COLOMBIA

ANDES TO CARIBBEAN ODYSSEY

A cultural and historical trip to Bogota, the Coffee Triangle and Cartagena







DURATION: 9 days / 8 nights

SEASON: December through March & June through September

DEPARTURES: Guaranteed with a minimum of 4 participants

TRIP RATING: Moderate Cultural Tour, Grade (II) - A superb, hotel and lodge-based adventure, ideal for couples, families, photographers, and any traveler who wants an in-depth introduction to the extraordinary cultural diversity and history of Colombia. This active itinerary features walking tours and day hikes of 2-4 hours in duration at elevations up to 9,000 ft.

2027 DATES: On request any week throughout the year.

INTRODUCTION: Colombia is a land of startling contrasts that is re-emerging on wish-lists for discerning South America travelers. With its rich cultural history, colonial architecture, geographical diversity and simple warmth and hospitality, it's easy to see why this captivating country is becoming an increasingly popular spot. Located in the northwest of the continent, Colombia is the 4th largest country in South America and is the only one on the continent to boast coastlines on both the Pacific and Atlantic (Caribbean) oceans. It shares a portion of the lush Amazon rainforest and the majestic Andes Mountains. The modern-day Republic of Colombia offers a wealth of cultural attractions dating to its pre-Columbian and colonial history. Nature and wildlife abound in its varied landscapes and the spirit and warmth of its people will ensure your Colombian experience will be one that lingers on long after you return home.

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS:

- Marvel at collections of pre-Hispanic gold work at the Gold Museum in Bogota
- Discover the impressive Salt Cathedral of Zipaquirá, an underground church built inside a salt mine
- Spend 3 days in the scenic Coffee Triangle region declared UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Visit a lively market and hands-on in the kitchen with an interactive cooking class
- Hike in the enchanting Cocora Valley where the magnificent Wax palm grows
- Go for a smooth ride on Paso Fino horses in the landscapes of a typical Hacienda
- Learn about coffee and enjoy a tasting in a plantation, see the whole process from planting to toasting
- Join for a cultural and scenic walking tour of Cartagena's old town
- Uncover the history of the San Felipe fortress, the largest fortification built by the Spanish in the Americas
- Get to know the fishing community of La Boquilla and explore nearby Mangroves by canoe
- Practice dance moves during a salsa lesson and participate in a rum and chocolate tasting

DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY:

DAY 01: USA / BOGOTA
Arrive this evening to the country's Andean capital, **Bogota** (8,860 ft), located in the center of the country and set in a wide plateau. Meet your friendly Southwind representative who will bring you to the charming colonial style **Hotel De La Opera**, located in the historic neighborhood of La Candelaria, about 40 minutes from the airport. Meals are on your own today.

DAY 02: BOGOTA
Following breakfast, join your guide for a full day tour of the city and surrounding highlights starting with a walking tour of **La Candelaria**. From its humble beginnings, this is the oldest part of Bogota and site of Plaza Bolivar (Main Square). Architecture here relates to the colonial and republican era, examples of which include the Palace of Justice and Colombian Congress. The Plaza is also home to the Mayor's office and the Primary Cathedral of Bogota. As you wander the streets of La Candelaria, learn from your guide about the intricacies of daily life. At the **Botero Museum**, take in a permanent exhibition of paintings and sculptures by Fernando Botero, Colombia's most famous artist. The museum also houses work by other world-famous artists such as Dali, Monet and Van Gogh. Next door is the Casa de La Moneda (mint) home to a museum featuring a historic tour of currency and money used in Colombia. At the **Gold Museum**, we find one of the finest collections of pre-Hispanic gold in the world with 35,000 pieces of pre-Colombian work in the collection, many said to be unsurpassed by goldsmiths of today.

