

— A Travel Guide for Our Wedding Guests —

Colombia & Beyond

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Jardín Botánico de Medellín · Colombia

Everything you need to know before, during, and after our wedding celebrations in Colombia

COLOMBIA INSIDER TIPS & ETIQUETTE

The Door Rule

In Colombia, car doors are treated with great care. When getting out of an Uber, taxi, or private car, do not slam the door. Most drivers take great pride in their vehicles and a hard close is considered very rude. A gentle push until it clicks is all it takes.

Personal Security

Stay in recommended areas. In Medellín, El Poblado, Laureles, and Envigado are safe and ideal for tourists. Avoid wandering at night without local guidance. Use Uber at night — the standard and safest option after dark.

Keep valuables out of sight and avoid using your phone on unfamiliar streets at night. Keep a copy of your passport and leave the original in your hotel safe. Trust your instincts. Colombia is safe and welcoming, but common sense goes a long way.

Getting Around

Uber works perfectly throughout Colombia — easiest and most reliable. For day trips, hiring a private driver is comfortable, affordable, and perfect for groups.

Money & Payments

Currency is the Colombian Peso (COP). Exchange rates are very favourable for USD and EUR travellers. ATMs are widely available — always notify your bank before travelling. Most good restaurants and hotels accept credit cards; carry cash for markets and tips. Tipping 10% at restaurants is a good rule of thumb.

Reservations

Colombia's best restaurants fill fast — especially in December. Book top-priority dinners before you fly. WhatsApp is completely normal for reservations; most places prefer it to phone calls.

Weather in December

Medellín: Perfect. Warm, sunny days (~26°C / 79°F) and cool evenings. A light jacket is useful after dark.

Coffee Region: Warm days, cooler at altitude. Pack a light layer.

Cartagena: Hot and humid year-round — 30°C+ (86°F+). Light, breathable clothing is essential.

Río Claro / Jungle: Hot and tropical. Insect repellent is a must.

La Guajira: Extreme sun and heat. Sunscreen, a hat, and plenty of water are non-negotiable.

Language

Spanish is the official language. English is spoken at most hotels, restaurants, and tourist services.

¡Gracias! (Thank you) · Por favor (Please) · Muy rico (Delicious!) · ¡Salud! (Cheers!) · Provecho (Enjoy your meal)

Connectivity

Claro and Movistar are the main networks. A local SIM is cheap and easy to buy at the airport. WhatsApp is the primary communication tool in Colombia — everyone uses it for everything, including reservations and ride coordination.

MEDELLÍN & ANTIOQUIA

Medellín is your wedding base and one of the most exciting cities in Latin America. Sitting at 1,500m elevation in a lush valley, the city enjoys a perfect eternal-spring climate. A full Medellín city guide — restaurants, bars, hotels, and nightlife — is included with your wedding website.

DAY TRIPS FROM MEDELLÍN

Some of Colombia's most extraordinary places are just a few hours away. Our top recommendations for days before or after the wedding.

Guatapé & La Piedra del Peñol

About 1.5 hours from Medellín. One of the most spectacular landscapes in Colombia — a vast turquoise reservoir dotted with islands, set against emerald hills. Climb the 740 steps carved into La Piedra del Peñol for a 360° panoramic view that is genuinely breath-taking. Then wander through Guatapé, the most colourful town in the country, where every building facade is decorated with hand-sculpted tiles called *zócalos*. Don't miss lunch by the lake.

Worth 1–2 nights.

La Pausa Hotelbistró — Lakefront cabins with private jacuzzis, terrace bonfires, and stunning reservoir views. Fantastic restaurant and exceptional service. One of the best small hotels in Antioquia.

→ @lapausahotelbistro

The Brown — The first true luxury hotel in Guatapé — Marriott Autograph Collection. Perched directly above the reservoir with panoramic views, a swim-up bar, two restaurants, pools, and a rooftop terrace. Contemporary architecture with a strong sense of place. The most full-service option in the area.

→ @hotelthebrown

El Retiro & Parque Los Salados

Only 40 minutes from Medellín. A chic, artistic town with excellent restaurants, boutique shops, and a beautiful reservoir with hiking trails. Perfect half-day or full-day escape. Easily combined with El Carmen de Víbora.

