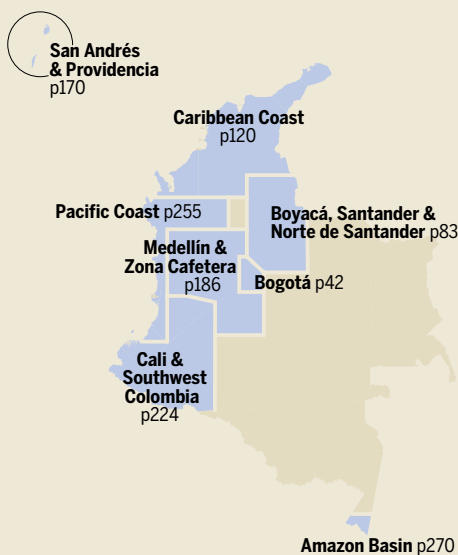




# Colombia



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

Alex Egerton, Tom Masters, Kevin Raub

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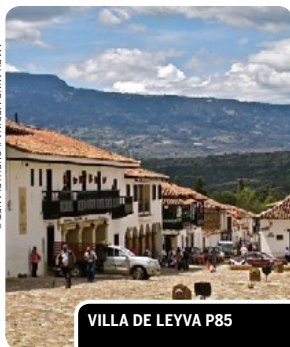
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# Itineraries



2  
WEEKS

## Bogotá to Bogotá

Welcome to Colombia! Cosmopolitan cities, looming mountains, colonial villages, verdant jungles and Caribbean beaches await. Pulling off this itinerary requires fifth gear and copious amounts of caffeine – good thing you’re in the land of coffee!

Take a day or two in **Bogotá**, admiring La Candelaria (its colonial center), the best of myriad museums, and world-class food and nightlife. Shake off the hangover a few hours north in the calming colonial villages of **Villa de Leyva** and **Barichara**, both miraculously preserved and picturesque. Take a day to walk the historic El Camino Real to **Guane**. Bus to San Gil to pick up the long bus ride to **Santa Marta**, from where you can access **Parque Nacional Natural (PNN) Tayrona** – linger on the park’s otherworldly beaches for a few days. Continue southwest along the Caribbean coast to **Cartagena**, Colombia’s crown jewel – a postcard-perfect old city chock full of colonial romance. It’s another long bus ride (or a quicker flight) to **Medellín**, where again you’re faced with Colombia on overdrive: culture, cuisine and Club Colombia, *paisa*-style. Raise a toast to El Dorado and exit via Bogotá, bowled-over by Colombia’s hospitality.

4  
WEEKS

## The See-(Almost)-Everything Route

The beauty of Colombia's diverse landscapes is that you can choose to fully immerse yourself in just one – Caribbean beaches, wildlife-rich jungle or soaring Andean highlands – or you can go for the full monty! Hit the ground running with three or four days in **Bogotá**, Colombia's Gotham, and don't miss its Museo del Oro, one of the continent's most fascinating museums, and the city's atmospheric colonial center, La Candelaria. From there head north to **Villa de Leyva**. Explore its cobbled streets and enjoy some colonial charm for a day or two, then visit **San Gil** for hiking and rafting, making time for nearby historic **Barichara**. Pass through Bucaramanga to catch a long-haul bus to **Santa Marta**. It's worth moving quicker than normal up to this point in order to free up some time for the sweaty, multiday trek to **Ciudad Perdida** or blissing-out for a day or two in the beach-riddled Parque Nacional Natural (PNN) Tayrona, Colombia's most popular national park. Next stop, **Cartagena** – you'll need a few days to fully indulge this exquisite colonial city.

From the Caribbean, take a bus or fly south to spend a week exploring **Medellín** and the Zona Cafetera. Enjoy some time in the nature reserves around **Manizales** before testing your fitness among the spectacular peaks of **PNN Los Nevados**. Next stop, the breathtaking **Valle de Cocora** outside Salento. Want to take a piece of Colombia home with you? Visit a coffee *finca* (farm) near Armenia and stock up on single-origin coffee beans direct from the source.

