



DISCOVERY GROUP TOURS

WEAVERBIRD: SPIRIT OF COLOMBIA

16 days from **£3,326pp**

COLOMBIA / BOGOTA / SAN AGUSTIN, POPAYAN AND CALI / COFFEE REGION (ZONA CAFETERA) / CARIBBEAN COAST AND ISLANDS / COLOMBIA'S HEARTLAND / CARTAGENA



WHY US

We are the UK's No.1 specialist in travel to Latin America and have been creating award-winning holidays to every corner of the region for over four decades; we pride ourselves on being the most knowledgeable people there are when it comes to travel to Central and South America and passionate about it too.

OUR JOURNEY

As our name suggests, we are single-minded about Latin America. This is what sets us apart from other travel companies – and what allows us to offer you not just a holiday but the opportunity to experience something extraordinary on inspiring journeys throughout Mexico, Central and South America.

WE LOVE LATIN AMERICA

A passion for the region runs through all we do

All our Consultants have lived or travelled extensively in Latin America

Up-to-the-minute knowledge underpinned by 40 years' experience

TRAVEL WITH CONFIDENCE

Fully bonded and licensed

ATOL-protected

On your side when it matters

Book with confidence, knowing every penny is secure

THE REAL LATIN AMERICA

Our insider knowledge helps you go beyond the guidebooks

We hand-pick hotels with character and the most rewarding excursions

Let us show you the Latin America we know and love



OVERVIEW & OUTLINE ITINERARY

On this adventurous small group tour, you'll discover the mysterious archaeological park at San Agustín, enjoy a farm stay in Colombia's bucolic coffee country, lie back on Caribbean beaches at Tayrona National Park and then dip into the culture of Cartagena.

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| | UK clients depart, arriving Bogotá, Colombia, in the evening or the following morning. |
| DAY 1 | City tour, including a visit to the Gold Museum. |
| DAY 2 | Optional excursions in and around Bogotá. |
| DAY 3 | Fly to Neiva, by road to San Agustín. |
| DAY 4 | Archaeological park visit. |
| DAY 5 | Tour of Magdalena Gorge and surrounding area. |
| DAY 6 | Drive to colonial Popayán. |
| DAYS 7-9 | Travel to the Coffee Region. Visit Salento and Valle de Cocora. |
| DAYS 10-11 | Fly to Santa Marta and visit the Tayrona National Park. |
| DAYS 12-13 | By private bus to Aracataca, birthplace of Gabriel García Márquez. Continue to Mompos. |
| DAY 14 | Travel by private vehicle to Cartagena. |
| DAY 15 | Explore one of Latin America's most interesting and famous cities - Cartagena. |
| DAY 16 | Drive to Cartagena airport. Depart for international flight. |
| | UK clients arrive home the following day. |

ITINERARY

Colombia is one of Latin America's most distinctive and often misunderstood countries. Many visitors consider it to be the continent's most beautiful. This trail-blazing small group trip allows you to explore Colombia's natural highlights, including the golden beaches and dense tropical vegetation of Tayrona National Park, the fertile rolling hills of the coffee country and the culturally rich, historic city of Cartagena.

Off the beaten track, you'll explore the picture-perfect colonial town of Mompós, on the banks of the River Magdalena and the intriguing ancient sculptures and burial chambers set in the lush countryside around San Agustín.

Colombia's distinct and heady mixture of Hispanic, colonial, indigenous and African heritage influences its food, music, architecture and culture. Its vibrancy, welcoming people and extraordinary natural and architectural features make it an engaging country, and this an unusual and captivating journey. The country has entered a period of peace and security and this is reflected in a growing interest in visiting one of the friendliest and most unspoilt countries on the continent.

UK clients depart, arriving Bogotá, Colombia, in the evening or the following morning.

Those of you arriving on an international flight this evening will be met at the airport and escorted to your hotel so you can rest before the tour officially starts the next morning.

DAY 1

City tour, including a visit to the Gold Museum.

If arriving on an overnight international flight will be met at the airport early in the morning and escorted to your hotel where your room will be waiting for you to rest for a few hours.

Bogotá is a city of sparkling prosperity, oppressive poverty, and everything in between. Its centre is awash with splendid colonial churches, fascinating museums, futuristic architecture and lively universities. Its population is diverse and engaging and its cultural life vibrant.