Lunch is included at the Son de Los Grillos, one of the city's oldest restaurants featuring traditional and international cuisine. This afternoon, we drive north of the city through countryside once occupied by the native Muisca Indians. At Zipaquirá, we find a celebrated **Salt Cathedral** an artistic masterpiece carved underground in a still functioning salt mine. The surrounding area stands out for its picturesque rolling farmland, its hidden mineral jewel beneath the earth's surface. Return to the familiar **Hotel De La Opera** for a restful night with dinner on your own this evening. **Driving time: 2.5 Hours** (B,L)

DAY 03: BOGOTA / PEREIRA
After a leisurely breakfast, transfer to the airport for a non-stop 1 hour **flight to Pereira** (4,630 ft), located in the coffee region. Here in the heart and soul of Colombia every turn presents a spectacular panorama of fertile hillsides with coffee plantations and plunging valleys. The rural Campesino life continues as it has done for centuries harvesting coffee, plantains, bananas and several other fruits in this verdant land. Experience a sense of tranquility blended with adventures and friendly encounters with locals. Outside town, in a region declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, we arrive at the **Sazagua Hotel**, a boutique property located just 15' from the airport, featuring a design that reflects artisan skills inspired by the surrounding mountains and lakes. This afternoon take a sensory trip with your private guide around Pereira to pick up fresh ingredients at the **local market** while mingling with local residents among a hustle-bustle vibe. Learn about less common fruits and vegetables and how they are prepared in Colombian cuisine. Afterwards, we drive return to the peaceful grounds of the Sazagua Hotel to prepare the basic ingredients with the seasoned chef who helps transform them into local delicacies. At the end of this **hands-on interactive cooking experience**, we can taste the special dishes. Afterwards, some time at leisure to enjoy the comforts of the hotel. **Driving time: 2 Hours** (B,D)

DAY 04: COFFEE REGION / ACAIME RESERVE
Today we drive south into the Quindío region and **Cocora Valley** where tall and slender Wax palm trees grow in one of its few natural habitats. We stop in Quindío, the first settlement of the modern era to visit the small quaint pueblo of **Salento**. The main square has not changed in appearance or character in decades. Walking Salento's narrow streets with brightly painted houses in the heart of coffee region, we stop at one of the many small coffee stores or crafts shops. Continuing our journey to the lush Cocora Valley, we arrive at the trailhead for our **Wax palm hike**. The route heads north uphill and then goes down into the valley passing through a trout farm that supplies most of the restaurants in town. We cross the river on a stable but sometimes slippery basic foot bridge. The hike continues along the bridle path with panoramic views of the Wax palms along the mountain fringe. Great photo opportunities for capturing images of the palms backdropped by the central cordillera of **Los Nevados National Park**.

This is a prime location for the palm which is a national symbol and protected species. From here as an optional addition, the hike ascends into the cloud forest once again along an easy, but sometimes slippery ascent and descent over tree roots traversing the contour of the river. The vegetation here becomes lusher and denser providing excellent birding from several river crossings on basic bridges and stepping on stones. After 2 hours of hiking, a short ascent leads to the **Acaime Reserve** where 6-12 different species of hummingbirds are often spotted around the friendly reserve keeper's feeders. Snacks, hot

coffee and soft drinks are available at the reserve. Later, we descend to the river and follow our return route with bridge crossings and out into the open plains and trails end. A well-deserved lunch is included at the nearby Donde Juan B restaurant where the specialty is the local trout and
salads. This afternoon we return to the familiar **Sazagua Hotel** for the night. **Driving time: 3 Hours, Hiking time: 3-4 Hours** (B,L)

DAY 05: COFFEE REGION

Early in the morning, we meet our guide and driver to head north through stunning scenery, carpeted rolling hills of lush green coffee, plantain and yucca fields towards the **Caldas region**. En route we visit the coffee farm **Hacienda Venecia**. Coffee makes this part of the country unique; it's the heart and soul of the region and its culture. Campesinos (local rural workers) pass by on their way to work in the fields, and children walk to school or wait for the morning bus. We join a tour of a coffee plantation to see the whole process from planting, seedling, picking, toasting and of course tasting. We learn about the trials and tribulations of the coffee growers and how their whole way of life is affected by this simple bean.

