

Santa
Marta

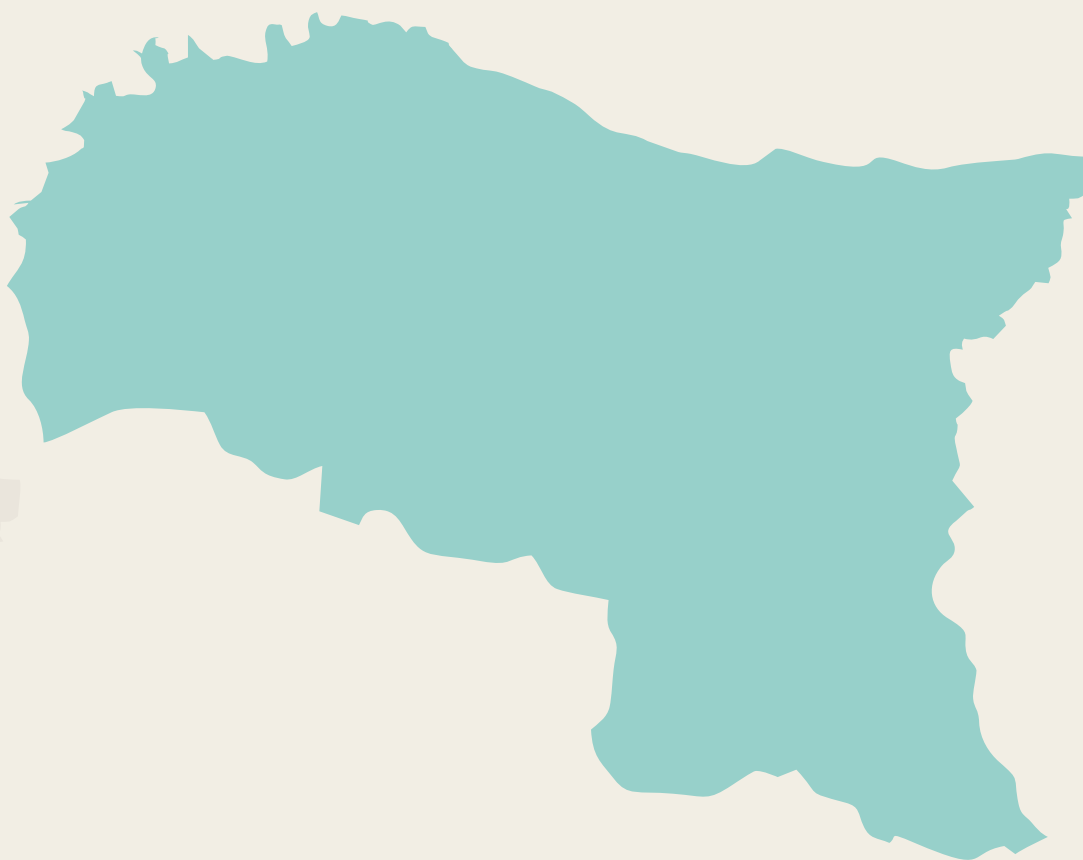
NATURALMENTE
MÁGICA

SANTA MARTA

TRAVEL GUIDE



*Santa
Marta*
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Santa Marta

TRAVEL GUIDE





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Welcome to Santa Marta

Welcome to the city between the Sierra and the sea. A territory privileged by nature, where Garcia Marquez's texts transcend and become reality with the magical biodiverse landscapes, history, and multiculturalism. With a Lost City in the middle of the mountains, which has the joy of being the heart of the world. Where the Sierra Nevada with the highest snow-capped peaks in the country meets the warm and crystalline waters of the Colombian Caribbean Sea in Tayrona Park.

A place where life is simple and joyful and ancestral traditions of the communities of the Sierra Nevada blend with artisanal fishing in Taganga,

green and blue waters and spectacular sunsets.

This guide collects the main attractions you can experience in the city, as well as less conventional alternatives that have emerged with the growth of tourism in Santa Marta. The experience of travelers, tours and ground research of the guide staff, publications and recommendations of official pages and reader-friendly formats (i.e., Lonely Planet, Culture Trip, etc.) have been taken as a reference to bring you the first version of the Santa Marta Travel Guide.

**Welcome to a naturally magic city.
Welcome to Santa Marta.**

Santa Marta Basics

Language / Spanish

Currency / Currency – Peso (\$ COP)

Time / GMT-5 / Eastern Standard Time

Visa

Generally not required for stays of up to 90 days. Citizens of certain countries need to present a tourist visa to gain entry. These can be processed at the Colombian embassies and consulates abroad. You can check if you need a visa or not in the link below. Check countries requiring visas at https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/en/procedures_services/visa/requirements.

High season

(Dec – Jan / Easter week / June – Aug / Oct recess week)

- Queues and crowds at beaches and destinations, especially in holidays.
- A good period for spontaneous cultural events and festivals in tourist areas.
- Lower intensity rainy season in July and August

Shoulder season

(May / Nov)

- Good deals on accommodation
- Weather is great for outdoor adventures

Low season

(Feb – Apr / Sept – Oct) (May / Nov)

- Easter and October recess week are high occupation periods
 - Rainy season in September and October
 - Affordable deals on accommodation
-



Money

Bringing money and goods into Colombia

In addition to their personal effects, each visitor is entitled to bring money and goods into Colombia. Whether or not these are tax-free will depend on the following conditions:

- Maximum of **US\$ 10,000** or equivalent in any other currency
- Items for family or personal use in non-commercial amounts up to **US\$ 1,500**
- Items for domestic, sports, art, professional or work-related use by the traveler, up to a maximum of 3 items of each type, with a value of up to **US\$ 2,500**

Cash

- The Colombian peso (**COP\$**) is the unit of currency in Colombia.
- Paper notes in circulation are the following: **COP\$2,000, \$5,000, \$10,000, \$20,000, \$50,000 and 100,000.**
- And the coins are **\$100, \$200, \$500, and \$1000.** \$50 coins are rarely used.
- Currency exchange is limited in the city, so use ATM cards (exchange rate won't vary substantially).
- Credit and debit cards can be used almost everywhere except for some rural areas. Visa and MasterCard are widely recognized.
- ATMs (cajeros) are everywhere and usually work with foreign cards (check transaction fees).
- Maximum cash withdrawal limits range from **\$400.000 to \$600.000** per transaction, but it varies.
- If you must use an ATM after dark, always use one inside a shopping mall or touristic places.
- Carry sufficient cash for payments in rural areas or outdoor activities.
- Passport is required for any banking transaction. You'll also have to provide a thumbprint.

VAT Refund

All foreign tourists are entitled to VAT refunds on products purchased, such as local crafts, toys, linens, household appliances, footwear, leather goods, jewelry, emeralds, etc.

↻ International transfers

- Efecty and Western Union are the main options for international transfers. Banking intermediation requires heavy paperwork and timing.
- Always carry photo identification and the numbered password they'll give the sender when you are on the receiving end.
- Both services have offices in all the major cities and most smaller towns.

\$ Bargaining

- Bargaining is limited to informal commerce, street stalls and food markets.
- Taxis have customary fixed fees but are not generally metered so bargaining may be possible in certain long-distance services.

👉 Tipping

Local regulation establishes that service charge, must be previously authorized by customers. Waiters in mid/high end restaurants usually ask you if they can add the 10% service charge to the bill.

Exchange rate (as of Dec. 20, 2021)

Colombian Peso	1 COP	inv. 1 COP
US Dollar	00250	4001.323045
Euro	00222	4512.035060
British Pound	00188	5305.411927
Indian Rupee	0.018927	52.835740
Australian Dollar	00350	2855.477028
Canadian Dollar	00323	3100.211308
Singapore Dollar	00341	2932.287548
Swiss Franc	00231	4331.089457
Malaysian Ringgit	01053	949.875514
Japanese Yen	0.028519	35.064940



Day to Day

\$ Daily costs (COP)

Budget: Less than COP\$100,000

- Dorm: \$25.000–\$50.000
- Lunch (corrientazo): \$10.000–15.000
- Bus ride: \$2.000
- Beer: \$0.75 - \$2

Midrange: \$100.000 – \$250.000

- Double room in midrange hotel: \$70.000–\$200.000
- Main dish in midrange and touristic restaurants: \$20.000–30.000
- Short taxi ride: \$6.000 – \$8.000
- Airport taxi: \$25.000 – \$35.000

Top end: More than COP\$250,000

- Double room in 4/5-star hotel: \$250.000 - \$800.000
- Multicourse meal with wine for two: \$250,000+
- Private day tours: \$350.000 - \$800.000
- One day boat rental: \$900.000 - \$2.000.000

Air traveling with pets

- Health certificate signed by a veterinarian within the last eight days.
- Current certificate of vaccination.
- Veterinarian certificate that guarantees that the animal has not presented symptoms of rabies in the 48 hours prior to embarkation.
- For domestic flight: internal travel certificate and vaccination certificate issued by a veterinarian.

Internet

- Most hotels and restaurants offer Wi-Fi.
- Internet is limited in rural areas. Download essential information to ensure availability

Mobile Phones

- Buy a Colombian SIM card for cheap and fast data almost anywhere in Colombia (\$10.000 + data plan).
- Local SIM cards can be used in unlocked international phones. The main operators are Claro, Movistar and Tigo.

Opening hours

Attendance hours are standard throughout the year:

- Banks: 8.30am–12 pm & 2.00–4.00pm. Exceptionally 8.00am – 12.00 pm on Saturdays
- Restaurants: 12.00 pm 10.00 pm / midnight on weekends
- Cafes: 9:00 am – 8:00 pm
- Clubs: 9:00 pm – 2:30 am
- Shops: 10:00 am – 8:00 pm



Day to Day

\$ Daily costs (COP)

Spanish language

- Like other Latin American countries, English is not widely spoken in Colombia.
- High end restaurants, tour operators and accommodations may have English customer service in main tourist areas
- As lonely planet guides mention, in the countryside and off the tourist track, you'll need to master a few basic phrases to travel around and improve your experience.
- Efforts to speak Spanish are appreciated by locals and are a nice way to connect.

Etiquette

- **Greetings** Shake hands and say hola (hello), buenos días (good morning), buenas tardes (good afternoon) or buenas noches (good evening) to strangers.
- **Introductions** When members of the opposite sex or two women meet it is customary to exchange a single kiss on the right cheek. Men shake hands. Use usted (you) in polite company; use tu (you) with friends and children.
- **Asking for help** Say disculpe (excuse me) to attract attention; use permiso (permission) when you want to pass by in a crowded space.

Important numbers

From outside Colombia, dial your international access code, Colombia's country code (57) then the number.

Colombia's country code / 57
International access code / 00
Directory assistance / 113
Ambulance, fire & police / 123

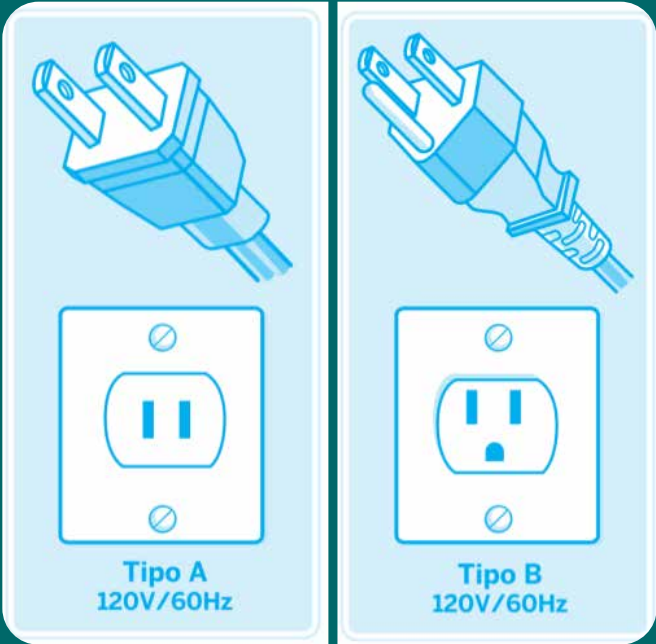
📋 Planning tips

Document Checklist

- Carry valid passport for at least six months past your arrival date.
- Check if your insurance covers all planned activities and northern coast region.
- Buy extreme-sports insurance.
- Yellow fever certificate is recommended.
- Inform your debit-/credit-card company to avoid security preventive blocks.
- Check Covid-19 regulations (see section below).