There is a guided tour of the city, including the fascinating colonial area of Candelaria with its fine historic buildings lining cobbled streets. The tour culminates with a visit to the excellent Gold Museum, housing more than 34,000 gold pieces and arguably the most impressive museum of its kind in the world.

DAY 2

Optional excursions in and around Bogotá.

You have the option to head into the attractive La Sabana countryside, dotted with greenhouses that assist the region's lucrative cut-flower industry. Zipaquirá is home to a still functioning, centuries-old salt mine. Nearly 200m beneath the earth is an extraordinary, mysterious salt cathedral, its vast pillars and walls made from glistening salt. There are 14 stations of the cross sculpted by different Colombian artists.

The excursion continues across some beautiful countryside to the Guatavita Lagoon. There is a hike to the crater-lake's 3,100m rim, offering wonderful views. Legend has it that this was the site of legendary El Dorado. The ancient Chibcha king was thought to have been doused in sap and gold dust and pushed out onto the lake's calm waters in a ceremonial raft, from which he would submerge himself, rinsing off this valuable body paint. Other precious objects were believed to have been thrown into the lake as offerings, and a number have been recovered and are housed in the gold museum in Bogotá.

DAY 3

Fly to Neiva, by road to San Agustín.

Transfer to the airport for a flight to Neiva (1 hour), then there's a pleasant 4 hour drive past coffee plantations and undulating green hills to San Agustín. This pretty little town is your base for the next 3 nights, and has a smattering of attractive colonial houses and churches, cobbled streets and shady plazas.

DAY 4

Archaeological park visit.

Today there is an excursion to the archaeological park, about 3km from the town. Here more than 100 statues, some of which are thought to date back to 3,300BC, stand amid the forested countryside. Alongside them are circular burial houses, only about a third of which have been excavated, into which human sacrifices and offerings to the gods were made.

Little is known about the culture which produced these stone figures, but it is an impressive site in beautiful countryside and there are hiking opportunities into the surrounding area, including to the Fuente de Lavapatas, where stream water runs through channels carved into the stone.

DAY 5

Tour of Magdalena Gorge and surrounding area.

A day trip takes you by through sugar plantations and up and down steep gorges to the Magdalena Canyon. Here you can see huge figures carved into rocks midway up the canyon wall, with the river crashing below, and some free-standing stones sculpted into rudimentary animal shapes.

DAY 6

Drive to colonial Popayán.

It's a beautiful and varied road through rugged hills which first climbs and then descends through cattle pastures and crinkled bright green hills to the university town of Popayán (4-5hrs). Popayán is a stately colonial town which has maintained its character in spite of devastating earthquakes. For many years during the troubles the city was off limits; now it is safe but still relatively undiscovered by tourists, a pleasant change from many popular, equally exquisite Spanish cities in Latin America and a fantastic place to spend the night.

DAYS 7-9

Travel to the Coffee Region. Visit Salento and Valle de Cocora.

We continue on by road (5hrs) to the heart of the countries coffee region. You spend 3 days in this beautiful, relaxing area, with walking trails, colourful flora and fauna and fresh coffee at your fingertips.

Time will be spent at a coffee ranch and there is a guided tour of a local farm, where you gain an insight into subsistence agriculture in the region. Learn about fruit production and tropical flower cultivation as well as the intricacies of the coffee production process, including the picking, de-pulping, washing, drying and roasting of the beans. There are opportunities to sample the final product. There is also the chance to drive out to traditional village Salento, its houses adorned with balconies bursting with flowers, and with wonderful views of the Cordillera Central emerging from behind elegant colonial buildings.

Continue to Valle de la Cocora, a beautiful nature reserve which is home to the wax palm, Colombia's national tree and the only palm which grows above 3,000m. Follow a well-marked path up the valley and look out over the mountains' verdant foothills, and the cultivated patchwork of fields made up of a dozen shades of green.

On the last day in the region there is the opportunity to visit the Botanical Gardens at Calarca. A series of nature trails pass abundant tropical flowers and there is an excellent insect museum and enclosed butterfly garden. Alternatively, you may prefer to take a horse-riding excursion from a nearby farm to explore the surrounding countryside.

DAYS 10-11

Fly to Santa Marta and visit the Tayrona National Park.

Travel back to Armenia before boarding a flight via Bogota to the Caribbean coast and the city of Santa Marta. Santa Marta is South America's oldest surviving colonial city and it's spruced up town centre offers small scale historic charm as well as some great restaurants, bars and cafés. It is probably most famous for being where the great liberator Simon Bolivar was born.