A traditional lunch is served today at a nearby restaurant to taste local dishes. We then continue to **Hacienda Providencia**, a horse breeding farm recognized for the **Paso Fino** pedigree with a distinguish breed's Trote (trot). The Paso Fino (fine step) is a naturally gaited light horse breed imported to the Caribbean from Spain. Pasos are prized for their smooth, natural, four beat, lateral ambling gait. They are used in many disciplines but are especially popular for riding. Equestrian activity in Colombia is as big and beautiful as Polo is to Argentina. We'll go for a horseback ride among the mountain landscape of the hacienda to experience the local culture and biodiversity. Later, we drive back to the **Sazagua Hotel** for dinner on our own to taste the restaurant's native cuisine and have a restful night. **Driving time: 2.5 Hours** (B,L)

DAY 06: PEREIRA / CARTAGENA

Following a hearty breakfast, we transfer to the Pereira airport to catch a **flight to Cartagena**, a notable UNESCO World Heritage Site. We meet our Southwind local guide on arrival and drive to the **Ananda boutique Hotel** in the historic downtown close to the Santo Domingo square, Cathedral and Inquisition Palace as well as boutiques, art galleries and restaurants. Founded in 1533 by Pedro de Heredia, Cartagena was formerly the Caribbean gateway port used by the Spanish. Cartagena's rich history, diverse culture and energy absorbs visitors by providing a glimpse into the past in a relaxing setting. This passionate and vibrant city has some of the best-preserved colonial architecture in all South America, it radiates character, mixing African rhythms and indigenous influences with the Spanish colonial splendor. This afternoon we join our guide for a panoramic walking tour of the old town.

A fun way to experience the city is a traditional horse and cart ride along the cobbled streets of **Cartagena's old town.** With a cool Caribbean breeze to refresh us, we wind along lanes with colonial buildings with flower arranged balconies. As our horseman maneuvers his cart through the late afternoon bustle, we watch day turn to night and see a different side of Cartagena come alive. Afterwards, we return to the Ananda Hotel for the evening. Dinner is on your own to try some of the nearby gourmet restaurants. (B)

DAY 07: CARTAGENA

Our tour this morning takes you through **old town** under a symbol of Cartagena, the Puerta Del Reloj (Clock tower entrance) and into the Plaza de los Coches. During the walk we visit the Inquisition Palace where in September 1610, the inquisition was established in Cartagena de Indias. The Inquisition building is considered one of the most elegant and characteristic colonial constructions of its time in the 17th century. Looming over the historic center, the **San Felipe fortress** dominates the city skyline. The largest fortification built by the Spanish anywhere in the Americas, it stands as an imposing example of military might and architecture. Construction on the site started in 1586 with the fortifications and ramparts strengthened during the next 200 years. Underneath is a labyrinth of tunnels, many of which are lit and accessible to visitors. Cartagena's history owes much to this fort and the stories surrounding it are intriguing to hear.

From the fort, we continue by private vehicle to **La Popa Convent** situated at the highest point in the city with excellent views of the bay, old town and Caribbean Sea beyond. Started initially as a humble wooden chapel but later it was replaced by a more solid construction fortified two centuries later. Here we find flower filled patios and can visit the historic interior of the convent. For lunch, we stop at Montesacro, a restaurant in the heart of this walled city offering a selection of traditional cuisine. By late afternoon, we join our guide for a boat ride around the **bay of Cartagena**, sipping a cocktail and watching the sunset, as a nice way to wind down from today's activities. Back at the comfortable **Ananda Hotel**, we'll spend the rest of the evening at leisure. You may want to stay in and try the refined and relaxed atmosphere of the hotel restaurant specializing in international cuisine with its own creations emphasizing Caribbean seafood. (B,L)

