Saint Andrew (or San Andrés) Island is an archipelago located in the Caribbean, in an area of incredible beauty declared a Biosphere Reserve by Unesco, where mangrove forests, palm trees, coral reefs, sea meadows, and paradise beaches are among the most beautiful ones in America.

San Andrés (nicknamed El Centro) is its capital and largest island, concentrating the largest hotel and entertainment offers on the archipelago, as well as famous enclaves for diving, snorkeling and water sports. Those looking for a quieter alternative with more exuberant yet less populated scenarios can opt for Providencia Island, or the smallest island of Santa Catalina, both accessible by a three-hour sail from San Andres.

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