From here it's a short journey to the incredible Parque Nacional Tayrona. There is a full day trip to this dazzling region of thick, humid jungle and exquisite unspoiled beaches fringed by coconut palms and peppered with vast, smooth boulders. It was once home to the indigenous Tayrona indians. Jungle paths follow tree-covered trails surrounded by tropical dry forest, with monkeys swinging in the trees overhead and the atmosphere heavy with heat. There are a number of restaurants and bars in the park where you can stop for lunch in the shade and take in your exotic surroundings. Of course if you'd rather have the day to explore or relax in Santa Marta then this can easily be arranged locally.

DAYS 12-13

By private bus to Aracataca, birthplace of Gabriel García Márquez. Continue to Mompos.

A private bus then takes you inland to the small provincial town of Aracataca (2 hours). The town is famous as the birth place of Gabriel García Márquez, and provides a good place to stop for lunch. Márquez is arguably Latin America's most famous writer and his works; (including 'One Hundred Years of Solitude') often feature in lists of the greatest novels ever written. He was born in Aracataca in 1927, and his birthplace features in some of his stories as the fictional town of Macondo. Today the family house he was raised in is a museum, and you will have time to visit the home of the Nobel Prize winning author.

A further 5 hour journey past banana and oil palm plantations leads to the small provincial town of Mompos. Situated on the eastern banks of the Magdalena River, this 16th-century town is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one feels as if transported into a Gabriel García Marquez novel, wandering streets fronted by whitewashed colonial buildings and mansions which were once home to powerful Spanish merchants (for whom the town was an important stopping-off point on the trade route to Cartagena). Spend 2 days in these beautiful surroundings, relaxing in the shady plazas, lapping up the atmosphere, and enjoy the natural scenery on the river banks on an included boat trip.

DAY 14

Travel by private vehicle to Cartagena.

The day is spent travelling back by private vehicle to the Caribbean coast and the famous city of Cartagena.

DAY 15

Explore one of Latin America's most interesting and famous cities - Cartagena.

Caribbean's most exotic and romantic colonial city, Cartagena was founded in 1533, quickly blossoming to become the main Spanish port in the Caribbean, and a gateway to the north of the continent. Treasure plundered from native inhabitants was stored here until the galleons could ship it back to Spain, and it therefore became a tempting target for pirates. In order to protect their booty, the Spanish constructed an elaborate system of ramparts, which still encircle the town.

Today, while Cartagena has expanded dramatically, the walled centre has changed very little, allowing a glimpse of 16th and 17th-century Spanish architecture and town planning. Enjoy the shade provided by the buildings in these labyrinthine, cobbled streets, and explore the monasteries, palaces, churches, plazas and imposing mansions where the overhanging balconies are heavy with flowers.

Beyond this, the city opens up: an eclectic and seductive mix of Caribbean and African influences produces a vibrant street life, with fruit stalls lining the roads and pulsating rhythms emerging from cars and houses. A guided tour will help you soak up the atmosphere of this unique city.

DAY 16

Drive to Cartagena airport. Depart for international flight.

UK clients arrive home the following day.

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE PRICE

Services of our team of experts in our London office

Services of Journey Latin America local representatives and guides

All land and air transport within Latin America

Accommodation as specified

Meals as specified

Excursions as specified, including entrance fees

INCLUDED EXCURSIONS

Bogotá: city tour and Gold Museum

San Agustín: Archaeological Park

San Agustín: Magdalena Valley

Coffee region: tour of coffee farm, Salento and Cocora Valley

Tayrona: visit to the National Park

Aracataca: Marquez museum

Mompós: boat trip

Cartagena: city tour

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE

Tips and gratuities

Meals other than specified

International flights to Latin America

Airport taxes, when not included in the ticket

Optional excursions

ESSENTIALS

ABOUT OUR GROUP TOURS

To find out more about how our group tours including group sizes, solo travellers and why to choose us. Please click [here](#).

TOUR LEADER

On this tour, you'll be accompanied from start to finish by one of **our exceptional Journey Latin America tour leaders**. From the moment you land in Latin America until the day the tour ends they will deal with all the practicalities, expertly adapting to the circumstances and individual needs of the group. Rather than different guides in different cities, your leader will get to know the group and keep you informed and entertained as you go.

SUMMARY OF NIGHTS

17 days, 16 nights: Bogotá 3 (or 2 with check-in on arrival if flying overnight from the UK); San Agustín 3; Popayán 1; Coffee farm 3; Santa Marta 2; Mompós 2; Cartagena 2.