DAY 08: CARTAGENA

This morning, experience a local fishing community while exploring **mangroves** by canoe. The fishing village of **La Boquilla** is located 30 minutes east of Cartagena in a wetland region. Many of the villagers are of African descent, on arrival there will be a dance performance and refreshment of fresh green coconut milk. The **Cueva Del Manglar** is the Spanish name given to this protected ecosystem rich in birdlife. Here in one of the most biodiverse countries on the planet, you may spot kingfisher, white heron and pelicans among other bird species. As we explore the mangroves in canoes paddled by local fisherman, we discover a wealth of flora and fauna. This is an ideal way to navigate the shallow waters through the "tunnels" naturally created by the Mangrove trees. Back in the city, a traditional lunch is served at the PaloSanto Restaurant.

Later this afternoon, we get to move to the beat of local rhythms with a private salsa dance lesson from local professionals in the historic center. We get to learn some of the basic steps in a relaxed and fun atmosphere. Colombia has a great passion for this sultry dance practiced throughout the country with an elegant ease and sensuality. The African influence here has helped salsa develop a sound and step all its own. To wrap up the day, we can partake in a **rum and chocolate tasting** at Restaurant 1621 in the deluxe Sofitel Legend Santa Clara Hotel. We taste some of the finest rums from different regions of Colombia including an aged variety of 3 and 8 years old. The rum, produced from sugar cane, is a popular national drink awarded several worldwide accolades. Our sommelier will pair tastes of the rum with some of Colombia's most delightful chocolates for a delicious combination. Colombia is the world's 9th largest grower of cacao, and you will be able to try chocolates ranging from 65% to 70% cocoa content. Afterwards, we return to the **Ananda Hotel** for a restful final night in South America before returning home. **Driving time: 1.5 Hours** (B,L)

DAY 09: CARTAGENA / USA

This morning, we're picked-up at the hotel and transferred to the airport with check-in assistance for the flight home. (B)

NOTES ON THE ITINERARY: Although we do our best to adhere to the schedule listed above, the day-by-day activities in this itinerary are subject to change for numerous reasons beyond our control including group considerations, weather, trail/road/sea conditions or flight delays and plane schedule changes. The trip is suitable for physically fit participants accustomed to outdoor activities ages 7 and older. In the case of families with younger children we could substitute some of the activities by designing a tailored family friendly itinerary. In Bogota, we also recommend staying in the Parque 93 area, a modern and lively part of the city. A visit to the Central Market and a Caribbean culinary experience in a private colonial house is an add-on option. On Day 08 a guided cultural touring to San Basilio de Palenque, recognized by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, is an alternative instead of the mangroves and La Boquilla tour. Driving times and altitudes are approximate and times indicated are net (not including lunch breaks, rest stops, time to explore towns or the countryside).

2027 LAND COST:

4-6 participants: from $6,700 p.p.d.
7-12 participants: from $6,200 p.p.d.
Single Supplement: from $1,500

p.p.d.=per person based on double or triple occupancy not including airfare.

Note: We can arrange this trip on a private basis for 2-3 participants at a higher land cost. Please call for specific pricing according to your travel dates and number of travelers.

AIRFARE ON REQUEST: **International and in-country airfare is not included in the land cost.** Tickets should only be purchased after Southwind advises that your trip is confirmed. Southwind has a ticketing partner who can quote and help coordinate all your flights (or just the in-country flights on Latam) to match your tour itinerary. You'll have a dedicated agent to arrange your seats according to cabin preference, to monitor schedule changes and work directly with the airline on your behalf, if any adjustments are needed after ticketing. United, Delta, American and Latam provide service to Lima via their US gateway hubs. You have the option to purchase any of the flights yourself or redeem award travel directly through your airline program. The airlines request that your tickets match your full name in your passport (including middle name if shown). If connecting, a 2-hour minimum buffer is important between flights.