El Carmen de Víbora — The Ceramic Town

Only 55 minutes east of Medellín, El Carmen de Víbora has been hand-painting ceramics since the late 19th century. Kaolin clay pieces painted with vivid floral motifs by hand in workshops that have operated for generations. The ceramics are everywhere — benches, fountains, building facades. Visit the open talleres to watch artisans at work and shop directly. The most meaningful souvenir you can bring home from Antioquia.

Perfect half-day. Combine with El Retiro for a full day in the Oriente.

Jardín

About 3.5 hours south of Medellín, Jardín is arguably the most beautiful pueblo in all of Colombia. Nestled among lush green mountains, its colonial architecture and spectacular central plaza feel like a fairy tale. Highlights include the Cueva del Esplendor — a waterfall that pours directly into a cave — and cable cars up the hillside for panoramic valley views.

Best as an overnight trip.

Río Claro — The Jungle

About 3 hours from Medellín (halfway to Bogotá). A private nature reserve where a crystal-clear river flows through a stunning marble canyon surrounded by tropical rainforest. Rafting, caving, zip-lining, birdwatching (toucans, macaws, blue morpho butterflies), and canyon hiking. Completely off-grid and magical. Plan to stay at least one night.

El Río Hotel — Seven luxury jungle suites including bamboo palapas and river-view rooms with jacuzzis. Exceptional staff, outstanding food, and guided experiences from caving to horseback riding. One of the most unique hotels in Colombia.

→ @elriohotel

Isla Clara — A beautiful eco-hotel in the Río Claro area, with rooms designed using natural materials — wood, stone, and jungle textures. A tranquil sanctuary of nature and comfort. For those who want to be completely immersed in the landscape.

→ @islaclara_hotel

Río Claro Reserva Natural — Rustic cabins directly within the marble canyon. All meals included. Sleeping to the sound of the river with howler monkeys and oilbirds for company.

→ @rioclaroreservanaturaloficial

Santa Fe de Antioquia, San Jerónimo & Sopetrán

About 1.5 hours northwest of Medellín. Santa Fe de Antioquia is the original colonial capital of the region — stunning cobblestoned streets and the famous Puente de Occidente, one of the oldest suspension bridges in Latin America. Bring your swimsuit — significantly hotter than Medellín.

Casa Candela — A mystical tropical retreat between San Jerónimo and Sopetrán. Lush gardens, infinity pool, spa, yoga, and exceptional food. One of the most atmospheric boutique stays in Antioquia.

→ @casacandela.co

La Gracia Hotel Boutique — A tropical oasis in San Jerónimo. Stunning pool, spa, and food by Repeat (one of Medellín's best restaurants). Chic, modern, and very Instagram-worthy.

→ @lagracia_co

Parque Arví

A great option if you only have a morning. Take the Metrocable gondola from the city up over the mountains into this massive natural reserve. Incredible views of Medellín from above, with great trails and local markets at the top.

CARTAGENA & THE CARIBBEAN COAST

The Jewel of the Indies. Cartagena is a UNESCO World Heritage city on the Caribbean coast — a perfectly preserved walled colonial city of pastel facades, flower-draped balconies, and warm sea air. It is magical, especially at night. Fly direct from Medellín in about 1 hour.

Tip: Stay inside the Walled City (Ciudad Amurallada) or the neighbourhood of Getsemaní for the best experience — access to everything on foot. Bocagrande (the beach strip) is more modern but lacks character.

RENTING A HOUSE FOR A GROUP

One of the best-kept secrets in Cartagena: the city has dozens of extraordinary colonial houses available for exclusive group rental. These houses range from intimate 4-bedroom villas to grand multi-floor colonial mansions. Most come with housekeeping, a cook, and concierge service. Search on Airbnb Luxe, onefinestay, or local agencies that specialise in Cartagena villas. Book well in advance — the best houses go months ahead of December.

WHERE TO STAY

The Grand Colonials — historic mansions, extraordinary architecture, impeccable service.

Sofitel Legend Santa Clara

The most iconic hotel in Colombia. A 17th-century Clarissian convent transformed into a grand colonial hotel — its cloistered pool courtyard is one of the most beautiful spaces in the country. 162 rooms, exceptional service, and an atmosphere unlike anywhere else on earth.

→ @sofitelsantaclara

Casa Pestagua

A 17th-century palace — one of the most beautiful hotels in Colombia. Eleven suites around a stunning central courtyard with a pool that feels like it belongs in a painting. Exceptional service and a celebrated restaurant.

