JOURNEY
LATIN AMERICA



PRIVATE JOURNEYS WITH JOURNEY LATIN

MAGDALENA RIVER CRUISE: COLOMBIA'S HIDDEN GEMS

16 days from **£6,750pp**

COLOMBIA / BOGOTA / COFFEE REGION (ZONA CAFETERA) / MEDELLIN / 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

Rising in the Colombian Massif and flowing for more than 1,500km to the Caribbean coast, the Magdalena River has long been Colombia's most important waterway. For centuries, it served as the country's main commercial artery, carrying gold, tobacco, coffee and countless other goods from the interior to ports on the Caribbean coast. Passenger steamers once travelled its waters too, and journeys along the river left a lasting impression on a young Gabriel García Márquez, later inspiring many of his novels.

DAY 1	**Arrive in Bogotá and transfer to your hotel.**
DAY 2	**Walking tour including visit to the Gold Museum.**
DAY 3	**Fly to the Coffee Region**
DAY 4	**Explore the Cocora Valley & the heritage towns of Salento & Filandia.**
DAY 5	**Tour a traditional working coffee farm.**
DAY 7	**Continue by road to Medellin.**
DAY 8	**Medellin City Tour.**
DAY 8	**Fly to Barranquilla on the Caribbean Coast and join your River Magdalena cruise.**
DAY 9	**Iraca palm weaving workshop**
DAY 10	**Boca de Tacaloa; arrive in Mompox.**
DAY 11	**Mompox walking tour and Ciénaga Pijiño wildlife.**
DAY 12	**Santa Bárbara de Pinto & Cumbia performance.**
DAY 13	**Calamar & Palenque.**
DAY 14	**Arrive in historic Cartagena.**
DAY 15	**Disembark; day at leisure in Cartagena**
DAY 16	**Transfer to the airport for your flight home.**

ITINERARY

DAY 1

Arrive in Bogotá and transfer to your hotel.

You'll be met at the airport and escorted to your hotel in the capital.

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 and seductive.

DAY 2

Walking tour including visit to the Gold Museum.

Step straight out of your hotel and into the heart of La Candelaria, Bogotá's atmospheric historic quarter. Accompanied by your guide, explore cobbled streets lined with colourful colonial houses, lively plazas and striking murals, while learning about the events and characters that have shaped Colombia's capital. At its heart lies the Plaza de Bolívar, the city's grand main square, framed by the cathedral and some of the country's most important government buildings.

The tour concludes at the renowned Gold Museum, widely regarded as one of the finest in Latin America. Its collection of 34,000 pre-Columbian gold artefacts offers a fascinating insight into the artistry, beliefs and traditions of Colombia's indigenous cultures.

DAY 3

Fly to the Coffee Region

A one-hour flight brings you to Pereira in Colombia's Coffee Region, a beautiful landscape of rolling emerald-green hills draped in coffee plantations and scattered with traditional *fincas*.

You'll spend the next couple of days immersed in the rhythms of rural Colombia, with opportunities to explore some of the region's heritage towns, wander among the towering wax palms of the Cocora Valley and, of course, sample some of the country's finest coffee.

DAY 4

Explore the Cocora Valley & the heritage towns of Salento & Filandia.

The Cocora Valley is one of Colombia's most iconic landscapes, where thousands of towering wax palms rise above the surrounding hills and cloud forest. Found at elevations of 1,800m to 2,400m, they are Colombia's national tree and the only palm species found at this altitude in the Andes.

Afterwards, continue to the nearby towns of Salento and Filandia, known for their colourful colonial architecture, flower-filled balconies and friendly atmosphere. Both retain a strong connection to the region's coffee-growing heritage and are among the most attractive towns in Colombia's Coffee Region.

DAY 5

Tour a traditional working coffee farm.

Today offers a chance to experience life on a working coffee farm. A scenic drive through the hills above Pereira leads to Finca La Mina, a family-run *finca* near the village of Palestina, where members of the family welcome you as their guests.