Bag essentials

- Sunscreen.
- Rain poncho.
- Mosquito repellent.
- Hiking/all-terrain footwear.
- A small day and waterproof pack.
- Flashlight.
- Combination lock.
- Medical kit.
- Universal electricity adapter



Day to Day

Planning tips

What to wear

- Santa Marta is very casual, and you'll encounter few dress-code restrictions.
- Social standard rules apply when referring to high end restaurants and religious places, among others. Bring a few nice shoes and outfits if you plan on fine dining or dancing the night away at any higher-end dance club.

What to wear

- Don't book tight connections to reach Santa Marta. Most international flights arrive through Bogota, Medellin, or Cali. You will need to book an extra flight to reach Santa Marta.
- Barranquilla and Cartagena also have international arrival airport. To transfer to Santa Marta, you can choose one of the following options (from Barranquilla / from Cartagena)

- Bus: **\$15.000 / \$30.000**
- Door to door van service: **\$30.000 / \$60.000**
- Taxi / private driver: **\$250.000 / \$500.000**
- Rent a car: one day rentals start at low end fees (**\$120.000**) and may include additional fees when the delivery destination is not the same as the pickup place.
- Always check flight prices when leaving Santa Marta. Local flight prices don't vary substantially when compared to intermunicipal bus tickets prices.

- Book in advanced. Popular activities such as the Ciudad Perdida trek and highly ranked accommodations fill up fast in high seasons.

Food



Due to its cultural diversity, Santa Marta has a wide gastronomic offer where African and Spanish heritages prevail, but you can also experience hints of Lebanese and Chinese flavors because of migrations. Fine dining restaurants have also followed international trends of developing new flavors by looking deep into one's roots, so local ingredients from the Sierra Nevada have been making their way into local dishes. But the most common food you will taste on your visit are snacks that can be found in most restaurants and street corners like empanadas, cayeye and arepa de huevo and the always present coconut rice dish, fried fish and patacones.



Music and dance

The mix of instruments, cultures, accents, and beliefs have consolidated a great musical tradition in the city. The main genres in the region are:

Vallenato originally from the Caribbean Coast - has become one of Colombia's favorite musical expressions. Farmers in the region are said to have inherited the traditions of Spanish and African immigrants, singing, and playing their instruments as they traveled around. Eventually, African, and indigenous instruments, such as bagpipe flutes, guacharaca, and drums, joined the European accordion to create a unique genre. Samarian international star, Carlos Vives has led efforts to blend vallenato with rock, pop, and other Caribbean Colombian ethnic rhythms.

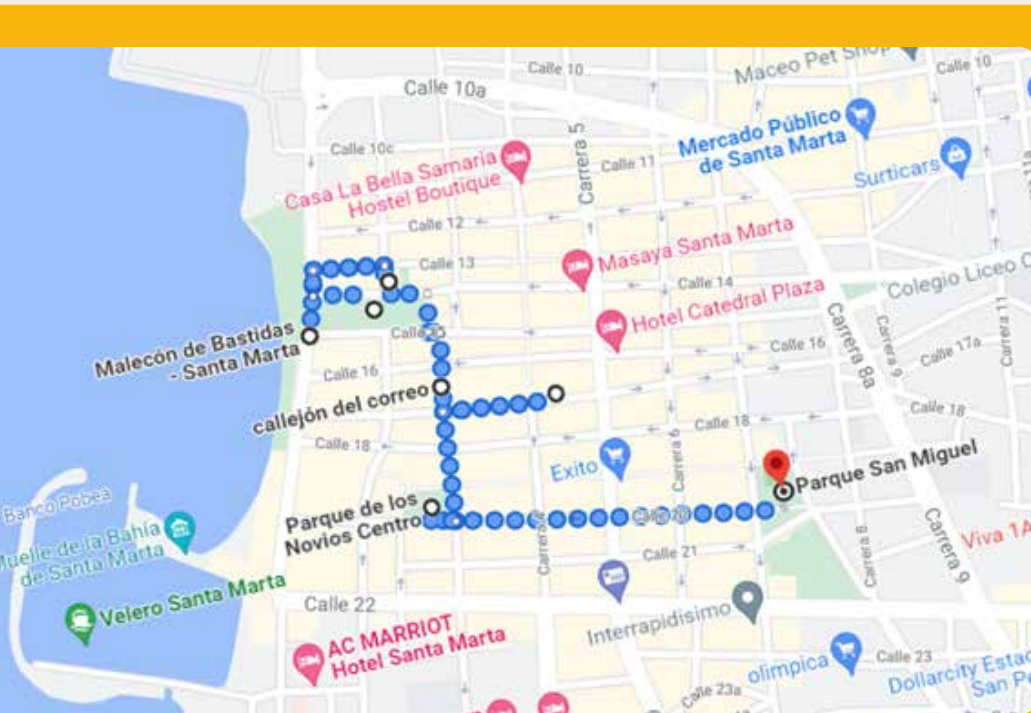
Cumbia is one of the most representative musical expressions of Colombia. Played with bagpipes, drums, maracas, and horns. A dance created by slaves to communicate with each other and express themselves. It is a dance of seduction in which the woman acts submissive while the man dances around her, seducing her.

La Puya Originally from Magdalena, dating from 1885, it is a lively, energetic, and very fast dance. There is not much choreography, as couples dance freely

Where to go

Around the city City Center

Quick one - day city center stroll



Malecon de la Bahía

Museo del Oro

Parque de Bolívar

Callejon del Correo

Catedral

Parque de los Novios

Parque San Miguel



**There are two main ways to stroll around
or take city center tours:**

 Bike rental - **\$10.000** per hour rental. **2-3 hours**

 Walking - Free walking tours (**recommend \$20.000 tip**)
or private paid tours (**\$40.000 +**)

Malecón de La Bahía

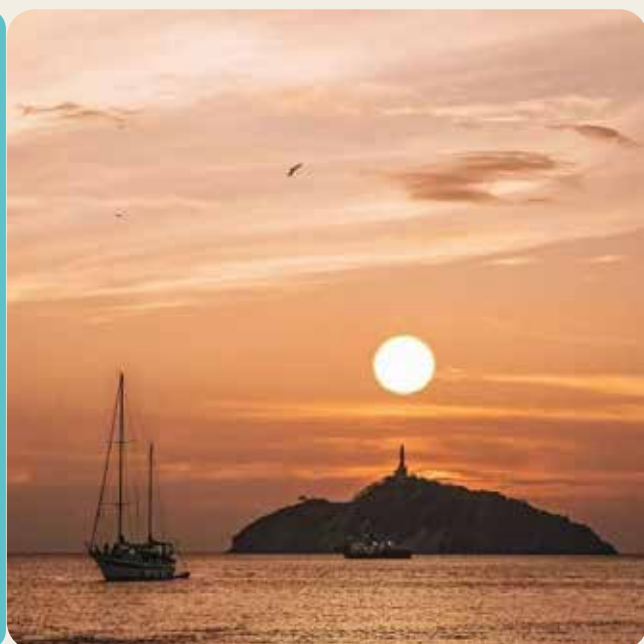
A must do plan in the city center is strolling around the Santa Marta Bay promenade, also known as Bastidas promenade, after the founder of the city, Rodrigo de Bastidas. The recently renovated Malecon is an important historical site and connecting artery of the city center.

With the recent works, artisans were relocated in modern stalls and selective restaurants and bars are set to open in the dining area. The promenade also includes children playground, 1.5km running circuit, urban gym, pet park and other amenities designed under universal standards.



The Malecon also leads to the Marine, which has nice gastronomy offer with informal bars and restaurants and is the sailing point for most high-end sailing tours or recreational / party boats. This is one of the most picturesque and best sunset spots in the city, with the “Morro” emerging in the horizon.

El Morro



El Morro is the guardian, custodian, and witness of the historical evolution of Santa Marta. For many locals, El Morro is the best representation of being “Samario” and main.

It is a rocky hill that during the conquest and the colony was used as a strategic means to preserve the city against pirate attacks. Today it is used as the seat of the lighthouse that guides ships entering and leaving the port.

El Morro is also considered a sacred site for the practice of rituals and worship of the indigenous communities that inhabit the Sierra Nevada.

Parque de Bolívar

The Plaza or Parque de Bolívar is the main square in Santa Marta, located in the central and oldest sector of the city.

The Plaza has great historical importance with buildings of architectural value, Libraries, the Tayrona Gold Museum, and monuments.

Considering Santa Marta is one of the first Spanish-founded cities in America and the oldest in Colombia (1525), its square-centric urban growth model led to the construction of main offices and houses around it.

The square has been called Plaza de Armas in the colonial period, Plaza de la Constitución after the independence and now, Plaza de Bolívar, as Simón Bolívar's corpse was veiled in a burning chamber in the Tayrona Museum. The square has an equestrian statue of Bolívar and a four-face Fountain of Italian precedence. Nowadays, the square is used to host cultural, artistic, and political events (Cromo 500).



Tairona Museo del Oro

The Tairona Museo del Oro is in the colonial Customs House (Casa de la Aduana), a branch of Bogotá's Museo del Oro, containing pre-colonial tools and remains. The museum reflects in the lives and stories of people from the Sierra Nevada and Magdalena over the last 2,000 years (BanRep Museo del Oro Tairona), through four thematic galleries:

Pre-Hispanic societies gallery describes the people that inhabited the Sierra Nevada during the Nahuange (200 to 900 A.D.) and Tairona (900 to 1600 A.D.)

People of Magdalena gallery is a journey through present-day Magdalena province and its people.

Stories from the Casa de la Aduana gallery tells of the foundation of the city, of battles and pirates, social customs, and of the recent times of the port, the railway, bananas, and tourism.

Bolívar was here is the gallery devoted to Simón Bolívar, who died in Santa Marta in 1830.