→ @casapestagua

Hotel Casa San Agustín

A collection of colonial buildings united around an extraordinary courtyard and pool. Member of Leading Hotels of the World. Enormous rooms, impeccable service, and one of the most architecturally spectacular properties in the Walled City.

→ @hotelcasasanagustin

Hotel Santa Teresa

A beautifully converted colonial mansion with a rooftop pool, spa, and elegant interiors. Refined, personal, and superbly located within the Walled City.

→ @hotelsantateresactg

Chic & Design-Forward — character and style without the grand-hotel formality.

Tcherassi Hotel + Spa

Designed by Colombian fashion designer Silvia Tcherassi — 13 suites, bold aesthetic, rooftop pool, and an excellent spa. The most visually distinctive hotel in Cartagena.

→ @tcherassihotel

Casa Diluca

Only 11 rooms, and every one of them exceptional. Casa Diluca is an intimate 5-star boutique in the heart of the Historic Centre, designed with the aesthetic of the Italian Riviera — warm, elegant, and unlike anything else in Cartagena. Two rooftop pools, one of which looks directly onto the Cathedral of Santa Catalina — one of the most extraordinary views in the city. The rooftop bar at sunset is a destination in itself. Spa, Turkish bath, and some of the most attentive service in Cartagena. For couples and small groups who want beauty and intimacy above all else.

→ @casadilucacartagena

Casa Carolina

An intimate and exquisitely decorated boutique within the Walled City. Beautiful pool, carefully curated rooms, and the personal touch that only a small hotel can offer.

→ @casacarolina_cartagena

Anadá Hotel Boutique

Ten rooms, each different, set within a beautifully restored colonial home. Tranquil pool courtyard, exceptional personal service.

→ @anandahotelcartagena

El Marqués Hotel Boutique

Warm, impeccably styled, and intimate. For guests who want genuine character and care over scale.

→ @elmarqueshotel

Cool & Contemporary — Getseamaní: the hippest neighbourhood in Cartagena.

OSH Hotel

The coolest hotel in Getseamaní. Two outdoor pools, a rooftop bar with 360° views, Carta Ajena restaurant, and a design-forward atmosphere that feels entirely its own. Steps from the Clock Tower and everything in the Walled City on foot.

→ @oshhotelesoficial

For Families — a full resort experience on the beach.

Hotel Las Américas

Cartagena's premier family resort — a large beachfront complex just minutes from the Walled City with direct access to 400 metres of Caribbean beach. Two properties in one: the modern Torre del Mar and the more relaxed Casa de Playa. Eight pools including a water park for children, a Kids Club, five restaurants (including the Michelin-starred chef Ramón Freixa's Erre), full spa, and every activity you could need. The right choice if you're travelling with children or simply want a proper beach resort base.

→ @hotellasamericas

Tip: Book early. The best hotels have very few rooms and sell out months in advance. December in Cartagena is peak of peak.

DINNER

La Vitrola

A Cartagena institution and one of our favourites. Live jazz, classic Caribbean cuisine, and an atmosphere of enormous charm. One of those evenings you will never forget.

→ @lavitrola_cartagena

La Única

Mexican-inspired food with live music. Festive, fun, and great cocktails.

→ @launicacartagena

Harry Sasson

One of the most celebrated restaurants in Colombia. A classic for a reason.

→ @harrysassonrestaurante

Juan del Mar

Exceptional seafood in the heart of the Walled City. Book ahead.

→ @juandelmarcartagena

Carmen

The Cartagena sibling of the Medellín restaurant. Outstanding.

→ @carmencartagena

Mar y Zielo

Romantic rooftop dining with stunning sea views.

→ @maryzielo

Alma

Beautiful setting inside a colonial hotel. Refined Caribbean cooking.

→ @almarestaurantecartagena

Uma Cantina Peruana

Excellent Peruvian-Colombian fusion.

→ @umacantina

Niku

Japanese-inspired cuisine done very well.

→ @nikucartagena

CLUBS, BARS & NIGHTLIFE

Alquímico

A multi-level bar in a breath-taking colonial mansion. One of the best bars in Latin America. Non-negotiable.

→ @alquimico

La Movidá

The best club in Cartagena. Expect queues; expect an incredible night.