ACCOMMODATION

For our Discovery Journeys we aim to use good quality, value-for-money accommodation. The properties we use are well maintained and rooms will have a private bathroom.

The focus of these trips is on getting outside, seeing the sights, and experiencing local restaurants and cafes, therefore not all hotels will have evening dining facilities. If you prefer more luxurious accommodation, please see the Classic Journeys on their respective pages on our website.

In Mompos, Santa Marta and Cartagena there may well not be hot water. This is due to the local climate and the perceived needs for it and the fact that many properties/areas may not have the infrastructure.

Examples of hotels used on this journey include:

- Bogotá: Casa Deco
- San Agustín: Hacienda Akawanka
- Coffee region: El Percal
- Popayan: La Plazuela
- Santa Marta: Casa de Leda
- Mompós: Casa Amarilla
- Cartagena: Tres Banderas

On very rare occasions these hotels can change, however please speak to one of our consultants who can provide full details for each departure if you have any doubts. Address and contact details will be sent out with your final documents.

TRANSPORT

3 flights (longest 3.5 hours) and 8 road journeys (longest 8 hours) all done by private vehicle.

MEALS

Breakfast daily.

OPTIONAL EXCURSIONS

On this tour the price includes excursions in all the places you visit as per the itinerary. There will however likely be some free time when you may choose to take part in an optional excursion. These are booked locally through your tour leader once you are in Latin America, however we are more than happy to advise you of what is on offer in advance of your holiday so you can best plan the excursions that suit you.

TRAVELLING ALONE

There is no extra cost for single travellers who are willing to share a room. You will be accommodated with a same-sex member of the group who is usually also travelling solo. For single travellers who wish to be sure of having their own room there are a limited number of single supplement places available, which carry a surcharge.

TRIP SUITABILITY

All walks on this journey are optional and you should discuss with your tour leader which are suitable for you. There are some long days spent travelling, in the heat, however many comfort stops are made to enjoy the scenery on route.

ALTITUDE

Several days are spent at high altitude (over 2,500m). You may notice the effect of high altitude; symptoms vary: most common are mild headaches and breathlessness. If you drink plenty of water and allow your body to acclimatise (don't exert yourself or drink alcohol) in the first couple of days after arrival, you will minimise your chances of being adversely affected.

CLIMATE

The dry season in Colombia is from December until March and then June to September and temperatures during this period average around 30°C, although are more or less consistent throughout the year. Bogotá, and towns in the coffee growing region have a spring like climate and can be chilly at night. Cartagena and the Caribbean coast are hot throughout the year, with rainy seasons typically in April, May, October and November.

CLOTHING, EQUIPMENT AND LUGGAGE

Bring plenty of light cotton clothing and good, comfortable walking shoes. Warm items and a good waterproof jacket are also necessary for all departures.

Protection against the sun (sun block, sun hat) and mosquito repellent are essential and you should bring swimwear. A daypack is essential for carrying rainwear, snacks, books/tablet and a water bottle.

MONEY

Please see the Country Info tab on this holiday for our latest currency information and advice about how to take your spending money. Tipping in Latin America is almost always done using cash. It is customary to tip tour leaders, local guides, drivers, boat crews and other service providers such as restaurant staff and porters. Full tipping guidelines are sent with your confirmation documents as is advice on local costs.

HEALTH, ENTRY REQUIREMENTS AND INSURANCE

For health information on travelling to Colombia including recommended vaccinations, please see <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/>

All Latin American countries have specific entry regulations related to Covid 19. Please also check our Travel Hub for further information.

Holders of a full British passport do not require a visa, although passports should be valid for at least 6 months after the trip begins. Other nationalities should enquire with us or check with the consulates.

Travel insurance is essential. Details of our recommended policy can be found on the Travel insurance website.

Our full briefing dossier contains more information on vaccinations, visas and insurance and will be provided with your final travel documents or can be requested from your travel consultant at any time.

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GET IN TOUCH WITH US...

Our friendly, knowledgeable team of travel experts are always happy to chat about holiday ideas and share helpful advice. Give us a call today and begin planning your perfect trip to Latin America.

GIVE US A CALL

We'd love to chat

0208 747 8315

OPENING HOURS

Monday – Friday: 9am – 6pm

Saturday & Sunday: Closed

SEND US AN EMAIL

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