As you explore the plantation together, you'll learn about the journey from seed to cup and gain a deeper understanding of the traditions that have shaped Colombia's Coffee Region for generations. There'll be plenty of opportunities to taste different coffees along the way, before sitting down to a typical Colombian lunch.

DAY 7

Continue by road to Medellin.

Five hours north of Colombia's Coffee Region lies Medellín, the country's second-largest city, and affectionately known as the 'City of Eternal Spring' for its mild year-round climate.

Once synonymous with drug cartels and violence, Medellín has reinvented itself as one of Latin America's most innovative and forward-looking cities, celebrated for its public art, urban renewal projects and vibrant cultural scene.

DAY 8

Medellin City Tour.

This half-day tour provides an introduction to Medellín, a city that has undergone one of the most remarkable transformations in Latin America. Strolling through the lively downtown streets to Plaza Botero, you'll find a collection of Fernando Botero's distinctive oversized sculptures, which the Colombian artist donated to his hometown. The bustling streets and public spaces reveal a city full of energy and confidence.

A ride on the Metrocable (cable car) takes you high above the city to Santo Domingo, a neighbourhood that has become a symbol of Medellín's revival. With panoramic views stretching across the Aburrá Valley, you'll gain an insight into the ambitious social and transport projects that have helped reshape the city over recent decades and improve the lives of many of its residents.

DAY 8

Fly to Barranquilla on the Caribbean Coast and join your River Magdalena cruise.

A short flight takes you to Barranquilla on Colombia's Caribbean coast, where you join your Magdalena River cruise.

For centuries, the Magdalena was Colombia's principal transport artery, linking the Caribbean coast with the Andean heartland and shaping the country's history, culture and commerce. Over the next eight days, you'll follow this legendary river through a region rich in wildlife, tradition and riverside communities.

The afternoon is free to settle into your stateroom and explore the ship before your journey begins. As the sun sets, a special performance showcases the music, dance and colourful costumes of the Carnaval de Barranquilla. Recognised by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, it is one of Colombia's most important cultural celebrations and a source of immense local pride.

DAY 9

Iraca palm weaving workshop

Before the cruise sets sail, you can choose between exploring Barranquilla or visiting Usiacurí, a small town renowned for its handicrafts made from locally grown iraca palm.

In Usiacurí, you'll visit a workshop to see how the fibres are woven into intricate baskets, hats and decorative items, with time to meet local artisans and browse their work.

You'll rejoin the ship in Sabanagrande, where your journey along the Magdalena River truly begins.

DAY 10

Boca de Tacaloa; arrive in Mompox.

This morning, you'll explore the peaceful wetlands of Boca de Tacaloa by small boat. Watch a traditional fishing demonstration and learn about techniques that have sustained communities along the Magdalena River for generations, while keeping an eye out for some of the region's rich birdlife.

As evening falls, you'll arrive in Mompox, a beautifully preserved colonial town whose prosperity once depended on river trade along the Magdalena. A special open-air jazz performance by local musicians provides a memorable introduction to this historic riverside settlement.

DAY 11

Mompox walking tour and Ciénaga Pijiño wildlife.

Founded in 1540, Mompox remains one of Colombia's most atmospheric colonial towns. Its quiet cobbled streets, colourful houses, elegant churches and riverside setting have changed little over the centuries, offering a glimpse into a bygone era.

Once an important trading post on the Magdalena River, the town became renowned for producing some of Colombia's finest filigree jewellery, a tradition that continues today. During a guided tour, you'll explore the historic centre and visit a local workshop to see the delicate craft still practised by Mompox's artisans.

Beyond the town, you'll have the opportunity to explore the wetlands of the Ciénaga Pijiño by small boat.These wetlands are home to a rich variety of birdlife and provide excellent birdwatching, particularly at sunrise and sunset.