→ @lamovida_ctg

La Jugada

Lively club popular with locals and visitors alike.

→ @lajugadactg

Havana

The classic Cartagena salsa bar. Sweaty, joyful, completely unforgettable.

→ @havana_cartagena

Donde Fidel

Legendary salsa in Getsemaní. No tourists, all soul.

→ @dondefidelcartagena

Café del Mar

Iconic spot atop the ancient city walls. Perfect for sunset drinks.

→ @cafedelmarcartagena

Townhouse Rooftop

Chic cocktails with a cool crowd.

→ @townhousectg

Botika Santa Clara Bar

Elegant bar inside the legendary Santa Clara hotel.

→ @botikactg

BEACH CLUBS

Most of Cartagena's best beaches are a short boat ride to the Islas del Rosario or nearby Barú.

Private Boat Charter — Our Recommendation for Groups

Hire a private boat rather than joining a shared tour. You set the itinerary, choose your beach club stop, and have the run of the boat. Full-day charters include snorkelling, lunch, and transfers. Ask your hotel concierge — most Walled City hotels have trusted operators. Budget roughly USD 400–600 for the day, split easily between a group.

Makani

Our top pick. Beautiful, elegant, excellent food and atmosphere.

→ @makanibaru

Éteka

Stylish and chic. Very good atmosphere and food.

→ @eteka_baru

Fénix Beach

Lively and popular. Great for a fun, social day.

→ @fenixbeachbaru

Marlin Beach Club

Well-organised with great facilities.

→ @marlinbeachclub

Blue Apple

A beautiful boutique option on Barú island.

→ @blueapplebeach

Bora Bora Cartagena

Fun, lively beach club energy on the islands.

→ @boraboracartagena

STAYING ON THE ISLANDS

For those who want to go beyond a day trip and wake up to the Caribbean right outside their door, there are two very different options.

Sofitel Barú Cartagena Beach Resort — Our Top Pick

Colombia's first true luxury beach resort and one of the finest hotels in South America. Set on the pristine white-sand beaches of Isla Barú, a 25-minute boat ride from Cartagena, the Sofitel Barú is a LEED-certified eco-luxury resort that blends French elegance with Caribbean beauty in a way that feels entirely effortless. 187 rooms and suites, all with balconies or terraces facing the sea. Four pools, private beach with free cabanas, four restaurants, three beach bars, a world-class spa, and activities from sailing to snorkelling. Ranked among the best resorts in South America by Condé Nast Traveller 2024. If you want the beach without sacrificing luxury, this is the answer.

→ @sofitelbarucartagena

Islas del Rosario — Rent a Private Island

The Islas del Rosario are Colombia's most beautiful coral archipelago — a protected national park of crystalline water and white sand just 45–60 minutes by boat from Cartagena. Several of the smaller islands in the archipelago can be rented in their entirety. Some sleep 8, some sleep 20. The setting is extraordinary and the privacy is absolute. Search through Colombia Collections, Colombia Rents, or Airbnb Luxe for current availability and style — the options range from architect-designed retreats to boho-chic open-plan villas right on the water.

Tip: This works brilliantly for a group of wedding guests who want 2–3 nights together after the celebration. Coordinate with a concierge in Cartagena — most Walled City hotels know exactly who to call.

Punta Faro — Isla Múcura, Archipiélago de San Bernardo

A different kind of island entirely. Isla Múcura sits in the San Bernardo Archipelago, further south and more remote than the Islas del Rosario — about 2 hours by speedboat from Cartagena through open Caribbean water. Punta Faro is the island's legendary hotel: a family-owned retreat with 25 years of history, lush gardens of coconut palms, white sand beach, and an atmosphere of total disconnection that guests describe as “old Hawaii.” No pool (this is a protected marine park — the sea is your pool). All meals included, served buffet-style but with exceptional fresh Caribbean seafood. The hotel participates in a sea turtle conservation programme, and evenings bring bioluminescent plankton in the water. Book the junior suites for a private deck over the sea. For those who want to genuinely disappear.

→ @hotelpuntafaro

SHOPPING

Centro Comercial La Serrezuela

Upscale shopping in a beautifully converted colonial building.

St. Dom

Boutique concept store with great Colombian designers and artisan goods.

Aguadelon

For Colombian fashion and unique pieces to take home.