Must know

- Free entrance for all.
- The permanent exhibition is fully bilingual (Spanish + English).
- Schedule:

Open Tuesday to Saturday: **9 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

Sundays and Public Holidays: **10 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

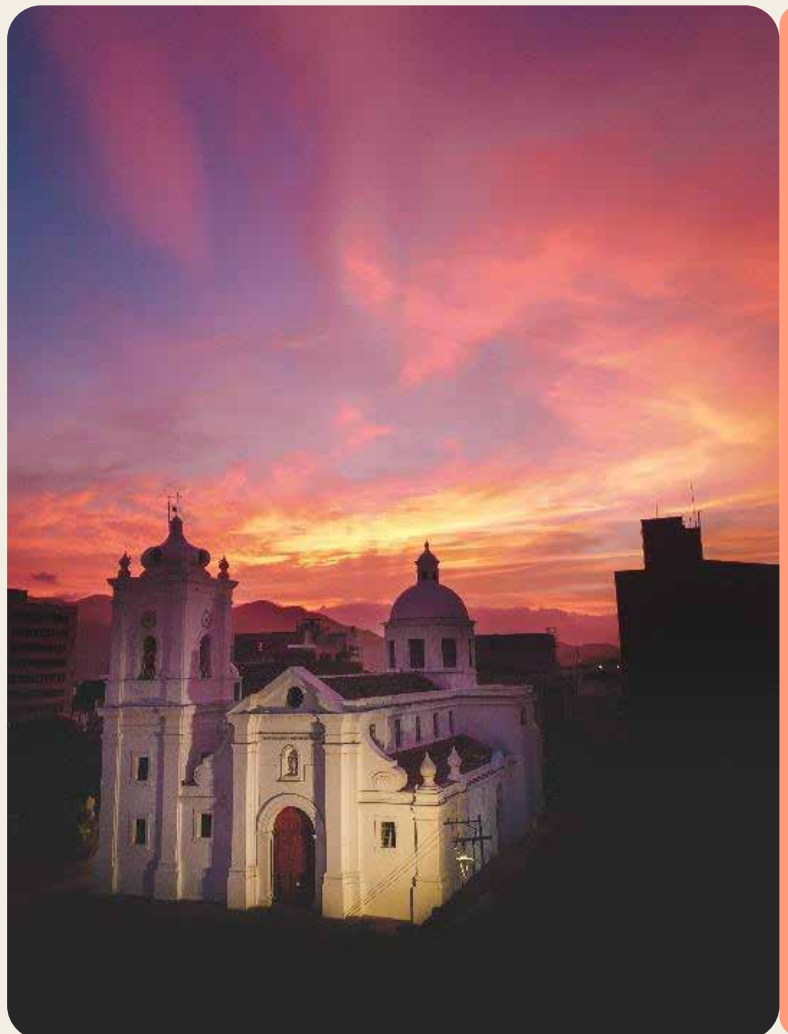
Closed on Mondays, including: **public holiday Mondays**

Cathedral

The Santa Marta Cathedral is in the Historic Center of Santa Marta surrounded by small restaurants and other colonial buildings. It is three blocks east from the main beach and the International Marina.

The Cathedral was built in 1765 and took over 30 more years to complete due to constant pirate attacks that resulted in the town being burnt down on more than 20 occasions. It has now been renovated on many occasions over the past centuries giving it a mix of several architectural styles.

Other than mass and a cool midday break from the city's heat, you can head inside for a glimpse into the city's history through the various plaques on the walls. It also stores the ashes of the founder of Santa Marta, Rodrigo de Bastidas, as well as the heart of Liberator Simón Bolívar. The military leader was first buried in the church before his remains were transferred to Venezuela.



Callejón del Correo



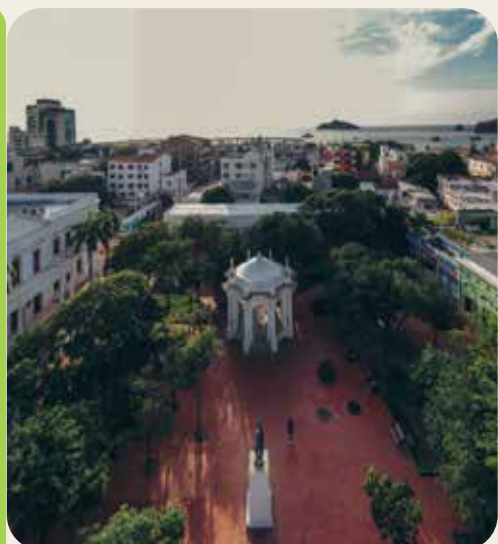
This pedestrian corridor that connects El Parque de los Novios Park with el Parque de Bolívar, between 15th and 17th streets, has nice, varied restaurants for all tastes. This photogenic place is the favorite spot for dinner and a few beers before continuing the night in the Parque de los Novios. Adorned with lights, posters, flags, and street performers, it is a corridor full of life and good energy.

You can find nice dishes and entries starting at **\$20.000+** and beer at **\$8.000**.

Santa Marta Theater

The Theater was inaugurated in 1949, designed by Cuban Manuel Carrera one of the most representative Latin American architects of the 20th century. His architecture represents in the Caribbean a symbol of the 'Art Deco' style. At the time of its opening, it became an innovative urban icon and came to represent the identity of the Historic Center.

The theater was rebuilt and reopened in November 2021 and has a permanent free cultural agenda to offer.



Parque de los Novios

Los Novios Santa Marta Park is one of the most emblematic places in the city to enjoy the best nightlife, due to the variety of restaurants and bars found there.

This tourist place is in the Historic Center of Santa Marta, just two blocks from the Bay of Santa Marta and 3 blocks from the Basilica Cathedral of Santa Marta.

The park is full of restaurants with terraces, hotels, vendors, and street artists that make the park the most socially active and main nightlife scene of the city.



Pescaíto

Pescaíto is just a 5-minute drive away from the City Center. In October 2021, the ‘Tras la Perla’ Foundation launched the ‘Pescaíto Days’ Festival in Barrio Pescaíto, a traditional neighborhood from which important sports and musical figures have emerged. Music, games, gastronomy, culture, sports, creativity, among others, were part of two days of cultural and social encounters.



The festival, and recent infrastructure works are turning Pescaíto into an emerging sport and cultural touristic destination.

City Market

Pescaíto is just a 5-minute drive away from the City Center. In October 2021, the ‘Tras la Perla’ Foundation launched the ‘Pescaíto Days’ Festival in Barrio Pescaíto, a traditional neighborhood from which important sports and musical figures have emerged.

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15.

Quinta de San Pedro

This colonial hacienda from the XVII century was Simón Bolívar's home during his final days. Today, it is an open museum that allows visitors to understand his life and work through art from the nations he freed. Guided tours include stepping into the former hacienda, where you can see Bolívar's bed and personal belongings at the time of his death in 1830, a walk through the botanical garden and the Modern Art Museum.

With over 150 species, the botanical garden offers visitors the chance of seeing some of the most beautiful and representative flora of the northern parts of the country. It has become a teaching ground for investigation purposes and conversational education.

In your final stop, visit the Altar de la Patria, or Nation's Altar, a monument made of marble built in 1930 to honor the Bolívar on the first centenary of his death and take a few minutes to walk through the picturesque Plaza de Banderas, where all the flags of the Americas are present as an expression of Bolívar's hopes and dreams of continental unity.



Entry hours

- Low season / 09:00 a.m. at 4:30 p.m.
- High season / 09:00 a.m. at 5:30 p.m.
- December 24 and 31 / 09:00 a.m. at 1:00 p.m.

Fees

Kids 0 to 5 (Nationals and Foreigners) Free

- Kids 6 to 12 / \$15.000
- Nationals 13+ / \$17.000
- Foreigners 13+ / \$23.000

Active and retired military / Free

The guidance service is offered by students as part of School Tourism Practices or Social Service, which are mandatory to earn a bachelor's degree or college student volunteers. No fee is charged but direct tips to volunteers is strongly encouraged.

📍 How to get there

La Quinta is a widely known place for locals, two blocks away from Buenavista, Santa Marta's shopping mall in Santa Marta. Taxis usually have fixed fees and will charge you \$6.000 - \$8.000 within the Santa Marta perimeter and \$12.000 - \$15.000 from Rodadero and Taganga. Several bus routes cover this area, so check before visiting as they are updated constantly.



Taganga

This small fishing village has become a go-to spot for people looking for a laid-back destination. Unpaved streets, hostels and bars abound. Tourism as an economic activity is relatively new in the history of Taganga but has taken great importance since it began 35 years ago with the construction of the road linking the city to Taganga.

Historically, people have depended on artisanal fisheries, but the tourism boom changed the town radically, and with it came new businesses, diving schools, kiosks, hostels, clubs, restaurants, and shipping between beaches. Taganga is a destination comparable to some Southeast Asia beach towns, where tourism has grown rapidly (with its ups and downs)

where a large majority of the economically active population works directly in tourism and many more benefit in some way in the industry.

Although Santa Marta is the place where most travelers stay, Taganga is the preferred option among backpackers and people looking for a quieter and more natural beach place. Its cheap prices and accessibility to nearby beaches and some of the city's best viewpoints and one day trekking, make it the perfect place for longer stays to thoroughly explore the region or become a certified scuba diver. In addition, it is closer to the Tayrona Park, making it an ideal point from which to go on boat trips.

GETTING AROUND

TAGANGA IS JUST A 20-MINUTE CAB RIDE AWAY FROM SANTA MARTA. MOST TAXIS DON'T USE A METER, BUT A RIDE FROM THE CITY CENTER OR BUS TERMINAL COMES IN AT 12.000 COP.

Things to do

Playa Grande

- Visit Playa Grande this is one of the most visited beaches around and with good reason, you will find pristine waters and white sand surrounded by picturesque mountains.
- A hiking trip to Playa Grande gives you some of the best coastal views of the city and makes for a stunning sunset spot as well. Although it tends to get busy during holiday season and weekends, early treks are well worth it.
- A round trip on boat costs anywhere between 7.000 - 12.000 COP.

Scuba Diving

Taganga has become one of the most popular places in all South America to get a scuba certification. Over 2- dive centers offer courses and day trips year-round. The shallow sites are sheltered from strong currents which provide calm waters that make it easy for beginners descend.

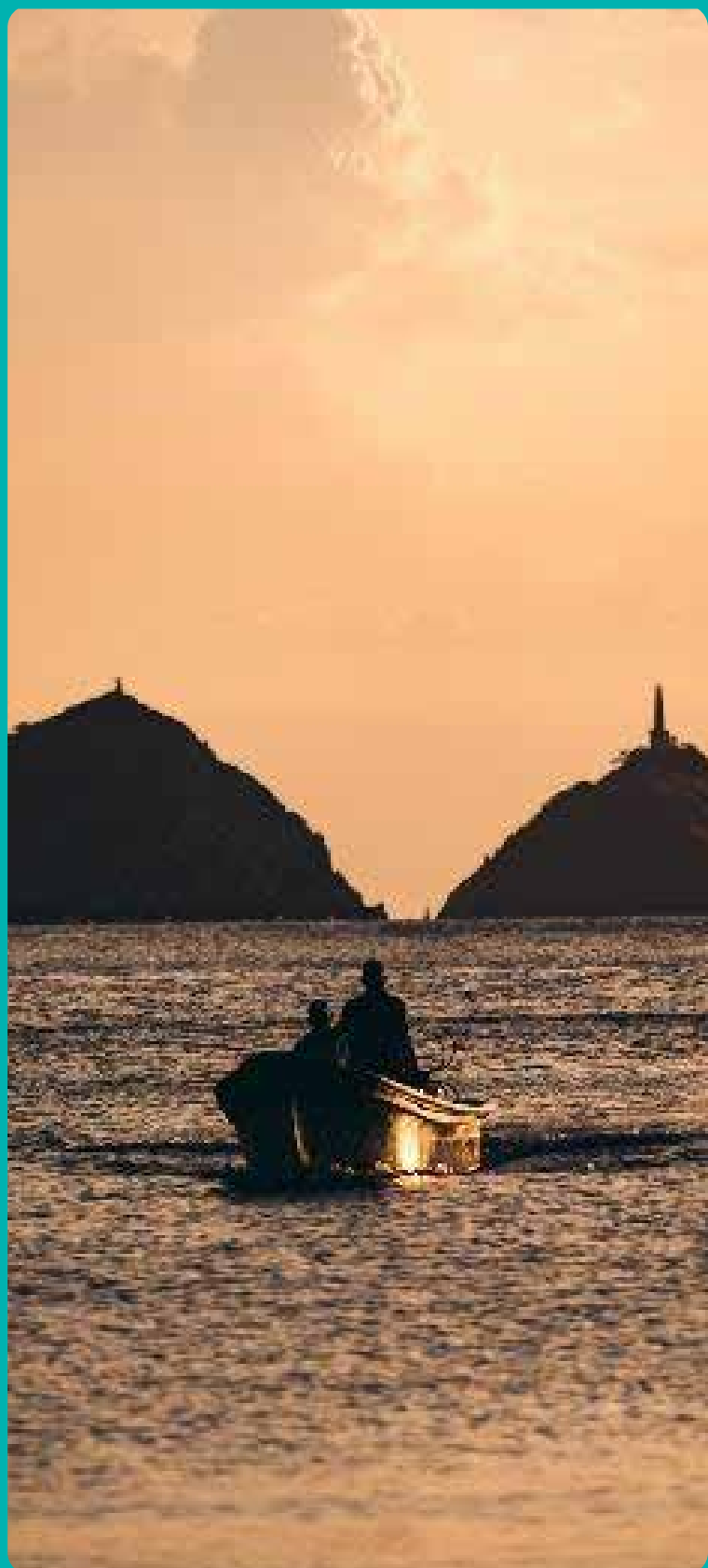
Daily spots are chosen upon departure according to wind direction, but usually head out to Tayrona National Park where coral can be found in great conditions and plenty different sizes. Barracudas, trigger, angel, and lionfish; eels and squids are amongst some of the possible sightings.

