



Venezuela

Includes »

Caracas	972
Archipiélago	
Los Roques	989
Mérida	999
Cueva del Guácharo....	1011
Isla de Margarita	1013
Ciudad Bolívar	1017
Salto Ángel (Angel Falls)	1021
Canaima	1022
Roraima	1024
Santa Elena de	
Uairén	1025
Puerto Ayacucho.....	1028

Best Adventures

- » Kitesurfing (p1015)
- » Catatumbo lightning (p1003)
- » Wildlife-watching (p1006)
- » Sand surfing (p996)
- » Warairarepano cable car (p990)

Places to Stay

- » Posada Casa Sol (p1002)
- » Casa Nova (p993)
- » Posada El Gallo (p996)
- » Posada La Casita (p1017)
- » Le Petit Jardin (p1009)

Why Go?

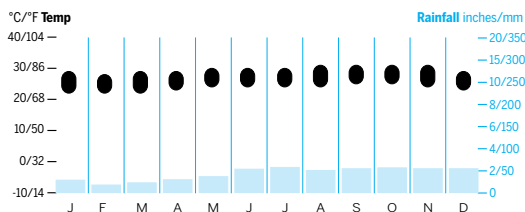
Venezuela is a land of stunning variety. The country has Andean peaks, endless Caribbean coastline, idyllic offshore islands, grasslands teeming with wildlife, the steamy Amazon and rolling savanna punctuated by flat-topped mountains called *tepuis*. Those seeking adventure will find hiking, snorkeling, scuba diving, kitesurfing, windsurfing, paragliding and more. Even better, most of these attractions lie within a one-day bus trip of each other.

Venezuela receives considerably fewer visitors than other major South American countries. Tourism infrastructure exists, but it's primarily geared toward domestic travelers. That said, Venezuelans love to have a good time, and that spirit is infectious.

After the death of President Hugo Chávez in March 2013, the future of his socialist 'Bolivarian Revolution' is uncertain. Regardless of who takes power, Venezuela – and indeed all of South America – will be a different place without this controversial and iconic leader.

When to Go

Caracas



May–Oct Salto Ángel and the Gran Sabana waterfalls gush, swollen with rainy season flow.

Oct & Nov Low season brings the best prices before the Christmas and New Year holidays.

Feb & Mar The country vacations during Carnival, with special festivals in some cities and towns.

Connections

Caracas is Venezuela's main transportation hub, with buses and flights radiating out to the entire country. There are four border crossings to Colombia, with the coastal Maracaibo to Maicao route being the most heavily used by foreign travelers, followed by the Andean route between San Antonio del Táchira and Cúcuta. Only one main road connects Brazil and Venezuela; it leads from Manaus through Boa Vista in Brazil, to the border crossing at Santa Elena de Uairén and continues to Ciudad Guayana. Brazil can also be accessed via remote southern Amazonas and onward to Manaus along the Río Negro. A weekly ferry connects Trinidad from Güiría on the Península de Paria, but no official crossings exist between Venezuela and Guyana.

ITINERARIES

One Week

One week will barely scratch the surface, but you can get a taste. Make your way to the colonial city of Ciudad Bolívar and explore the historical district along the mighty Río Orinoco. From there, fly to the lagoonside village of Canaima, skirting the iconic tabletop *tepui* mountains. Take a boat tour to the base of Salto Ángel (Angel Falls), and spend the night in the jungle. Then head to the Caribbean coast to clock in a few days of beach time in laid-back Puerto Colombia.

One Month

Now we're talking. Set sail for the Andes and learn to paraglide in Mérida, then make your way east across Los Llanos on a wildlife tour. Fly to Canaima and visit Salto Ángel from Ciudad Bolívar and follow up with an outdoor adventure to the Orinoco Delta or a week-long trek to Roraima. Then get some sand in your shoes as you sunbathe and snorkel in the islands of Parque Nacional Mochima.

Essential Food & Drink

- » **Arepá** A grilled corn pancake stuffed with cheese, beef or other fillings – ubiquitous fast food, and often eaten for breakfast
- » **Pabellón criollo** The Venezuelan national dish of shredded beef, black beans, rice and plantains
- » **Polar beer** If there was a national beverage, it would be these icy mini-bottles of brew
- » **Coffee** Aromatic espresso shots of homegrown liquid heaven, served in little plastic cups at the *panadería* (bakery)
- » **Chocolate** Not widely exported, Venezuelan chocolate is some of the best in the world

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Bolívar fuerte (BsF)
- » **Languages** Spanish; various indigenous
- » **Money** Lots of ATMs; inflation can create difficulties (see p1041)
- » **Visas** Not required for most nationalities
- » **Time** GMT minus 4½ hours

Fast Facts

- » **Area** 912,050 sq km
- » **Population** 27.2 million
- » **Capital** Caracas
- » **Emergency** ☎171
- » **Country code** ☎58

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	BsF6.47
Canada	C\$1	BsF6.24
Euro zone	€1	BsF8.40
New Zealand	NZ\$1	BsF5.78
UK	UK£1	BsF9.75
USA	US\$1	BsF6.30

Set Your Budget

- » **Budget lodging** BsF250
- » **Dinner main** BsF50
- » **Salto Ángel tour (Ciudad Bolívar)** from BsF2600

Resources

- » **Venezuela** (www.venezuelaturismo.gov.ve)
- » **Rumba Venezuela** (www.rumbavenezuela.com)
- » **Politics and human rights** (www.venezuela.blog.tumblr.com)