LA COSTA — SANTA MARTA, TAYRONA & BEYOND

Colombia's Caribbean coast stretches far beyond Cartagena. Santa Marta is the oldest city in South America and the gateway to two of the country's most extraordinary natural destinations: Tayrona National Park and the otherworldly desert of La Guajira. Fly from Medellín or Cartagena in under 1 hour.

TAYRONA NATIONAL PARK

One of the most spectacular national parks in South America — Caribbean beaches backed by dense tropical jungle, with the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta rising dramatically behind. Crystalline water, howler monkeys, and a landscape that genuinely feels like the edge of the world. Book park entry in advance online — spaces are limited, especially in December.

Tip: Tayrona requires a hike to reach its beaches — between 45 minutes and 2 hours depending on your destination. Go early, go prepared, and stay at least one night.

Tewimake

The finest hotel in the Tayrona region. A luxury eco-lodge on the banks of the Don Diego River, in the heart of the Sierra Nevada between Tayrona and Palomino. Seven private bungalows nestled into the jungle, each with a private plunge pool — reachable only by boat or ATV. Restaurant Zamú serves exceptional food using fresh regional ingredients. Genuinely extraordinary. Book well in advance.

→ @tewimakehotel

Villa Playa Tayrona

A boutique hotel on its own stretch of Caribbean beach near the park. One of the most high-end options in the area — known particularly for its exceptional cuisine. The pick for those who want both luxury and direct beach access without venturing deep into the jungle.

→ @villaplayatayrona

Senda Koguiwa

A beautifully crafted lodge only 5 minutes' walk from the Zaino entrance to the park. Thoughtfully designed with a connection to the natural environment and Indigenous heritage of the Sierra Nevada. For those who want to spend maximum time inside the park with comfortable accommodation to return to.

→ @sendakoguiwa

Quetzal Dorado Eco Lodge

Set on a hill at the gateway to the park with astonishing jungle and mountain views over the Tayrona canopy. Beautiful bungalows with private verandas and hammocks. One of the most praised lodges in the area for its views and warmth of service.

→ @quetzaldoradoecolodge

MOMPOX — WHERE MAGICAL REALISM WAS BORN

If Cartagena is Colombia's grand stage, Mompox is its most beautiful secret. A UNESCO World Heritage colonial town built on an island in the Magdalena River, Mompox was once one of the most important cities in South America — and then, as the river shifted and trade moved on, the world simply forgot it was there. Nothing changed. The colonial facades, the baroque churches, the cobblestoned alleyways along the riverfront — all exactly as they were three centuries ago.

Gabriel García Márquez was fascinated by Mompox. His wife went to school here, the couple courted here, and the town's dreamlike isolation and sense of time suspended informed the world of his novels more than almost any other place. It appears in *The General in His Labyrinth* — the story of Simón Bolívar's final river journey — and its atmosphere permeates the magical realism of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Walking its streets at dawn, before the heat sets in, feels like stepping directly into the pages of a novel.

Mompox is also famous for its extraordinary filigree jewellery — hand-crafted gold and silver work of astonishing delicacy, made in workshops that have been operating since the colonial era. Watch it being made and bring a piece home.

Tip: Mompox requires a small effort to reach — fly to Corozal or take the bus from Cartagena (about 6 hours), then a combination of road and river. The journey itself is part of the experience. Best as a 2-night detour. There are direct seasonal flights from Bogotá with Satena in high season.

Where to Stay

Hotel San Rafael — A lovingly restored 17th-century colonial mansion on the Albarrada — the iconic riverside avenue — on the northern corner of the Santa Bárbara square, with direct views over the Magdalena River. Eight-metre ceilings, two lush tropical gardens, a pool, and a beautiful air-conditioned library. Seven rooms, each with artisanal Colombian amenities and a breakfast made from fresh local produce. The staff arrange guided tours of the town and the river. The finest hotel in Mompox.

→ @sanrafaelmompox

LA GUAJIRA — THE DESERT AT THE EDGE OF SOUTH AMERICA

La Guajira is Colombia's most remote and otherworldly destination. A vast desert peninsula stretching to the northernmost point of South America, it is the ancestral home of the Wayuu people — a proud indigenous community whose textiles, culture, and way of life are unlike anything else on the continent.