On top of that, it is one of the cheapest Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) open-water diving courses in South America.

Artisanal fishing

Around 40% of its people engage in artisanal fishing activities. Although fishing has always been the backbone of the economy of the region, productivity has declined sharply,

causing some to fisherman to diversify their activities and offer short and informal sailing and fishing trips. Multiple efforts to develop formal touristic products and experiences are taking place, so expect new touristic alternatives soon.



Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta

The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is a mountainous system full of magic where nature and the ancestral wisdom of indigenous peoples make it a unique place in the world.

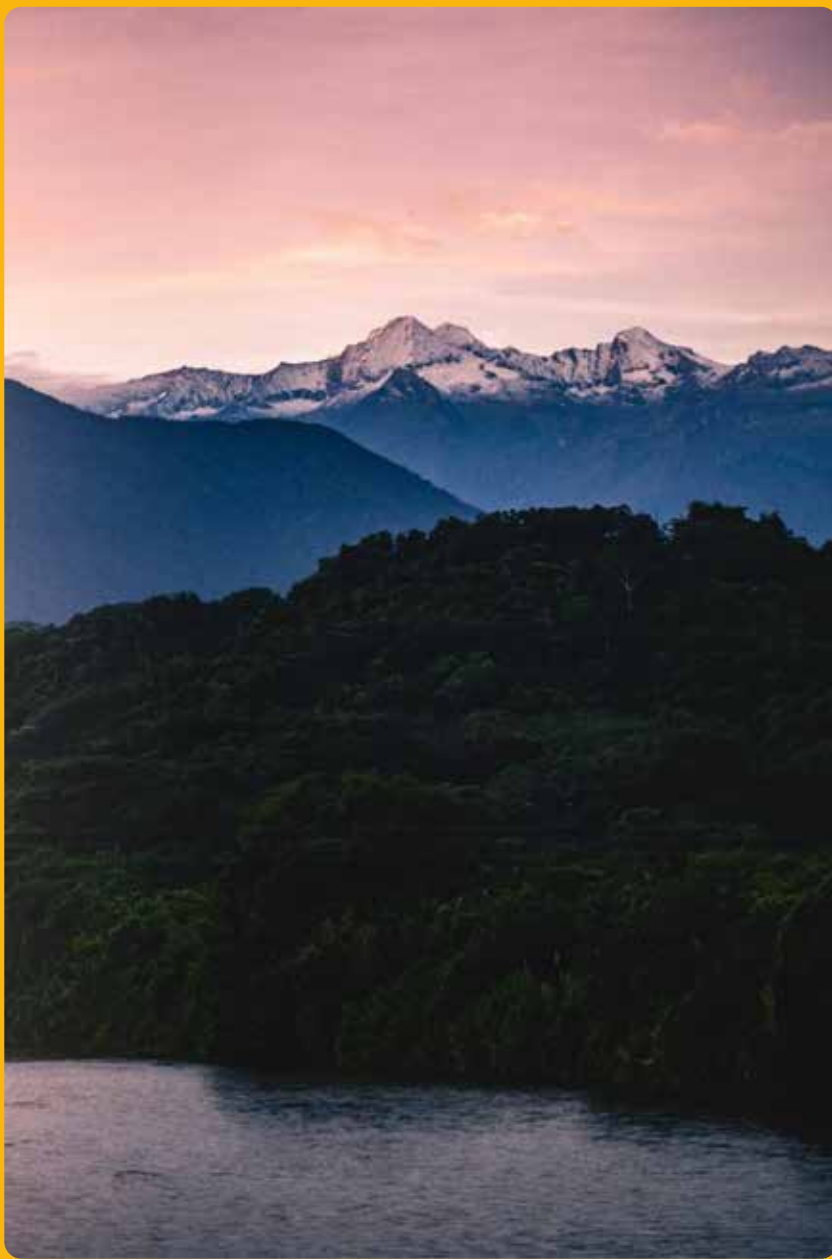
The Sierra Nevada is considered the highest coastal mountain in the world, where its snowy peaks Bolívar and Colón reach a height of **5,775 meters**.

The northern and western side of the Sierra Nevada was inhabited since **200 AD** until **1600 AD** by the Tairona and their predecessors.

Today there are four indigenous populations belonging to the Kággaba (Kogui), Ijka (Arhuaco), Wiwa (Arzarios), and Kankuamo peoples, migrant peasant communities mostly from the Andean region, and residents of the Magdalena departments, Guajira, Cesar (ProSierra Foundation).

The peoples of the Sierra Nevada are characterized by their ancestral knowledge, the defense of nature and their spiritual strength. All these groups depend on the vitality and health of the ecosystems of the Sierra for their survival and economy.

The Sierra Nevada is the 'Ancestral Territory' of the original peoples, known as the Heart of the World, and contains hundreds of sacred sites. The people of the Sierra



believe that people are in the world to care for the spiritual mothers and fathers of nature. Both the mamos and the sagas take care of each person according to the Law of Origin given by Sherankwa.

Within this mountainous massif there is an area of scenic beauty and with great cultural significance, considered a sacred site: the Archaeological Park Teyuna **"Lost City"**.

The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta was declared a Biosphere Reserve and World Heritage Site, in **1979 by UNESCO**, due to the network of ecosystems that host countless forms of life.

Law of Origin and Peoples of the Sierra Nevada

For the Arhuaco, Kankuamo, Kogui and Wiwa indigenous peoples of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, the Law of Origin is the sacred mandate that contains the principles and elements that sustain existence and harmony. of the universe, regulating everything that exists.

The Law of Origin is a set of teaching-learning codes that embody the Knowledge System and ancestral wisdom of the indigenous peoples of the Sierra Nevada, and that must be respected to guarantee social coexistence, harmony, and balance between all the natural components that make up the body of Mother Earth.

Activities

► Cultural Heritage

For 5 days (round trip) travelers can walk around 23 kilometers into the depth of the Sierra through, rivers, waterfalls to reach the Archaeological Park Teyuna – Ciudad Perdida (Lost City).

► Trekking

There are a great variety of routes that can be visited: surroundings of Minca, San Lorenzo, El Campano, Cerro Kennedy, etc.

► Trekking

Colombia is the country with the largest number of bird species in the world, equivalent to 36%, which makes it a destination frequented by amateur and professional observers. The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta occupies 1.48% of the country's and 0.011% of the planet's



Activities

► Trekking

surface, respectively. 35.45% of the bird species in Colombia have been registered in the Sierra, equivalent to about 7 % of the world's bird species (ProSierra). In the Sierra Nevada there is an Area of Endemism of Birds and Areas of Importance for the Conservation of Birds (AICAS).

► Flora and fauna

There are 44 of the 340 endemic species registered for Colombia, among these species there are terrestrial mammals such as the jaguar, the paramo deer and the tapir. There are 49 threatened species of the 3,057 registered and in plants a total of 126 endemic species have been registered. Among the plant species found, there are giant trees such as the snail (*Anacardium excelsum*), the milk ceiba (*Hura crepitans*), the chupo (*Quararibea cordata*), the wax palm (*Ceroxylon*) and the well-known tagua (*Gaia dendron*) stand out. as 'vegetable ivory'. * These species are of ancestral use and management of the native peoples that live there (Natural Parks).

► Ecosystems

Due to its geographical, climatic, and geomorphological characteristics, the Sierra has a variety of ecosystems: equatorial humid forest, sub-Andean Forest, Andean Forest, paramo, super-paramo and snow floor.

► Hydrography

Water is one of its greatest riches, it forms a hydrographic star of very high performance, made up of 35 rivers (16 are born in the park).

► Colón and Bolívar peaks

The Colón and Bolívar peaks are part of the highest area of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (with 5,775 and 5,560 meters above sea level respectively) and are considered sacred places by the ancestral Tayrona culture, whose descendants oversee the environmental balance of this zone. This destination is recognized as a Biosphere Reserve.





Dronoptera/Shutterstock.com

Lost City

Visiting The Lost City is an unforgettable adventure. Amid the dense flora of the Sierra and its natural park, lies Ciudad Perdida, which was discovered in 1976. Its extension is roughly 13 hectares. Built around 700, it's the principal urban center of the ancient Tayrona civilization and is one of the most important archaeological findings for the investigation of this culture. In the city where are circular plazas, stairs, paths, and canals made stone that were the foundations of dwellings made of straw and mud.

The sunrises and striking trails lead the trekkers into a 1,200-step staircase that will take you into the heart of Ciudad Perdida. Once you arrive, you'll find several circular platforms, which are the last remnants of the homes inhabited by the indigenous Tayrona thousands of years ago. Near these platforms is a series of paths and channels of water that show what life was like the Ciudad Perdida (ProColombia).

Covid - 19 vaccination certificate is mandatory

Tour price: \$1.400.000 - \$1.700.000

Tours may range from 3 to 5-day roundtrip, depending on the difficulty level.

Standard itineraries

Day 1 Santa Marta • Mamey • Camp 1

- Departure from agency office of pick up at hotel.
- 3-hour drive to El Mamey.
- Lunch in the village.
- 3-5 hour walk to Camp No. 1.
- Dinner and overnight sleep-in hammocks or shared rooms.
- You will enjoy natural pools and swimming during hiking breaks.

Standard itineraries

Day 2 Camp 1 • Mutanzi • Camp 3

- Breakfast 6:00 – 7:00 am
- Early departure from camp 1 - 2-hour hike to the Mutanzi indigenous village. Cultural tour and information will be provided.
- 40-minute walk to camp No. 2 and lunch. 4-hour hiking to the camp No. 3 - Mamo Romualdo.
- Night in hammocks or beds with mosquito nets.
- Dinner and overnight sleep-in hammocks or shared rooms.

Standard itineraries

Day 3 Camp 3 • Lost City • Camp 2

- Breakfast 6:00 – 7:00 am
- Early departure from camp 3 – 1-hour hike to the Lost City.
- 2-hour spare time and tour to experience the archaeological, ethnological, and historical area and enjoy the place and the healing energy of the mountain.
- Bath in the well of youth, a place that, according to legend, has wonderful properties
- Return to the Camp 3, Lunch.
- 4-hour hike to Camp 2.
- Dinner and overnight sleep-in hammocks or shared rooms.

Standard itineraries

Day 4 Camp 2 • Camp 1 • Ecological Walking

- Breakfast 6:00 – 7:00 am
- Early departure camp 2, 4-hour hiking to Camp 1 where you will spend the night.
- Lunch and free time to enjoy nearby waterfalls and landscapes.
- Dinner and overnight sleep-in hammocks or shared rooms.

Standard itineraries

Day 5 Camp 1• Mamey

- Breakfast.
- Early departure camp 1, 3-hour hike to Camp El Mamey.
- Lunch and return to Santa Marta (3:00 – 5:00 pm) or agreed drop-off point.