Spend the night in **Cali** to experience the city's hopping salsa joints. Travel down through colonial **Popayán** to the archaeological ruins at **San Agustín** and **Tierradentro**, two of the country's most important pre-Columbian sites worth a few days. Return to Bogotá via the startling **Desierto de la Tatacoa** and catch a flight to **Leticia**, where a wildly different Colombia exists. Spend a few days exploring the three Amazonian ecosystems: *terra firme* (dry), *várzea* (semi-flooded) and *igapó* (flooded) along the **Río Yavarí**, the best spot in Amazonia to observe wildlife in its natural habitat. Fly back to Bogotá, or, from Tabatinga across the Brazilian border from Leticia, head deeper into the Amazon via adventurous river-boat rides to Manaus (Brazil) or Iquitos (Peru).



## Complete Caribbean

This is the ultimate beach adventure; Colombia's northern coast and islands serve up slices of luminous Caribbean waters backed by an astonishing variety of landscapes.

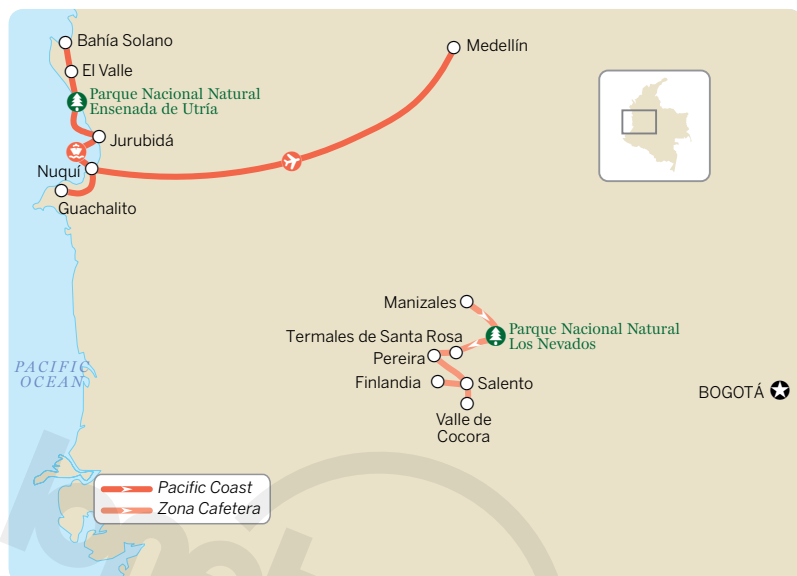
Start out east of Santa Marta with a few days at **Cabo de la Vela** on La Guajira Peninsula, a striking panorama where the desert meets the sea at the top of the continent. Don't skip South America's northernmost tip, **Punta Gallinas**, where you can sleep in a hammock and feast on local lobster near towering dunes somersaulting into remote beaches.

Heading southwest, make your way to lovely **Palomino**, where you'll find a crystal clear river running down from the majestic Sierra Nevada to a wild palm-studded beach. A short drive away is **Parque Nacional Natural (PNN) Tayrona**, very popular among aspiring beach bums. Giant boulders frame pretty coves and you can ride horses through the jungle to the ruins of a pre-Hispanic settlement. Spend a couple of days, then pass through **Santa Marta** and take a break from the heat with an overnight side-trip to the charming mountain town of **Minca**.

Next spend a leisurely couple of days exploring the colonial splendor of **Cartagena** before getting your tanning plans back on track with a trip to **Playa Blanca**. Hit the road again and make your way to **Tolú**, where you can take a trip in the mangroves before boarding a boat to the **Islas de San Bernardo** for three days of white sands, crystalline waters and tiny fishing communities.

Suitably relaxed, make the arduous journey southwest via Turbo to spend a few days in **Capurganá** and **Sapzurro**, two cute beachside neighbors surrounded by jungle right on the border with Panama, which offer excellent diving.

If you're hungry for more, take a flight via **Medellín** to **San Andrés** to experience Raizal culture with its British Caribbean roots. The next day, head over to **Providencia** to soak up the tranquility and reflect on your journey, while reclining beside some of Colombia's most idyllic stretches of sand.