Highlights include Cabo de la Vela (dramatic coastline and world-class kitesurfing), the sand dunes of Taroa, and Punta Gallinas — the northernmost tip of South America, accessible only by 4x4 and boat. The colours of the desert at sunset — terracotta, rose, and burnt orange against a turquoise Caribbean — are genuinely breath-taking.

Tip: La Guajira is an adventure, not a luxury trip. Accommodation is rustic — authentic Wayuu rancherías and basic eco-lodges. Bring cash (no ATMs beyond Riohacha), a hat, sunscreen, and an open mind. The best way to visit is with an organised 2–3 day tour from Santa Marta or Riohacha. December is one of the best times — dry season, clear roads, and the desert in full golden glory.

THE COFFEE REGION — EJE CAFETERO

If you have a few extra days, the Coffee Region is an absolute must. Fly into Pereira or Armenia (about 45 minutes from Medellín). This is the heart of Colombian coffee production — rolling green hills of banana trees and coffee plants, with charming colonial towns throughout.

Salento

The most charming town in the region. A beautiful main street lined with colourful shops and cafés.

→ *@salentotravel*

Valle de Cocora

A breath-taking valley home to the Wax Palm, Colombia's national tree and the tallest palm in the world (up to 60m). The iconic landscape that inspired Disney's Encanto. A 6-hour hike through cloud forest, suspension bridges, and hummingbird farms.

→ *@valledelcocora*

Filandia

A quieter alternative to Salento with equally gorgeous views and excellent artisan shops.

→ *@filandiaquindio*

Coffee Farm Tours

Almost every hotel can arrange a tour of a working farm. You will taste some of the best coffee of your life. Non-negotiable.

Hot Springs

Natural thermal springs near Pereira (Termales de Santa Rosa or San Vicente). Perfect after a day of hiking.

BARICHARA — COLOMBIA'S MOST BEAUTIFUL VILLAGE

A perfectly preserved colonial village of cobblestoned limestone streets, whitewashed walls, and terracotta rooftops in the Santander highlands that looks, impossibly, exactly as it did three centuries ago. Quieter and more authentic than anywhere else on this list. No crowds. No noise. Exceptional.

How to Get There

Fly Medellín or Bogotá to Bucaramanga (about 1 hour with LATAM or Avianca), then drive 2 hours through spectacular canyon landscapes. Best as a 2–3 night detour.

The Camino Real to Guane

A 4km hike through an ancient cactus-and-stone landscape to the neighbouring colonial village of Guane. One of the most beautiful short walks in Colombia.

Artisan Crafts

Famous for hand-carved stonework, toquilla straw hats, and handmade paper from the fique plant. The workshops are open to visitors.

La Palma de Vino

The best restaurant in town. Excellent food, beautiful terrace, and a wine list that will surprise you. Book ahead.

Where to Stay

Hotel Misión Santa Bárbara — The grandest option in town. A beautifully converted colonial building right on the main plaza, with a pool, excellent service, and rooms that open onto the kind of view you'll want to photograph every morning.

→ *@misionhotel*

SAN ANDRÉS & PROVIDENCIA — COLOMBIA'S CARIBBEAN ISLANDS

Sitting in the Caribbean Sea closer to Nicaragua than to Colombia, San Andrés and its quieter sister island Providencia are some of the most beautiful islands in the hemisphere. Famous for the “sea of seven colours” — the water shifts from turquoise to emerald to cobalt to navy depending on the depth and the light. Fly direct from Medellín, Bogotá, or Cartagena in 1.5 hours.

San Andrés has a distinctive Raisal culture — English-speaking, Afro-Caribbean, with a reggae and creole spirit that feels nothing like the Colombian mainland. Rent a buggy or motorbike and loop the island in an afternoon. Snorkel the reef, visit Johnny Cay, and eat fresh ceviche on the beach.

WHERE TO STAY — SAN ANDRÉS

Nattivo Collection Hotel

The finest hotel on San Andrés. A contemporary luxury property in the heart of the island, 3 minutes from the beach, with 99 rooms, four restaurants, rooftop bar with panoramic views, pool, and a design that pays genuine tribute to the island's culture. For those who want a polished, full-service experience.

→ *@nattivocollectionhotel*

Casa Las Palmas Hotel Boutique

A beautiful boutique set away from the bustle, surrounded by tropical gardens and a pool area of real charm. The chef Leo is spoken of reverently by returning guests, and the staff treat you like family. Four years of loyal return visitors say it all. The best intimate option on the island.