Tours usually include

- Transport
- Local Guide from the zone and English translator
- Food
- Travel Insurance
- Accommodation
- Contribution to indigenous communities, peasant communities and ICANH
- Ticket to the archaeological zone
- Snacks and fruits

Must bring and must Do's

- ID
- Notify food restrictions and health conditions
- Don't bring valuable or unnecessary items
- 1 liter flask or thermos.
- Conformable Trekking Boots (and trekking sandals – to cross the rivers)
- 2-3 pair of shorts
- Mosquito Repellent
- Sunscreen
- Trousers
- Sweater
- Flashlight
- 5 t-shirts
- 2 Swimsuits
- Personal Toiletries (soap, toothbrush and toothpaste, deodorant among others)
- Dry Towel
- Comfortable backpack
- Toilet Paper
- Plastic Bag to keep dry clothing separate from wet clothing.
- Appropriate socks
- Camera

Make sure your backpack stays below 10kg considering the long hikes and river crossings.



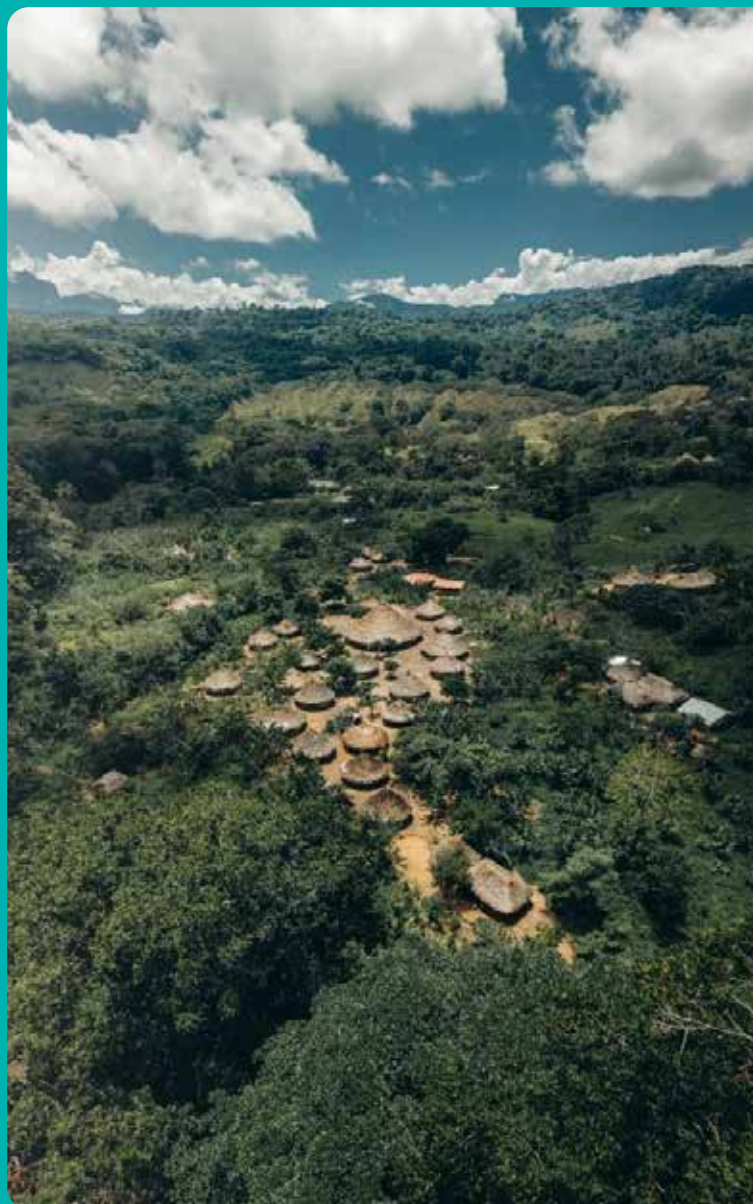
Quebrada del Sol + Mulkuakungui

The Mulkuakungui people is a Koguis town embedded in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. It is a cultural and nature protection center. Some activities are:

- Typical breakfast in Quebrada del Sol, historical briefing, impact of illegal crops, demobilization phase in the region and historical briefing on the impact of illegal crops, the demobilization phase in the region and transition to tourism.
- Walk to the Kogui "Mulkwakungui" village with a "Mamo" (the highest indigenous authority).
- Cultural exchange and tradition sharing: workshop transformation of chocolate and taro, weaving etc.
- Ecological walk for 20 minutes to reach the Don Diego River and cross to visit to the Arhuaco town "Kandumake"
- Buy typical indigenous bags directly from the community.

1 or 2-day tours. Price ranges from

\$400.000 - \$600.000.



Gotsezhy

Gotsezhy, ("Reborn"), is a Wiwa indigenous refuge settled in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

- Dip in the majestic natural pool of the "Matuna" waterfall (El Encanto), where you can take a bath in its refreshing waters.
- Cultural exchange
Display of traditional crafts.
- Trek to Guachaca River.

1 or 2-day tours. Price ranges from

\$400.000 - \$600.000.

Ruta del Río- 2 days

This tour takes place in a small village surrounded by a lot of biodiversity. The community has gone from relying on illegal crops to finding a new way of life in tourism. For this reason, the River Route Tour was created as an income alternative for each of the peasant and indigenous families of the village. Some activities

include:

- Chilling and waters sports in the Buritica River
- Native flora and fauna sighting
Cultural exchange with indigenous Kogui "Maleiyi" communities and the Mulkuakungui people
- Horseback riding, tubing, hiking and more.



Northern Sierra Nevada Region and Rivers

Santa Marta is more than sun, beach, and history. Thick jungles also account for a big portion of the territory, carrying through them the rivers that descend from its highest mountains.

The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is divided into three large basins or macro-basins made up of a system of 30 main rivers. The macro-basin of the Caribbean includes all the rivers that flow directly into the sea. Río Piedra, Mendi- huaca, Guachaca, Buritaca and Don Diego are the city's touristic highlights.

From massages to kayaking, immersing yourself in these rivers is an alternative plan packed with nature, adventure, and total relaxation.

Paddle, kayak, and tubing activities are possible amongst the other rivers.

Mendihuaca is the slowest flowing and has the shortest paddle circuits. Rio Don Diego is the quietest especially in the week so it's a great chance to see the wildlife. On Rio Buritaca you might be able to see the Howler Monkeys. Surfers gather in Los Naranjos right of Rio Piedras, but due to the presence of alligators, activities in the river are not recommended, so keep out of the water.

Don Diego

The Don Diego River is located 56 kilometers from the city of Santa Marta. The river connects from the snowy peaks to the sea in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.



Tayronaka

Tayronaka, is an eco-lodge and a place where recreation and culture are combined. You can enjoy the magic of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta and learn about who the Tayrona and their cultural legacy. Inhouse guides will walk you through restored terraces where the natives built their homes and an archaeological museum with original pieces. For the Koguis, the area is of great importance.

A visit to Tayronaka may include:

- Ecological trail 15 min trek or 10 min upriver boat ride.
- Guided tour for 45 min, observing beautiful gardens and fruit trees characteristic of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta
- Visit to the Tayrona culture museum, where you can see archaeological pieces of the Tayrona culture.
- Free time to enjoy the river.

Sport And Artisan Fishing in The Don Diego River

Fishing tours allows you to understand, experiment and connect with local communities and their environment.

The tour begins in Tayronaka where you take a boat downriver while observing the fauna and flora. Howler monkeys, endemic and migratory birds can be spotted until you reach the fishing spot. Local fishermen will briefly explain how to place the bait, cast the hook, and how to get the fish out of the water. In the meantime, you will learn about the species found in the region (white snapper, goat, grunt, etc.).

You can ether release the fish or take it with you for a local fish cooking lesson.

Buritaca

The Buritaca river runs through the heart of the Sierra, passing through Teyuna, until it empties into the sea. Its small delta is frequently visited by locals.



Dronoptera/Shutterstock.com

Guachaca

The Guachaca River Basin is located via Santa Marta to Riohacha, Kilometer 49. Here you will find Gotsezhy, Indigenous Village famous for its Cultural Conservation, upriver.

Mendihuaca

The Mendihuaca River is found via Santa Marta to Riohacha, Kilometer 37. Touristic hotels and hostels are found walking distance from the Mendihuaca River.



Río Piedras

With cold waters and huge stones, hence this name, it is located at kilometer 28 via Santa Marta - Riohacha, near Tayrona Park flowing into the Naranjos Beach. Visitors can surf on the Los Naranjos Beach, next to the edge of Tayrona Park in the far north, a place to find good quality waves.

This place is often used to hold sport championships and is surrounded by exclusive hotels and resorts, concentrating a major part of the high-end accommodation options in the Tayrona area.



Quebrada Valencia

Quebrada Valencia is a popular destination among locals and travelers. It has easy going trek 30-min trek and refreshing pools water flowing down natural waterfalls from the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.



Laguna Encantada

Located 37 km from the city of Santa Marta about 2 kilometers from the entrance of Tayrona Park, its name refers the magic, beauty and charm of the place that captivates visitors, according to locals. The trail is easily accessible and will take you around 40 minutes until you reach a quiet lagoon fed by a small waterfall.

Bonda

Bonda is a small village of indigenous origin that lives off the agriculture and ecotourism. Located in the vicinity of the Manzanares River, its main natural attractions revolve around the spaces adorned by waters that descend from the Sierra Nevada. Bonda’s eco touristic portfolio is rapidly growing and many visitors are changing itineraries to include this natural, off the beaten track destination.

Donama Stone

Bonda boasts several icons of the Tayrona culture, such as the cobbled paths, the carved stones of the Pozo de Bondigua and the more famous Donama Stone. This monolith of approximately four meters in diameter and three meters high, contains many petroglyphs engravings thought to represent nature's codes. It is presumed that the carving was made by the Tayrona between 500 and 1525 AD. Although its true meaning remains a mystery, the stone has great spiritual and symbolic significance for the indigenous populations of the area.

Make sure you visit Pozo la Lisa on your trip to Bonda, for a nice off the beaten track river destination.



Diana Magaloni

Common tours and nearby activities

Paso del Mango

Paso del Mango has beautiful scenery located 500 meters above sea level in the middle of the Sierra mountains. This place is a great option to enjoy natural pools and crystal-clear rivers without having to worry about huge crowds. The paths are packed with mango trees, which give this area its name, but these are just one of many agricultural products in the area. Farms and homeowners have set up private tours so people can enjoy and take part of the process of taking cacao and coffee from farm to table. Visitors get the chance to experience how daily activities unfold and buy souvenirs of their own making like ground coffee or cacao cakes.

Activities include:

- A trip to the vicinity of Bonda
- Visit to a cocoa farm
- Visit the Caoba reserve to observe the flora and fauna of the Sierra Nevada area (we will observe animals such as: crocodiles turtles, marmosets, macaws, etc.)
- Visit to the Indian Bridge (built by the Kogi) and 2 huts that recreate home of indigenous communities in the Sierra Nevada.
- Visit fish farming pools and others to observe the Pirarucu (also known as the King of the Amazon).
- Visit to the Pozo del Indio for baths and meditation sessions.



Cacao Chocolate Tour

Guided tour of the chocolate farm for 2 hours to experience the cocoa transformation process.

Activities include:

- Visit Cacao plantation.
- Learn how they plant, collect, clean, dry and make homemade organic cocoa.
- Buy chocolate and thus support the local economy.
- Relaxing chocolate-based massage and then a fun immersion.

Arts and crafts

The arts and crafts of Santa Marta reflect the city's unique landscapes. The colors of the Caribbean Sea and the shapes of the Sierra Nevada are found fabrics and designs throughout the region.

Crafts constitute a productive and cultural activity of great tradition and economic importance, especially for the people of the Sierra Nevada. For years, they have represented their identity, customs, and beliefs by weaving in sheep's wool and dry plantain leaves, carving in coconut bark, wood and in soapstone.

Arts and crafts

Their most recognizable product are backpacks made from sheep's wool and fique or cabuya and colored with leaves, roots and tubers that give them a permanent natural hue. Colors, patterns, and styles vary among indigenous communities and families. You can learn more about their art and support local communities by including community-based tours in your itineraries.