DAY 12

Santa Bárbara de Pinto & Cumbia performance.

Leaving Mompox behind, you'll continue north along the Magdalena River, stopping en route at the riverside village of Santa Bárbara de Pinto. Here, you'll discover traditions that remain an important part of daily life, from the hand-rolling of tobacco to the craft of fishing-net weaving.

Back on board, you'll be introduced to *La Cumbia*, a musical tradition deeply rooted in the communities of Colombia's Caribbean coast and the Magdalena River. Through music, dance and storytelling, local families from El Banco share a cultural heritage that has been passed down through generations and remains central to life along the river today.

DAY 13

Calamar & Palenque.

Today begins with a tour of Calamar by *paola*, a bicycle taxi for two, travelling along the riverside malecón to the House of Culture. The town also marks the beginning of the Canal del Dique, the artificial channel linking the Magdalena River with the Bay of Cartagena, which the cruise now follows.

In Mahates, you'll continue by road to Palenque, widely regarded as the first free town in the Americas. Founded by formerly enslaved people who escaped colonial rule, it remains a place with a strong Afro-Colombian heritage.

During your visit, you'll discover traditions that remain central to community life, from distinctive hairstyles and ancestral medicine to the Palenquero language, music and rhythms that continue to shape the town.

DAY 14

Arrive in historic Cartagena.

The ship continues through the night, so you'll wake up in Cartagena, one of Latin America's most captivating cities. Its walled historic centre stands as a reminder of the wealth that once flowed through this important Caribbean port. During a guided tour, you'll explore its cobbled streets, leafy plazas and beautifully preserved colonial architecture, while learning how Cartagena's extensive fortifications helped protect Spain's trade routes from pirates and rival powers.

Afterwards, you'll visit the imposing Castillo San Felipe de Barajas, built to defend the city from attack, before continuing to the colourful neighbourhood of Getsemaní. Once a working-class district beyond the city walls, it's now known for its vibrant street art, lively atmosphere and independent bars and cafés.

DAY 15

Disembark; day at leisure in Cartagena

After disembarking, the day is yours to further enjoy Cartagena. Relax in a shady plaza with a coffee, browse the city's many boutiques and galleries, or sample the local cuisine at one of its excellent restaurants.

DAY 16

Transfer to the airport for your flight home.

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

Bogota: walking tour & Gold Museum

Coffee Region: Cocora Valley, Salento & Filandia

Coffee Region: Coffee tour at a traditional finca

Medellin: City tour

River Magdalena: all excursions are included.

Cartagena: San Felipe fortress & street art of Getsemani

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

SUMMARY OF NIGHTS

16 days / 15 nights: Bogota 2; Coffee Region 3; Medellin 2; Magdalena River 7; Cartagena 1.

ACCOMMODATION

This trip features a mix of colonial-style and contemporary hotels. The seven-night cruise on the Magdalena River takes place aboard a comfortable, well-equipped vessel accommodating up to 60 passengers.

Upgrades and alternate options are possible. Please contact us for details.

TRANSPORT

In addition to airport-hotel transfers, this trip includes:

- 2 domestic flights (1 hour each)
- 1 long-distance road journey (approx. 5 hours)
- 7-night cruise on the Magdalena River

MEALS

Breakfast: daily

Lunch: day 5

Full board on Magdalena River cruise

GUIDES

Our local, trusted and carefully selected partners understand the expectations of our customers very well, and their staff and guides are consistently singled out for praise by clients on their return.

On this holiday, you will be joined by different guides for each activity and or region, ensuring you benefit from specialised expertise and knowledge, often from someone local to the area.

OPTIONAL EXCURSIONS

As well as any included activities, most Private Journeys include some free time for optional excursions. As optional excursions are often subject to availability, we recommend you discuss and arrange them with your Travel Expert as early as possible before you depart.

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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

tours@journeylatinamerica.com