



CLASSIC GROUP TOURS

CHACHALACA: COLOMBIA'S COLONIAL AND COFFEE CULTURE

14 days from **£4,370pp**

**COLOMBIA / BOGOTA / COLOMBIA'S HEARTLAND / COFFEE REGION (ZONA CAFETERA) /
MEDELLIN / CARTAGENA**

WITH OVER 40 YEARS EXPERIENCE, NO-ONE KNOWS LATIN AMERICA LIKE WE DO

EXPERIENCE SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY

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

Explore cosmopolitan Bogotá, colonial masterpiece Villas de Leyva, the peaceful Andean scenery of the coffee region, resurgent city Medellín and historic Cartagena on the Caribbean coast.

	UK clients depart, arriving Bogotá, Colombia, in the evening or the following morning.
DAYS 1-2	City tour, including a visit to the Gold Museum.
DAY 3	Drive to Villa de Leyva via Zipaquirá salt cathedral.
DAY 4	Guided visit to the varied highlights of the surrounding area.
DAY 5	Fly to Armenia in the coffee region.
DAY 6	Guided visit to a coffee farm.
DAY 7	Guided day trip to Valle de Cocora, Salento and Filandia.
DAY 8	Travel from Armenia to Medellín by road.
DAY 9	Guided city tour of Medellín.
DAY 10	Guided visit to El Peñol and Guatapé.
DAY 11	Fly to Cartagena on the Caribbean coast.
DAY 12	Guided city tour of Cartagena.
DAY 13	Day at leisure in Cartagena.
DAY 14	Transfer to airport for international flight. UK clients arrive home the following day.

ITINERARY

On this new tour, Colombia offers you an experience of riches galore in a range of sumptuous landscapes and vibrant towns and cities. Having emerged from a period of social and political unrest, the country is resurging with a new optimism which permeates the very fibre of society both in rural villages and the vividly contrasting major cities. The welcome from its youthful, friendly people has always been warm, but now that is imbued with a tangible confidence in the future.

The dynamic capital Bogotá and romantic, Caribbean Cartagena have long been on the radar for visitors, and the gorgeous coffee region has been welcoming guests for some time to its historic fincas. Here we also take you to Villa de Leyva, a beautifully preserved Spanish colonial town; arty villages Salento, Filandia and Guatapé, and a wholly transformed Medellín, now one of the most exciting cities on the continent for the arts, entertainment and gastronomy.

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.

DAYS 1-2

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 in a commercial and residential quarter in the popular north of the city where your room will be waiting for you to rest for a few hours.

Bogotá is a city of sparkling prosperity and creative innovation, but also home to people living on the margins of society, and everything in between. It's awash with splendid colonial churches, fascinating museums, futuristic architecture and lively universities. Its population is diverse and engaging and its cultural life vibrant.

You have time to relax, get accustomed to the altitude, get to know your fellow travellers and familiarise yourself with your surroundings. A short hop from the hotel is the up and coming quarter Usaquén, once a town in its own right but now absorbed into the capital with a vivacious flea market on Sundays.

We take you on a guided exploration of the city with a walking tour of the historic core, the colonial Candelaria district, crammed with baroque churches, museums and graceful Spanish-style buildings with intricate balconies, shuttered windows and huge wooden doors. You head to the historic centre and the vast central Plaza de Bolívar, framed by the imposing Cathedral and Congress building. Explore the steep colonial streets ultimately reaching the Gold Museum. This is an extraordinary, well-displayed collection of pre-Columbian artefacts housing more than 34,000 gold pieces.

Later there's an ascent of the mountain towering over Bogotá, with a white church at its peak. From there, at a heady 3,152m above sea level, there are splendid views. There's a steep path up to the top but you won't have to climb: a cable-car and funicular railway station whizz you to the top.

DAY 3

Drive to Villa de Leyva via Zipaquirá salt cathedral.

3-4 hours' drive from Bogotá, Villa de Leyva is a well-preserved colonial highland town steeped in history, popular among Colombian and foreign visitors alike and busy at weekends. En route you make a stop at Zipaquirá, home to a centuries-old salt mine, which is still functioning. Nearly 200m beneath the earth are two extraordinary salt cathedrals, their vast pillars and walls made from glistening salt. There are also 14 stations of the cross sculpted by various Colombian artists.