Indigenous weddings

The amazing sunsets, landscapes, varied accommodation, qualified wedding planners and comparatively much lower costs to Cartagena provide a mix that is positioning Santa Marta as a top beach wedding destination. However, unique ceremonies are taking place in the Sierra. Indigenous weddings have become increasingly popular due to its symbolism and respect for mother nature. Ceremonies are performed by Mamos, spiritual leaders from the communities of the Sierra Nevada. The couple marries in a traditional hut or in a private area of some of the city's premium hotels. This a highly spiritual and personal ceremony where only the couple is present.

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The wedding consists of several steps

- **Confession:** is a space for the couple to connect their thoughts with nature.
- **Cleansing:** is a time to surrender thoughts to mother nature to cleanse the couple of both negative and positive thoughts.
- **Offerings:** consists of practicing gratitude and giving back spiritually to mother earth.

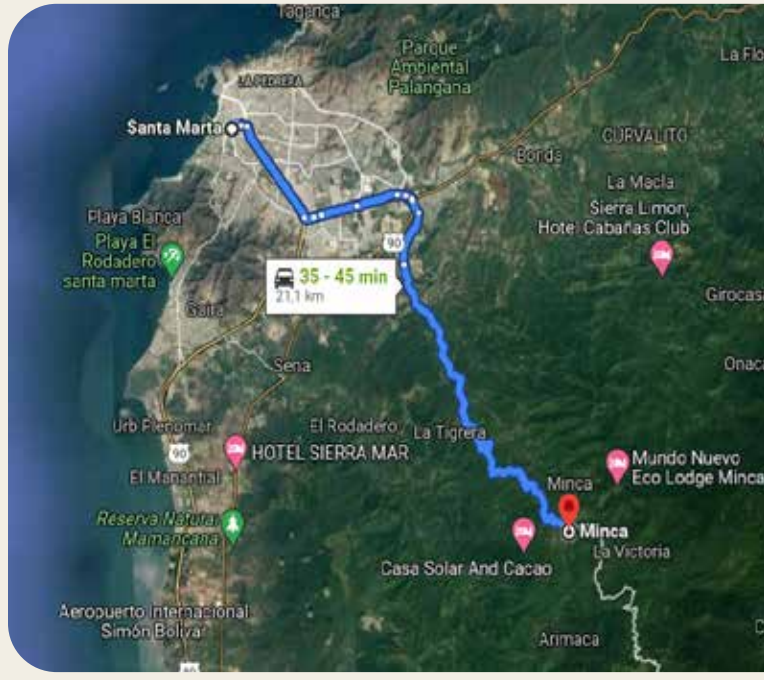
The ceremony comes to an end as the Mamo places yarn fibers in hands and feet of husband and wife to bring balance to their life and align the energy of the earth, sun, and the moon.

The whole event lasts approximately 2 hours and can take place at any time of the year.



Minca

Minca is a small town located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, about 20 km from the city center. Minca is the ecological capital of the Sierra Nevada known for its varied flora and fauna, pools and waterfalls, organic coffee, and cooler weather. Initially a preferred backpacking destination and preferred trekking destination, in recent years, new glamping, boutique hotels, restaurants and nice coffee shops have attracted a growing number of visitors.

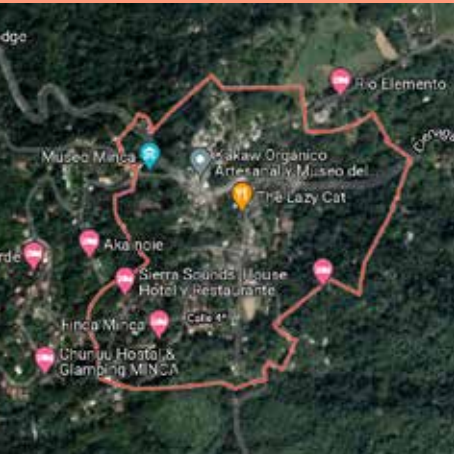


How to get there

- Taxi: \$60,000 from the city center
- Shared van: \$10.000 leaving from the City Market.

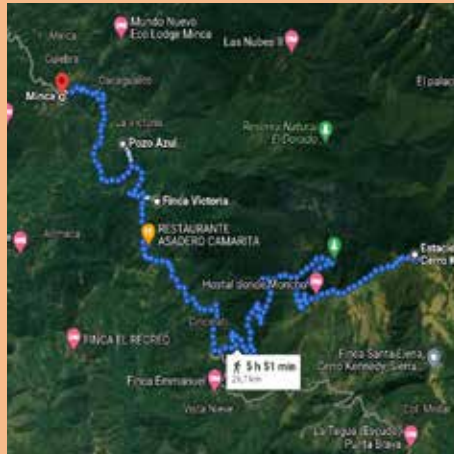
The region is beautiful and is best explored on hiking, motorbikes or 4-wheel drive vehicles, as many roads remain unpaved and are of low quality, particularly during rainy seasons.

Suggested itineraries



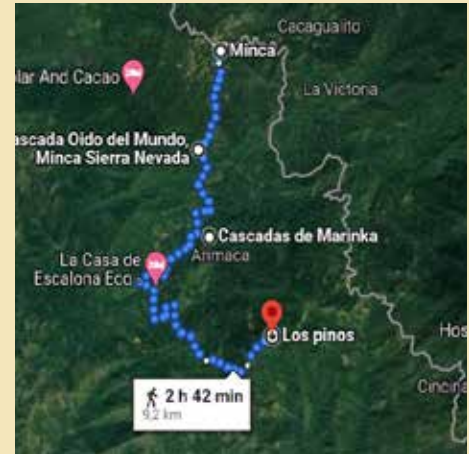
Half a day

- Stroll around Minca and nearby pools and waterfalls



1 day

- Cerro Kennedy (sunrise)
- Finca Victoria
- Pozo Azul (or vice versa)



1 day

- Oído del Mundo
- Marinka
- Los Pinos
- San Lorenzo

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Pozo Azul

Pozo Azul is a set of seven clear-water natural swimming holes and waterfalls. On sunny days, you see blue hues in the water that give it its name. To get there, you can walk from the center for 30 minutes or take 10-minute moto ride to the entrance and then another 30 minutes from there to the waterfalls. This small trail is loaded with beautiful natural views and surrounded by a lot of nature.

The place gets very crowded on weekends and high season, so go for early swims or weekdays to have the place for yourself. The first waterfall is generally the most crowded spot, so consider trekking to avoid crowds.



Coffee plantation and tours

La Victoria coffee plantation is a popular attraction. Original machinery from the 1800s and a self-sustaining coffee production process (using water from mountain streams to power generators) make this a sustainability stand out process.

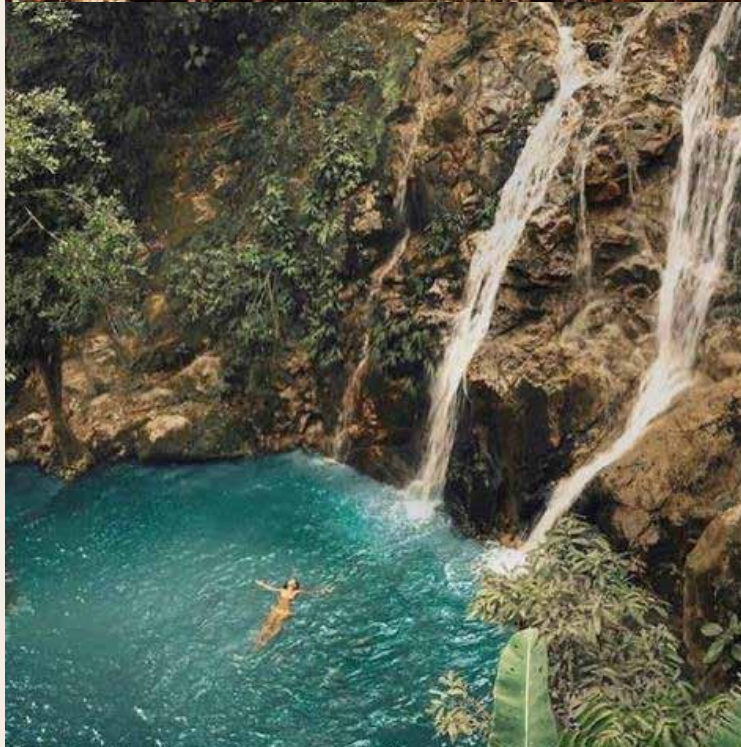


Marinka Waterfalls

The Marinka falls are two beautiful falls of crystalline water that descend from the mountains forming the Quebrada de Marinka. The second fall has natural pool that is very popular among visitors.

Like Pozo Azul, Marinka is an easy-to-reach destination, so it gets crowded on weekends and high season.

To get there, you can walk from the center for 45 minutes approximately or take a 15-minute moto ride to the entrance and then another 10-minute walk from there to the waterfalls.



Los Pinos

Los Pinos (pine trees) is one of the most popular sunset spots in the region. The amazing Sierra Mountain range landscape all the way to the coast and Santa Marta makes it a great viewpoint and popular

destination for photographers and visitors avoiding crowds. You can reach Los Pinos by foot, which usually take 2.5 – 3.5 hours (mid-level difficulty), moto (40 minutes / \$35.000) or 4x4 with larger groups.



Cerro Kennedy

Cerro Kennedy is a mountainous formation that is located at an altitude of 3,100 meters above sea level. It presents a forest covered with fog and hundreds of endemic, common and migratory birds that make it an ideal place for bird watching. The hill also offers one of the best views and one of the most

famous sunrise spots in the country, with the snow-capped peaks Bolívar and Colón in the background. It takes at least a day to hike up and is recommended for experienced hikers or you can book a 4x4 sunrise trip leaving at 3:00 am from Minca at \$700.000 (4-6 people)





San Lorenzo

Minca is the main birdwatching destination in Santa Marta, and probably in Colombia and South America. As noted above, Colombia is the country with the largest number of bird species in the world, equivalent to 36%, which makes it a destination frequented by amateur and professional observers. The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta occupies 1.48% of the country's and 0.011% of the planet's surface, respectively. 35.45% of the bird species in Colombia have been registered in the Sierra, equivalent to about 7 % of the world's birds species

(ProSierra). In the Sierra Nevada there is an Area of Endemism of Birds and Areas of Importance for the Conservation of Birds (AICAS). Custom made tours are frequently arranged or you can join tours starting at \$300.000. Check with local operators as prices vary depending on the season, duration, rental, overnight stays, etc.

Museo Minca

The local museum is becoming a historical and culturally integrative spot in the area. The Museum has three lines of research: indigenous wisdom, coffee history and culture, armed conflict, and its impact on the community. The entry is free and free English or

Spanish guides take place (please tip the volunteers). Ending your trip in Minca visiting the museum will give a comprehensive view of the town and help you understand its social, cultural, and touristic relevance.



Parque Tayrona

The Tayrona National Natural Park (Parque Nacional Natural Tayrona) is a natural protected that covers approximately 30 square kilometers of maritime area in the Caribbean Sea and approximately 150 square kilometers of land. The park is located 34 kilometers from the city center and presents a biodiversity endemic to the area of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta Mountain range, featuring a variety of climates (mountain climate) and geography that ranges from arid sea level to 900 meters above sea level. The Park is part of the ancestral territories of the Kankuamo, Kogui, Wiwa and Arhuaco indigenous communities who inhabit the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. There are some sacred sites of the four indigenous towns of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, which are off limits to tourists.

Tayrona park has been included among the world's most beautiful destinations by Condé Nast Traveler magazine and British newspaper and its white sand, crystalline waters beaches are among the most visited destinations in Latin America.

The entrance to Tayrona National Park is open between 8 AM and 5 PM every day, except for periods when the park is entirely closed to the public. Park closure is scheduled three times a year to allow the ecosystem restoration.