→ *@casalaspalmas_sanandres*

Casa Harb Hotel Boutique

A stylish retreat with Asian and Middle Eastern influences — canopy beds, dark wicker, an elegant pool. Excellent personal service and a short drive from the beach. For those who want design and quiet over resort bustle.

→ @casaharbhotel

PROVIDENCIA — THE WILD SISTER ISLAND

If San Andrés is Colombia's Caribbean, Providencia is its secret. A tiny volcanic island 90km to the north — even more remote, even more beautiful, with the third largest barrier reef in the world and almost no crowds. Fly from San Andrés in 20 minutes on a small propeller plane. For those who want to completely disappear.

Deep Blue Hotel — The only luxury boutique on Providencia and one of the most special small hotels in Colombia. Perched above the sea with extraordinary views of the reef and the island. A handful of rooms, exceptional personal service, and a location that will make you never want to leave.

→ @hoteldeepblueprovidence

CALI — THE CAPITAL OF SALSA

Cali is Colombia's most passionately itself city. Where Medellín reinvented itself and Cartagena traded on its beauty, Cali simply never stopped dancing. The salsa here — caleña style, quick-footed and joyful — is different from anywhere else in the world, and the city knows it. Worth a detour if you have the time, and a particularly spectacular one in late December.

Tip: The Feria de Cali runs December 25–30 — overlapping with our wedding week. One of the great street parties in South America: parades, live salsa orchestras, food, fireworks, and the entire city dancing in the streets. If you're extending your trip, timing it for the Feria is not a coincidence you'll regret. Fly from Medellín in 45 minutes or from Cartagena in 1 hour.

WHAT TO DO

Delirio — The Must-Do

Colombia's greatest show and reason enough to visit Cali on its own. A four-hour spectacle of salsa, acrobatics, live orchestras, and theatrical performance that fills a giant marquee tent with pure caleña energy. Performances happen only a handful of times a month. Book tickets well in advance — this sells out.

→ @deliriocali

La Topa Tolondra

The most famous salsa bar in Cali. Live bands, a packed floor, Caleños and visitors dancing together until dawn. Go on a weekday if you want space to actually dance; weekends are glorious chaos.

→ @latopatolondra

Zaperoco

The more local, more intimate alternative to La Topa. Where serious dancers go. Smaller floor, better crowd, and the kind of salsa that reminds you why Cali is Cali.

→ @zaperocobarcali

San Antonio & Granada

San Antonio is Cali's most charming neighbourhood — cobblestoned colonial streets, terraced cafés, live music drifting from doorways, and a hilltop church with panoramic views. Granada is the upscale dining and rooftop bar district. Both are essential.

WHERE TO STAY

Cali Marriott — The best-located luxury hotel in the city, right in Granada. Pool, spa, three restaurants, and a team that consistently gets praised for warmth. The right base for a Cali that mixes comfort with easy access to everything.

→ @marriottcali

InterContinental Cali — A Cali classic in a beautiful location above the city. Stunning views, large rooms, and an old-school grandeur that suits the city's character.

→ @intercontinentalcali

EL CHOCÓ — COLOMBIA'S PACIFIC WILD COAST

One of the most biodiverse and least-visited places on earth. El Chocó is Colombia's Pacific coast — a vast swath of rainforest, mangrove, and deserted black-sand beach where the jungle falls directly into the sea. There are no roads. Everything arrives by small plane or boat. And that is exactly the point.

The main destinations are Bahía Solano and Nuquí — tiny fishing villages accessible by 20-minute prop plane from Medellín or Bogotá. From there, everything is accessed by boat along a wild and jaw-dropping coastline. Activities include surfing pristine breaks with nobody else out, birdwatching (Chocó has one of the highest rates of endemism on earth), river swimming, waterfall hiking, and simply existing somewhere that feels like the world has not yet found.

Tip: Humpback whales migrate along this coast from June to October to give birth — one of the most extraordinary wildlife spectacles in the Americas. In December the whales are gone but the coast is equally beautiful and the rains have eased. This is not a luxury destination — it is a genuine wilderness experience. Embrace it.

El Almejal — Bahía Solano

The most established and comfortable eco-lodge on the Pacific coast. Set in El Valle between Bahía Solano and Nuquí, within its own private rainforest reserve directly on Almejal Beach. Ten family cabins and two larger safari-style superior rooms, all built sustainably with natural materials. Organic food, excellent guides, whale watching excursions, birdwatching, Utría National Park, and waterfalls falling directly onto the beach. The benchmark for this coast.