2  
WEEKS

## Zona Cafetera

In this arabica-fueled region, hearts are pumped with caffeine as much as blood. Visiting coffee farms will keep you hyped for exploring the region's highlights. Start by spending a few days in the nature parks around **Manizales** – Los Yarumos, Recinto del Pensamiento and Reserva Ecológica Río Blanco, the latter a bird-watching favorite. Indulge in a coffee tour just outside town at Hacienda Venecia, for an excellent overview of all things coffee. Return to Manizales to organize a hiking trip among snow-covered volcanic peaks in **Parque Nacional Natural (PNN) Los Nevados**. Spend a night in the *páramo* (high-mountain plains) beside the mystical Laguna de Otún before heading down the mountain to **Termales de Santa Rosa** to reinvigorate tired muscles. Suitably revitalized, pass through **Pereira** to spend four days in coffee-crazy **Salento**, full of quaint charm and typical *bahareque* (adobe and reed) architecture. Take a classic jeep up to the impressive **Valle de Cocora**, one of Colombia's most beautiful half-day hikes. Finally, make the short trip across the highway for a couple of days in slow-paced **Finlandia** and toast your tour from its towering *mirador* (lookout), which offers some of the best views in coffee country.

10  
DAYS

## Pacific Coast

Colombia's ultimate off-the-beaten-path destination boasts tropical jungle, diving, whale-watching, world-class sportfishing and black-sand beaches. It isn't cheap – all transportation is by small plane and boat – but it's worth it. Start by flying in for a couple of days at **Bahía Solano**, where you can get used to the pace of El Chocó while lounging in a hammock at Punta Huíña. After a spot of diving or a jungle trek, take a taxi south for a night in **El Valle**, where in nesting season you can observe turtles laying eggs and swim beneath a thundering waterfall. Hike south to **Parque Nacional Natural (PNN) Ensenada de Utría** and take a row boat to the visitor center, where you can spend the night. During whale season you can spot the magnificent mammals playing in the inlet.

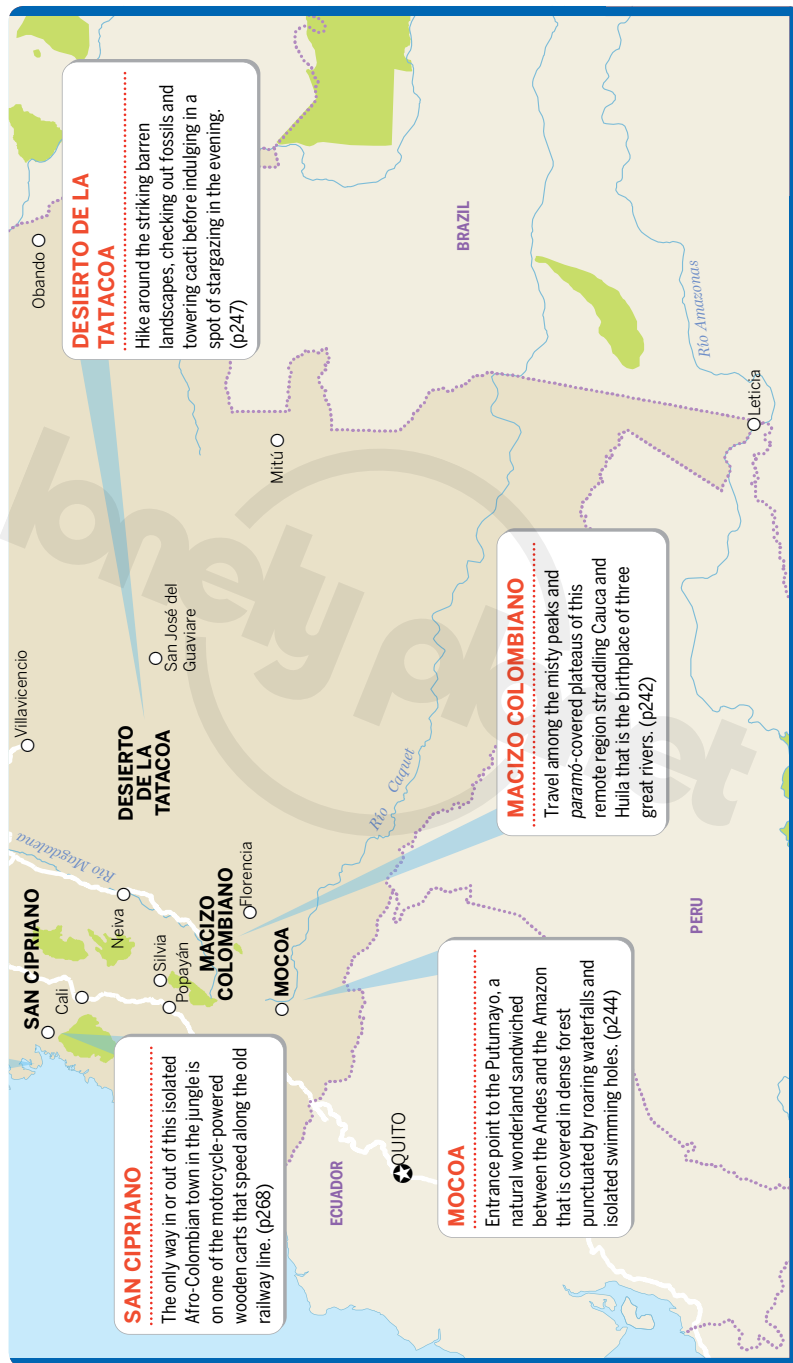
Next hire a boat to take you to the friendly village of **Jurubidá** and visit the thermal pools hidden in the jungle. Yet another boat will take you to **Nuquí** for an overnight stay. From here you can pick up transport to **Guachalito**, a top-class beach with several comfortable eco-lodges. After three days, return to Nuquí to take a quick flight back to Medellín.