This strategy is known as #RespiraTayrona which has been agreed between Parques Nacionales Naturales de Colombia and four indigenous towns of the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta. Dates are subject to changes, but currently are.



Main entrances

Zaino





It is 34 km from the city of Santa Marta taking the Caribbean trunk via La Guajira, from this entrance we can access beaches in order: Castillete, Cañaveral, Arrecife, Arenilla, La Piscina, Cabo San Juna, La Playa Nudista / Boca del Saco, and Playa Brava. To enter Zaino they must pay tickets to the PNNT

Bahía Concha

You enter through the Bastidas neighborhood on an uncovered road to the Bay. Previously this bay was considered part of the Tayrona Park, but currently you can enter without paying entrance.

Vehicle Rates

Vehicles can only enter until the Cañaveral parking lot

	Automobiles \$ 24,500
	Collectives \$ 37,500
	Buses \$ 79,000
	Motorcycles \$ 10,000

High Season Rate

June 15 to July 15 – December 15 to January 30 – Thursday to Holy Sunday – Weekends with Holiday Bridge

- Foreign \$ 64,500
- National & CAN Residents Over 25 Years of Age and older: \$ 29,000
- National Over 5 Up to 24 Years: \$ 20,500.

Low Season Rate

All the dates of the year that are not mentioned in high season

- Foreign \$ 54,500
- National & CAN Residents Over 25 Years of Age and older: \$ 24,500
- National Over 5 Up to 24 Years: \$ 18,500.

How to get there

- \$5.000 per day insurance fee is mandatory.
- Approximately 450,000 visitors enter Parque Tayrona annually.
- The entry capacity limit is 6.900 tourist/day but was reduced to 3.535. Entries run in a matter of hours during high peak seasons.
- Tayrona Park costs are above Santa Marta average budget standards (i.e., water bottles usually cost \$5.000).

Bus to El Zaino

- The bus from Santa Marta to El Zaino leaves frequently (every 20 to 30 minutes) from the City Market or the Terminal.
- It takes about an hour to get from Santa Marta to El Zaino, and the ticket costs \$15.000 COP.
- Buy entrance ticket at the main park entrance in El Zaino. Once in the park, you can either walk 4 km on a paved road to get to Canaveral point or take a shuttle for 5 000 COP.
- Private cars or taxi cost \$120.000 - \$150.000.

Bus to Calabazo

- Calabazo entrance is along the path before you reach El Zaino (45-minute drive).
- Bus ticket costs 6000 COP.
- Entrance looks very unofficial, at least compared to the one in El Zaino.

Boat to Cabo San Juan

- This alternative is popular for one day trips or those avoiding long sweaty hikes.
- Boats usually leave between 9:30 AM and 11 AM, and a one-way ride that takes around 45 minutes costs 70 000 COP – 100.000 COP depending on the season.
- The boat will drop you off at Cabo San Juan Beach, and from here, it leaves back around 4 PM - ask the boat captain, in case you want to return by boat to Taganga.
- Entrance fee must be paid on arrival to Cabo San Juan.

How many days

- Two-to-three-day itinerary is more adequate to spend your time in the park.
- The Park is open from 8:00 to 17:00, so one day visits are very tight.
- As most people travel on a one-day basis, beaches are usually crowded at peak hours. An overnight stay will allow you to enjoy the sunset, sunrise, and the much emptier beaches from 7.00 to 10.00 am and from 15.00 onwards.
- Beyond Cabo San Juan there are two less frequented beaches not suitable for swimming, but with white sands and crystal-clear waters. Due to the low number of visitors, Boca de Saco has become a nudist beach.
- Playa Brava is ideal for camping and hammocks since it has a fairly open area. There are simple cabins to stay, and the costs vary according to the seasons and their negotiating capacity, they will also find a restaurant service.



Google Maps

Cabo San Juan



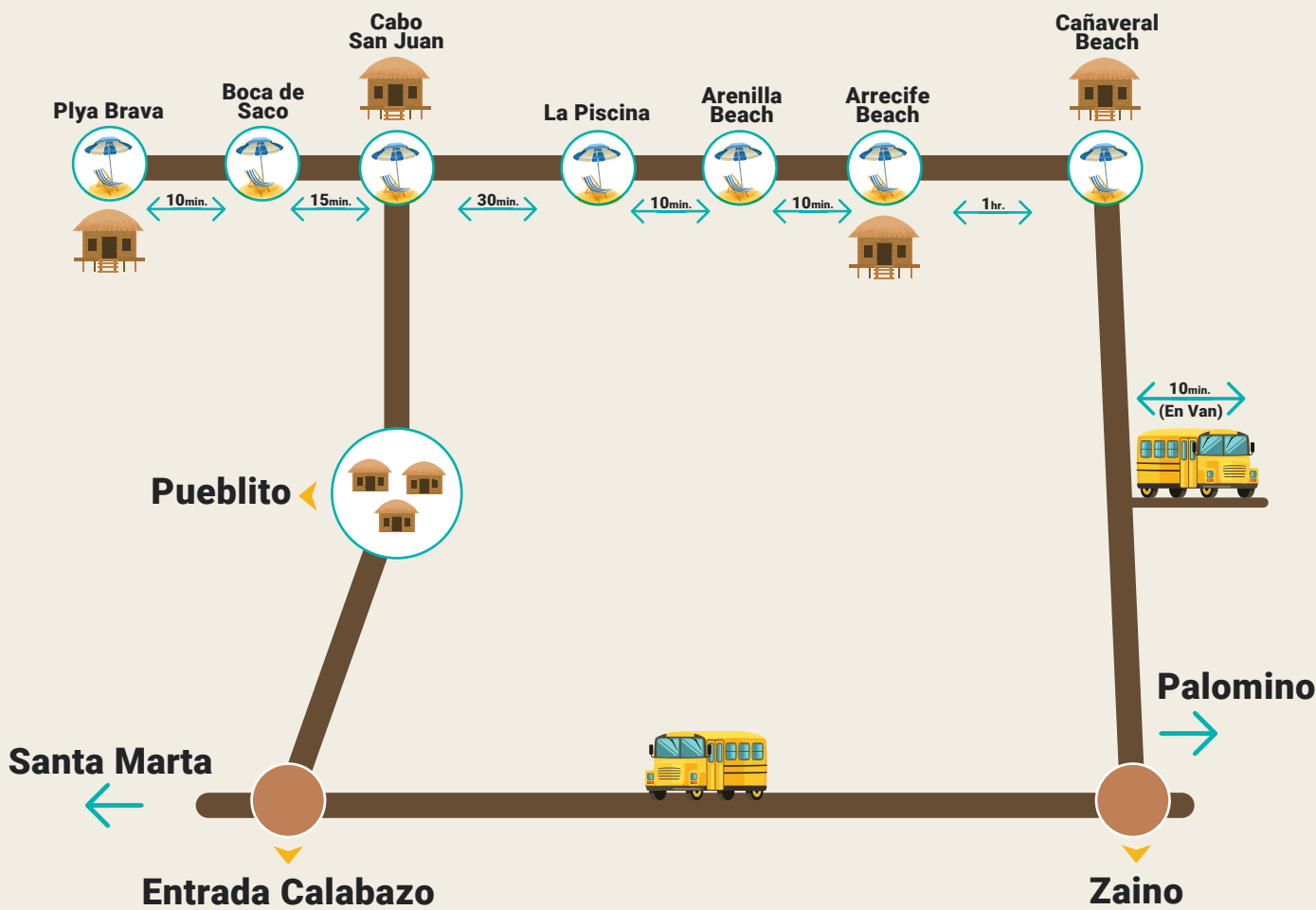
Cabo San Juan the most popular beach in the Tayrona National Park and one of the most visited countrywide. Turquoise water, white fine sand and beautiful palm trees are part of this picturesque destination. Cabo San Juan is located 2 hours away (if you take the shuttle at the entrance) by hiking from El Zaino entrance and 3.5 hours hiking from El Calabazo.

Is very common to see wildlife during the hikes, especially in low seasons of right after the Tayrona Respira closures.

Both beaches of Cabo San Juan are swimmable, considering most beaches are not swimmable inside the park, and snorkeling activities are popular among visitors.

Cañaveral – Arrecifes – Arenilla – La Piscina - Cabo San

The most popular one-day alternative when visiting Tayrona is hiking to Cabo San Juan:



Beaches



cabins



transport medium



Sector or zone



Travel times



towns

Where to sleep

Camping: In Cabo San Juan there is a wide range of tents, with mattresses (not very neat), which cost \$ 70,000 - \$ 100,000 per night for two people.

Hammocks: There are several areas with hammocks available for rent (one of them on top of the rocks that divide the two beaches) where you can sleep for \$ 50,000 to \$ 70,000 per person.

Bungalow in Playa Brava: In Playa Brava there are simple cabins to stay, and the costs vary according to the seasons.

Ecohabs: For the most comfortable accommodation in Tayrona National Park, Ecohabs Tayrona is your best choice. Located in Cañaveral beach, this is the only high-end stay at the park, where travelers can enjoy cozy bungalows good for up to 4 people. From Ecohabs Tayrona guests may easily explore the rest of Tayrona National Park, choosing from a variety of activities such as bird watching, trekking to the ancient ruins of the Tayrona tribes, or simply taking long walks along the different beaches of the park, as Arrecifes, Cabo San Juan del Guía, La Piscina, etc.



Hugh Huddleson (ecohabs)



Thewonderingblonde



Booking.com

Other beaches

Tayrona Park has more than 30 beaches, but not all of them are easily accessible or suitable for swimming. Here’s a list of other popular Tayrona Park beaches:

Playa Cristal



One of the most beautiful beaches in the park. Also known as Playa del Muerto, where indigenous communities used to perform rituals. You can reach Playa Cristal taking a 5-minute boat ride from Neguanje or a 30-minute boat from Taganga.

Canaveral & Piscina



One of the smallest but most dangerous beaches. However, it has the “piscinita”, one of the few swimmable beaches in Tayrona. Surrounded by stones and calm pool-like water, hence its name. Located between Arrecife and Cabo San Juan, the Tayrona Ecohabs (14 cabins) are in this beach.

Cinto



One of the calmest and most crystalline beaches. Is a good place for snorkeling or diving. It can be reached by boat from Taganga or Neguanje.

Neguanje



One of the largest beaches in the park. It served as an indigenous cemetery and is considered a sacred spot. There are 2 ideal sectors for diving due to its marine life and corals.

Boca del Saco Nude Beach



It is not legally constituted as a nude beach. However, visitors usually practice this activity considering the beach is lonely and far from the busiest areas of the park.

Playa Brava



Playa Brava is accessed through the Calabazo or from El Zaino (longer path). The trekking is ascending and demanding, but during the tour you will be able to see waterfalls and rich fauna and flora.

Guachakyta



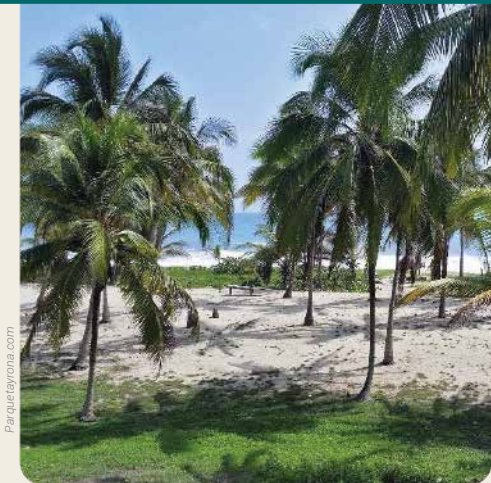
One of the calmest and most crystalline beaches. Is a good place for snorkeling or diving. It can be reached by boat from Taganga or Neguanje.