Villa de Leyva is a small Spanish-style town founded in 1572 which has been home to many important politicians, artists and wealthy families of the colonial period. The town is extremely well preserved. The enormous *plaza mayor* (the largest in Colombia) is flanked on all sides by red-tiled, whitewashed houses and most of the streets are cobbled. You can wander around a leisurely place absorbing the atmosphere, browsing in the handicraft shops and popping in to any of the small museums.

This region of Boyacá was once submerged under the sea and a large number of marine fossils can be seen in the area. The scenery of the immediate surrounding countryside is somewhat Mediterranean in appearance and olives, oranges and other citrus fruits are cultivated there. However, nearby are both near-desert, arid landscapes and chilly high altitude puna blanketed in rough grassland.

DAY 4

Guided visit to the varied highlights of the surrounding area.

Today you visit El Infiernito, a pre-Columbian Muisca indian site at the outskirts of Villa de Leyva. It is composed of several earthworks surrounding a setting of upright standing stones. The site was a centre of religious ceremonies and spiritual purification rites, and also served as a rudimentary astronomical observatory.

You also visit the 'Ecce Homo' Dominican convent, constructed in the XVII century, which has experienced a chequered history of military occupation, abandonment and restoration. You also get to view the fossil of a reptile revealed just outside the town which is reckoned to be more than 150 million years old. Contrasting with the colonial baroque style is the Gaudiesque Casa Terracota which looks a bit like the cosy, rustic home of a hobbit. As its name suggests it is virtually completely constructed and furnished with locally made terracotta ceramic tiles, including mosaics and an ingenious use of light.

DAY 5

Fly to Armenia in the coffee region.

You are driven back to Bogotá via the Boyacá Bridge, where Simon Bolívar and his troops won the most important battle against the Spanish, sealing Colombia's independence. There's also a stop at Laguna Guatavita, an emerald green lake filling a crater hidden below steep cliffs in a tightly forested nature reserve. This lake pinpoints the origin of the legend of El Dorado, triggering many subsequent ill-fated quests for gold.

From Bogotá airport you fly to Armenia in the famous coffee region, centred on the western slopes of the Cordillera Central. This green and fertile area has a pleasant climate, and lovely bucolic scenery with a mountainous, lush, green landscape of shiny coffee bushes interspersed with enormous bamboo jungles and banana plants. You'll be staying at traditionally styled countryside accommodation in this photogenic region.

DAY 6

Guided visit to a coffee farm.

Many working fincas (coffee farms) have embraced tourism and welcome visitors onto their plantations to learn all about the coffee-growing process. It is particularly interesting to visit during the harvests (April to May, October to December) when the farms are a hive of activity. You visit one of the region's estates and learn about the intricacies of coffee production, from the picking of the coffee cherries to the various stages of processing, sorting, grading, roasting and the final brewing of the beans.

DAY 7**Guided day trip to Valle de Cocora, Salento and Filandia.**

You take a guided day trip out to Valle de 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. There's a well-marked path up the valley to look out over the mountains' verdant foothills, and the cultivated patchwork of fields made up of a dozen shades of green.

On the way back to Armenia we visit the traditional Colombian village Salento, its houses adorned with balconies bursting with flowers, and with wonderful views of the Cordillera Central emerging from behind elegant colonial and bahareque (traditional mud and wood intertwined) buildings. It still has a villagey ambiance but is a popular weekend destination for Colombians these days and here you can browse a number of artisan craft shops.

You also make a stop in Filandia, one of the most quintessential villages of the coffee region where the window frames, doors and balconies are painted in bold paint-box bright primary colours.

DAY 8**Travel from Armenia to Medellín by road.**

Medellín, the capital of Antioquia department, has a year-round temperate climate, which explains why it is also known as the 'City of Eternal Spring'. Its population is about 3 million, which makes it the second-largest city in the country. We are delighted to be able to include a visit on our itinerary as we are sure you'll be captivated.

Medellín has left behind its somewhat dodgy reputation for newfound celebrity as a dynamic cultural and gastronomical centre. This exciting city exudes youthful innovation and enthusiasm hosting numerous internationally recognised events such as the August Flower Fair and the International Poetry Festival. You'll find well-managed parks and plazas dotted with sculptures, while the whole city is serenaded by music.