## Colombia: Off the Beaten Track

0 0 250 miles 500 km









## OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

## OUR WRITERS



### Alex Egerton

**Medellín & Zona Cafetera, Cali & Southwest Colombia, Pacific Coast** A journalist by trade, Alex has worked in Latin America for more than a decade, regularly wandering the back roads from Mexico to Argentina. He is currently based in southern Colombia where he travels extensively and writes about the country for a variety of media. When not on the road researching guidebooks, you'll find him hiking around the remote landscapes of the upper Amazon, Chocó and

southern mountains or working on his *tejo* technique closer to home. Alex also wrote the *Itineraries*, *Colombia Outdoors* and *Regions at a Glance* chapters.

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[lonelyplanet.com/members/alexegeerton](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/alexegeerton)



### Tom Masters

**Caribbean Coast, San Andrés & Providencia, Amazon Basin** Having traveled all over Latin America as a backpacker and later as a Lonely Planet author, Tom was thrilled to finally get to write about Colombia, a country he first visited in 2006.

For this edition Tom traveled the Amazon Basin, dived and hiked in San Andrés & Providencia and drove almost 3000km up and down the Caribbean coastline, falling in love with Mompox, Sapzurro and Providencia in the process. You can

find more of his work at [www.tommasters.net](http://www.tommasters.net). Tom also wrote the *Need to Know*, *If You Like...* and *Month by Month* chapters, all of the *Understand* features, plus the *Safe Travel* chapter.

Read more about Tom at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/tommasters](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/tommasters)



### Kevin Raub

**Bogotá, Boyacá, Santander & Norte de Santander** Kevin Raub grew up in Atlanta and started his career as a music journalist in New York, working for *Men's Journal* and *Rolling Stone* magazines. He ditched the rock 'n' roll lifestyle for travel writing and moved to Brazil. He's done Colombia via government helicopter, on tour with DJ Paul Oakenfold and through jungles, over rivers and through woods. This is Kevin's 29th Lonely Planet guide. Follow him on Twitter

(@RaubOnTheRoad) Kevin also wrote the *Welcome to Colombia*, *Colombia's Top 21 Experiences*, *Directory* and *Transportation* chapters.

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