Chengue



Chengue is one of the less crowded beaches in the park which can only be reached by boat or a demanding path. Chengue is a small beach, with white sand that, adorned by a salt flat and the deep jungle that make it one of the most beautiful beaches in the Tayrona Park.

Castillete



It is not legally constituted as a nude beach. However, visitors usually practice this activity considering the beach is lonely and far from the busiest areas of the park.

Arrecife



Is the largest beach inside Tayrona. As the name says, Arrecife is filled with many reefs and rocks. Waves are very strong, and swimming is prohibited, although is very popular for photos on the way to Cabo San Juan.

Bahia Concha



Located only 30 minutes from Santa Marta, it is one of the most visited beaches in Santa Marta. Most Tayrona Park tours include a half day trip to Bahia Concha, so you can expect large crowds in high seasons.

Gairaca



Gayraca is one of the least crowded beaches in Tayrona Park; It is ideal for snorkeling or diving as it has a large extension of coral reefs where you will see rich marine life.



El Rodadero

El Rodadero is a neighborhood located 15 minutes by cab from the city center. Many visitors book their stay in this area because of the high number of hotels, rental apartments, restaurants, and Rodadero Beach, possibly the most famous beach in Colombia.

Given that it's one of the most visited spots in the Caribbean coast, this beach is usually quite busy on weekends and public holidays. If you are looking for more than sunbathing, this is the right place. The calm waters of the beach make allow for a variety of aquati

activities and sports like kayak, paddle, jet skiing or beach hopping boat trip. Local administrations are pushing efforts to modernize touristic infrastructure in the area and 2022 will see the new Rodadero Beachwalk open for tourists.

If you are looking for a more laid-back option to grab a tent and enjoy drinks, jump on a boat to white sand beach, Playa Blanca, for 12,000 COP round trip.

Make sure to take in best views on the one-kilometer zip line that takes you full speed down the entire beach stretch.

El Bello Horizonte

A very popular area for tourists is the beach of Bello Horizonte, in the south-west part of Santa Marta. This is an area that is characterized by high-end hotels and tourist residences where visitors find a wide variety of restaurants and entertainment venues. This is a good place to go with your family (ColombiaTravel).

Santa Marta in detail

How to get to Santa Marta

Bus

- The bus station is ‘Terminal de Transportes de Santa Marta’, and it is a 30-minute drive from the center.
Santa Marta is well connected to the rest of Colombia with buses running to and from: Medellin (15 hours), Bogota (17 hours), Cali (1 day), Bucaramanga (10 hours), Cartagena (5 hours) and Barranquilla (2 hours).

Shuttle

- Cartagena (4 hours) to Santa Marta - \$60.000
 - Barranquilla (1.5 hours) to Santa Marta - \$30.000
- The shuttle is more comfortable and quicker than the public buses and they drop you off near the city center.*

Flying

- Santa Marta has the small but modern Simon Bolivar Airport with frequent routes from Medellin, Bogota, and Cali to Santa Marta. Prices vary substantially depending on the season and schedule, although is common to find low fares to travel to Santa Marta.
- If you can’t find a cheap flight to Santa Marta and want to avoid long bus journeys, try flying into Barranquilla and then catching a shuttle to Santa Marta. The center is 30 minutes from the airport and very easy to get to. Taxis will charge \$30.000 and bus fare is \$2.500.

Accommodations

Santa Marta offers choices for all budgets, from excellent hostels and boutique hotels to occasional jaw-dropping accommodations in la Sierra Nevada or exclusive resort areas in the northern part of the city. Book ahead around major religious holidays and festivals like Easter and Christmas.

- **Backpacker hostels** Widely available and often quite good, especially in the City Center.
Budget hotels: Simple and functional accommodations, often family-run and mostly catering to Colombians. Mostly found in the City Center and Rodadero.
- **Midrange hotels** Some international chains have opened and Santa Marta and appeal mostly to the Colombian business crowd or family groups.
- **Top-end hotels** Colonial boutique hotels and seaside resorts are rapidly growing.
- **Camping** a growing number of campsites welcome tent-toting tourists, particularly in Parque Tayrona.



Hostels

- Backpacker tourism is booming in Colombia. All hostels have dorm beds for around **COP\$25,000** to **COP\$50,000**, and most have a few private rooms for **COP\$65,000** to **COP\$120,000**.

Hostels

- Also sometimes called residencias, hospedajes or posadas, hotels generally suggest places of a higher standard, or at least higher prices. Cheaper accommodations are usually clustered around the less touristic areas of the city center, Rodadero and other residential areas of the city. If you speak Spanish and wish to avoid the gringo trail, a budget private room with hot water, air-con and cable TV goes for between **COP\$45,000** and **COP\$75,000** – cheaper than a hostel.

- Midrange hotels are rare in Santa Marta. Prices tend to jump rapidly from budget cheapies to three- and four-star hotels, with little in between.

Resorts

- There are a handful of package-style resorts in Santa Marta, mostly frequented by Colombians, rather than foreign package tourists, and are usually excellent value.
- Most conventional 5 star hotels are in the City Center and south touristic corridor (Bello Horizonte and Airport areas)





Hostels

- › Luxury eco hotels and glamping are growing in Santa Marta and usually offer full wellness packages.
- › Most of these trending eco hotels are in the Tayrona, Naranjos and Northern Sierra region.



VAT exemption

- › Recent regulations exempt from taxes some travel-oriented services (the 19% IVA tax on accommodations, for example). Although foreign travelers that stay in Colombia for less than 60 days shouldn't have to pay accommodation tax, some hotels charge it. In such case, VAT returns are possible at the National Department of Taxes and Customs (DIAN) airport offices, before leaving the country.

Backpacking

Santa Marta is a backpacking friendly destination with multiple budget-friendly places to stay, allowing you to save money for experiences. Backpackers traditionally used Santa Marta as base point for Tayrona or Lost City treks. However, the city's growing popularity and diversity has led travelers to extend their travel itineraries and add a few extra days to enjoy Santa Marta fully. There is also a wide volunteering network, which has many backpackers staying at hostels or working at coffee shops and tour operators.

Solo female travelers

Solo female travel is becoming more common in Colombia and Santa Marta is one of the main destinations. Santa Marta’s touristic spots are relatively safe but, as you should do in other destinations, precautions must be taken, so always check with locals or share your plans at hotel for guidance. Avoid flashing your cell phone if you’re in solitary places, like in most places in all Latin America and be aware of pickpocketing. There are a very few female dorms, so check your accommodation in advanced in case that’s your preference.

Orientation

Like other Colombian cities, Santa Marta’s streets have been laid out on a grid plan.

- Streets running north–south are called Carreras (Cra, Cr or K)
- Streets running east–west are called Calles (Cll, Cl or C).
- Diagonal streets (Diagonales - east–west or Transversales – north - south) compliment main road systems.
- Streets are numbered and the numerical system of addresses is used.
- Each address consists of a series of numbers: i.e., Calle 6 No 12-35 (which means that it's the building on Calle 6, 35m from the corner of Carrera 12 toward Carrera 13).



Año Nuevo (New Year's Day)	January 1
Los Reyes Magos (Epiphany)	January 6*
San José (St Joseph)	March 19*
Jueves Santo & Viernes Santo (Maundy Thursday and Good Friday). The following Monday is also a holiday.	March/April (Easter)
Día del Trabajo (Labor Day)	May 1
La Ascensión del Señor (Ascension)	May*
Corpus Cristi (Corpus Christi)	May/June*
Sagrado Corazón de Jesús (Sacred Heart)	June*
San Pedro y San Pablo (St Peter and St Paul)	June 29*
Día de la Independencia (Independence Day)	July 20
Batalla de Boyacá (Battle of Boyacá)	August 7
La Asunción de Nuestra Señora (Assumption)	August 15*
Día de la Raza (Discovery of America)	October 12*
Todos los Santos (All Saints' Day)	November 1*
Independencia de Cartagena (Independence of Cartagena)	November 11*
Inmaculada Concepción (Immaculate Conception)	December 8
Navidad (Christmas Day)	December 25

When the dates marked with an asterisk do not fall on a Monday, the holiday is moved to the following Monday to make a three-day long weekend, referred to as the puente (bridge).

Covid-19, Medication, and healthcare services

Covid-19

- Colombia’s Ministry of Health announced, effective December 14, 2021, new entry requirements for all travelers 18 years and older arriving to Colombia by air.
- Vaccinated non-resident foreign travelers must present proof they have been fully vaccinated for COVID-19 for at least 14 days prior to travel.
If less than 14 days have elapsed or if the vaccination scheme is not complete, the
- traveler must present a PCR test with a negative result taken within 72 hours of boarding.

- Unvaccinated non-resident foreign travelers will not be allowed to enter Colombia.
- The proof of vaccination must be presented either in paper format or digitally. The certification must include the individual's full name, date of vaccination, name of the vaccine administered, and the number of doses administered.
- All travelers must complete the online Check-Mig form (found at <https://apps.migracioncolombia.gov.co/pre-registro/public/preregistro.jsf>) between 72 hours and 1 hour prior to arrival in, or departure from, Colombia. Carry a print-out of the form and be ready to show the electronic version on your mobile device at Colombian immigration.

➤ **Covid-19 related regulations are constantly changing. Therefore, follow these recommendations:**

- Monitor the Colombian Health Ministry website for the latest guidance regarding testing requirements.
 - Check COVID-19 Country Specific Information pages for updated information on COVID-19 related to the availability of testing.
-

➤ **Make sure you have:**

- Health insurance, and insurer contact and care provider numbers at hand.
 - Documentation regarding any special health condition, in case of an emergency.
 - Prescription, if you are taking medicine.
 - Although compulsory vaccinations are not required to enter Colombia, it is recommended to have current vaccinations, including Covid-19, rubella, and yellow fever.
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Travel with children

- Few foreigners travel with children in Colombia, but family trips are growing in popularity.
 - Almost all attractions in Colombia offer discounted admission for children.
 - Baby-changing facilities are not standard in public toilets and are rare in men's facilities.
 - Breastfeeding in public remains controversial in some sectors of Colombian society although education programs are seeing attitudes slowly changing.
-

LGBTIQ+ Travelers

- Compared to some Latin American countries, homosexuality is well tolerated in Colombia (it was declared legal by the government in 1981), especially in Santa Marta.
 - There is a substantial, though discreet, LGBTIQ+ scene and nightlife in Santa Marta but discretion is advised when it comes to public displays of affection.
 - Apps like Grindr for men are popular.
 - For LGBTIQ+ specific listings see the website www.guiagaycolombia.com
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Safety precautions

- Colombia suffered from internal armed conflict for over 50 years. As a result, the country has been labeled with stereotypes of widespread violence and drugs. However, on 24 November 2016, Colombia's President Santos signed a peace deal with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrilla movement to end the internal armed conflict. This peace agreement comes after four years of negotiations.

Colombia has made significant improvements in security over the past decades and is much safer to visit today than it was several years ago, but it still has its dangers like everywhere else. Accordingly, you should consider the following measures:

- Street crime is the main problem for travelers in major cities, including Santa Marta. Mugging and pickpocketing can be accompanied by violence. Be vigilant, particularly if you are in public places used by foreigners, or near official buildings.
- Avoid deprived areas of cities.
- Be aware of your surroundings. Use caution when walking or driving in areas with less police presence.
- Don't carry large amounts of money or wear valuable watches or jewelry.
- Avoid using your mobile phone in the street.
- Where possible use pre booked taxis or official operators.
- Don't leave drinks unattended in public or accept drinks or food from strangers.
- Do not invite strangers into your lodging or residence.
- Monitor the local security situation.
- Avoid drugs.
- Check ATMs for tampering and avoid using ATMs on deserted streets or at night.



An aerial photograph of Santa Marta, Colombia, taken at sunset. The image shows the city's dense urban area, a large bay filled with boats, and the surrounding green, hilly landscape under a dramatic, orange-hued sky.

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