→ @ecolodgeelalmejal

Madreagua — Arusí, Nuquí

A beautifully conceived sustainable lodge in the tiny community of Arusí, just outside Nuquí. Built with genuine respect for the Chocó environment and the people who live in it, Madreagua offers a deeper connection to the region than most lodges — with native cooks preparing traditional Chocoan recipes using fresh fish and local ingredients, and activities designed

around the natural and cultural landscape. Warm, personal, and with a strong following among Colombian travellers who know the coast well.

→ @madreaguahotel

Morromico — Private Beach, Gulf of Tribugá

The most extraordinary lodge on the entire coast. A family-run ecolodge on its own private black-sand beach, built almost entirely from choibá hardwood, a 45-minute boat ride from Nuquí into the Gulf of Tribugá right beside Utría National Park. Four simple rooms and one private cabaña, no WiFi, no phone signal, no music. Just the sound of the Pacific and the jungle. Melissa and Pablo — the family who have run this place for over 30 years — are extraordinary guides and hosts. Freshwater waterfalls run directly into the beach. Morromico is consistently rated one of the best places to stay in all of Colombia. Book well in advance — it fills months ahead.

→ @morromico

The most enchanting lodge on the coast and one of the most special places in Colombia. A handful of cabins perched above the Pacific with views of the sea and the jungle canopy. Guests report watching whales breach from their rooms. Pure magic, in the words of nearly everyone who goes. Reached by boat from Nuquí. Small, intimate, and exceptional.

→ @puntabravanuqui

BOGOTÁ — A NOTE ON THE CAPITAL

Bogotá is a vast, dynamic, and genuinely fascinating city at 2,600m altitude — but our honest advice: if you're here for Colombia's beauty and warmth, Bogotá is not where to spend your limited nights. Traffic can be extraordinary. Journeys that look short on a map can take 1–2 hours in the city.

If you have a layover or early connection, book a hotel near El Dorado Airport (BOG) rather than in the city. The Courtyard by Marriott Bogotá Airport is a solid, comfortable option directly accessible from the terminal. That way you avoid the city entirely.

If you do decide to explore, stay in the north — Zona Rosa, Usaquén, or Chapinero — and budget more time than you think you'll need to get anywhere.

WORTH SEEING IN BOGOTÁ

Zipaquirá Salt Cathedral

About 1 hour north of Bogotá. A breath-taking cathedral built entirely inside a salt mine, 200 metres underground. One of Colombia's most extraordinary wonders.

Museo del Oro

One of the finest pre-Columbian gold collections in the world, in the heart of La Candelaria.

Montserrat

Cable car to the top of the mountain overlooking 8 million people. Unmissable views. Go in the morning for clear skies.

Usaquén

Best neighbourhood for Sunday brunch, a great flea market, dinner, and bars. This is where you want to be.

FOR THE MOST ADVENTUROUS: CAÑO CRISTALES

This is the bucket-list entry. Caño Cristales — the “River of Five Colours” or “Liquid Rainbow” — is considered by many to be the most beautiful river in the world. Located deep in the Sierra de La Macarena National Park, the river turns vivid shades of red, yellow, green, blue, and black due to a unique aquatic plant, *Macarenia clavigera*, that blooms in the clear water.

Tip: The famous colours peak June–November. In December (dry season), the colours are less vivid — but the canyon hiking, Ciudad de Piedra rock formations, and wildlife (pink river dolphins, macaws, monkeys) are still spectacular.

How to Get There

Fly to La Macarena from Bogotá or Medellín (seasonal direct flights). All visits require a park permit and a certified local guide, easily arranged on arrival.

Where to Stay

La Manigua Lodge — Set on the banks of the Guayabero River, 30 minutes upstream by wooden canoe from La Macarena. A stunning eco-lodge on stilts, solar-powered and surrounded by dense jungle. Private cabins, exceptional local food, wildlife spotting (pink dolphins, howler monkeys, toucans), and a cacao workshop. Community-based, supporting over 200 local families. One of the great eco-lodge experiences in South America — book well in advance.

→ @lamanigualodge

We cannot wait to celebrate with you.

¡Hasta Colombia!