DAY 9**Guided city tour of Medellín.**

Explore downtown Medellín and the historical centre with its soundtrack of traditional Guasca music, performed by musicians in Parque Berrio. Stroll through the hustle and bustle of downtown to Plaza de las Esculturas which hosts an exhibition of the work of Colombian artist Fernando Botero, whose voluptuous sculptures have become a landmark of the city.

Take the Metrocable service up to Santo Domingo, in the past a notorious area ruled by gangs but where now the focal point is the library, Parque Biblioteca, featuring thousands of books, which was opened by the King and Queen of Spain in 2007. The cable-car system was constructed to make the inner city more accessible to people from the outskirts. While enjoying bird's-eye views over the sprawling residential and commercial quarters you learn more about the transformation of Medellín into a fascinating melting pot of cultures with some of the friendliest and warmest people in Latin America.

DAY 10**Guided visit to El Peñol and Guatapé.**

You'll travel by road through the eastern highlands of Antioquia. The Peñol Boulder is one of the most spectacular natural features in the landscapes surrounding Medellín. This striking 200m high sugar-loaf shaped granite monolith can be climbed via a 740-step pathway. If you choose to ascend this way your efforts will be rewarded with breathtaking views over the picturesque countryside where bright green, crinkly mountains are studded by spidery blue lakes.

You also make a stop at the tranquil village Guatapé, a lakeside town with a pleasantly warm climate. It is famous for its Greco-Roman church and the vivid paintings, called *zócalos*, featuring local families and historical events which adorn the base of the Technicolor, paint-box-bright houses. Here you have time to explore independently, perhaps savouring a traditional Colombian lunch on the lake shore, taking a boat ride on the placid waters or just strolling through the streets, which are quiet except at weekends when they are thronged by families from Medellín.

DAY 11**Fly to Cartagena on the Caribbean coast.**

The country's most exotic and atmospheric colonial city, Cartagena, was founded in 1533. It quickly blossomed to become the main Spanish port in the Caribbean. Treasure plundered from native indians was stored there until galleons could ship it back to Spain, and the city became a tempting target for pirates. In order to protect their booty, the Spanish colonists constructed an elaborate system of ramparts which still encircle the town.

Today, while Cartagena has expanded dramatically, the walled centre has changed very little, preserving an uninterrupted display of 16th and 17th-century Spanish architecture. Here you can enjoy the shade provided by the buildings in the labyrinthine cobbled streets, and explore the many monasteries, palaces, churches, plazas and imposing mansions where the overhanging balconies are heavy with flowers.

DAY 12**Guided city tour of Cartagena.**

The city, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is an eclectic and seductive mix of Caribbean and African influences producing a vibrant street life, with fruit stalls lining the roads and pulsating rhythms emerging from cars and houses. Your guided tour of the historic walled city, the forts and battlements will help you soak up the atmosphere of this seductive city, possibly the most evocative and romantic on the continent.

DAY 13**Day at leisure in Cartagena.**

Now you enjoy a day at leisure, free further to explore the streets, visit the famous fort, have a meal in one of the many fantastic al fresco restaurants or even travel further afield and take a speedboat to spend the day on the coral, palm-kissed beaches of the nearby Rosario Islands.

DAY 14**Transfer to airport 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

Zipaquirá salt cathedral and Laguna Guatavita

Villa de Leyva: EccoHomo, El Fossil, El Infiernito and Casa Terracota

Coffee region: tour of Coffee farm

Coffee region: Cocora Valley, Salento and Filandia

Medellín: city tour

Medellín: Antioquia region tour

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

15 days, 14 nights: Bogotá 2 (or 2 with check-in on arrival if flying overnight from the UK); Villa de Leyva 2; Coffee region 3; Medellín 3; Cartagena 3.

ACCOMMODATION

On this journey we use mid-range and upper mid-range hotels and lodges.

Examples of hotels on the Chachalaca include:

- Bogotá: Artisan DC
- Villa de Leyva: Posada San Antonio
- Coffee region: Casa Rivera del Cacao
- Medellín: Park 10
- Cartagena: Bastión Luxury Hotel

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

2 flights (longest 1.5hrs); 4 road journeys (longest 7-8hrs with stops for drinks and lunch) 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.

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 day pack is essential for carrying rain-wear, 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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