



Boyacá, Santander & Norte de Santander

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Mercagán (p113)
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- ➔ Ristorante Al Cuoco (p111)
- ➔ Gringo Mike's (p106)
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Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Refugio La Roca (p116)
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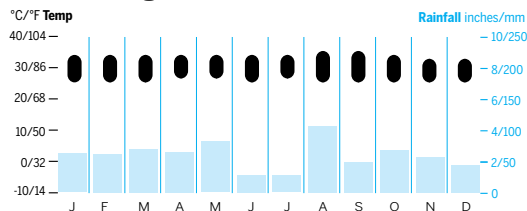
Why Go?

Boyacá, Santander and Norte de Santander together form one of the first areas settled by Spanish conquistadores and its calling as Colombia's heartland cannot be understated. It's here that the seeds of revolution were sowed, culminating in the victory at Puente de Boyacá that ultimately led to Colombia's independence.

Amid its deep gorges, fast-flowing rivers and soaring, snowcapped mountains, extreme is the game in Colombia's outdoor adventure capital, San Gil, and the glacial peaks of Parque Nacional Natural (PNN) El Cocuy. But it's the region's bucolic colonial villages evoking life inside a living museum that forge the most lasting impressions – immensely beautiful Villa de Leyva and its massive main plaza; fiercely authentic Monguá burrowed near the *páramo* of Lago de Tota, Colombia's largest lake; unadulterated Playa de Belén, saddled up against the eroded brownstone pedestals of Área Natural Única Los Estoraques; and cinematic, perfectly preserved Barichara.

When to Go

Bucaramanga



Jan The driest, clearest days in PNN El Cocuy, Colombia's most coveted park for trekking.

Feb & Mar The pre-Semana Santa (Holy Week) season has less crowds and full-bloom parks.

Dec Like elsewhere in Colombia, a festival of lights illuminates the region's charming villages.



Boyacá, Santander & Norte de Santander Highlights

- 1 Wander the colonial village of **Barichara** (p107).
- 2 Ogle Los Llanos from **Parque Nacional Natural (PNN) El Cocuy** (p101).
- 3 Juggle sophisticated restaurants, colonial cobblestones and prehistoric fossils in pristinely preserved **Villa de Leyva** (p85).
- 4 Tackle the epic Cañon del Río Suárez in **San Gil** (p103) via white-water rafting or extreme mountain biking.
- 5 Trek the extraordinary páramo wetlands around sky-high **Lago de Tota** (p94).
- 6 Paraglide over **Parque Nacional del Chicamocha** (p112).
- 7 Explore rock formations around the postcard-perfect **Playa de Belén** (p119).
- 8 Lose yourself in the color-coordinated, stuck-in-time village of **Monguí** (p95).
- 9 Take on **tejo** (p106) in San Gil, an alcohol-fueled game of pucks and explosions born in Boyacá.