IF YOU HAVE 1 EXTRA TRAVEL DAY:

If you have a total of 10 days/9 nights, consider adding a day to explore the **Rosario Islands** by a private boat. This

archipelago and protected nature reserve is located off the coast of Cartagena. The day trip includes visits to different islands and offers nature and coastal views. Rosario and San Bernardo Corals is one of 46 National Natural Parks of Colombia, created to protect one of the most important and diverse coral reef ecosystems of the country's Caribbean Coast. The park encompasses over 460 sq miles of marine and land habitat providing refuge for numerous species of algae and animals, all which feed corals and fish life inhabiting the reefs. The coral and sparkling blue water of these 27 protected islands are an ideal location for snorkeling and swimming from the private boat or while enjoying pristine white sandy beaches. Lunch is included at Gente de Mar Hotel on Isla Grande, where kayaking is feasible. After a day of relaxation among the sunny beaches of the **Caribbean Sea,** we navigate back to the city and return to the **Ananda Hotel**. **Navigating time: 3 Hours**

(B,L)

OPTIONAL HOTEL UPGRADES: We can reserve the elegant **Sofitel Victoria Regia Hotel** or the colonial style **Four Seasons Casa Medina** in Bogota located in the trendy northern end of the city, the upscale **Hacienda Bambusa** in the Coffee Region, a perfect place to relax and enjoy the tranquil surroundings, or the historic and sophisticated **Sofitel Santa Clara Hotel** in Cartagena for an additional fee. Due to the small size of these hotels and high demand, these reservations are recommended at least 4-5 months in advance. Upgrades are subject to availability and cannot be guaranteed. Please contact our office for details.

SERVICES INCLUDED:

- Comprehensive **pre-departure planning packet** and expert travel advice.
- All **in-country transfers** as scheduled. Ground transportation in spacious and comfortable private vehicles with professional drivers.
- Local and return flight reconfirmation, **in-country airport check-in and luggage assistance**.
- All **accommodations in first-class (4 star)** hotels, lodges and unique haciendas as listed (or at similar boutique style properties) on a shared basis with private bath. Advanced bookings are recommended if you require double beds (King/queen) for couples, or plan to arrive early or extend your stay.
- All **meals** indicated on the itinerary (B=breakfast; L=lunch; D=dinner). **Vegetarian diets accommodated** on request (advance notification required). For other diets, consult your travel specialist before making a reservation.
- All **guided tours** (as listed) conducted on a private basis by knowledgeable, English-speaking native guides specializing in the local culture and natural history of Colombia (includes applicable entrance fees).
- Single Supplement provides single room accommodation in all hotels. Due to the limited number of rooms at these boutique properties, we recommend making reservations several months in advance.

NOT INCLUDED:

- US domestic nor international flights.
- Tours, meals (at about $30-50 each per person) or other services not listed on the itinerary.
- Early arrivals, dayrooms or late check-outs at hotels.
- Alcoholic beverages nor items of a personal nature; such as clothing, equipment, laundry and phone calls.
- Tips to the local staff.
- Expenses incurred in preparing for this program such as, but not limited to, non-refundable airline tickets or traveler's insurance, nor additional expenses resulting from flight delays, schedule changes, cancellations, or missed connections.

WEATHER: Due to the country's proximity to the equator, the climate is generally warm and tropical along the coast and eastern plains while cooler in the highlands. There is not a noticeable change of seasons, so travel is possible year-round as long as you are ok with occasional semi-tropical showers. Temperatures remain relatively consistent throughout the year. The **best time to travel is December-March and July-August** (high season since it rains the least these months). In **Bogota**, highs are in the upper 60's and lows in upper 40's, with more rain occurring April, May & October. The **coffee region** has highs in upper 70's and lows in mid 60's), with rain more common April, May, October and November. Cartagena on **the coast** is warmer with highs of 90°F and lows in upper 70's) with rain concentrating during June and August-October. The rainy or "wet" season is approx April – May and October – November with rainfall of 40-70 inches according to region. Temperatures mostly vary by altitude with an annual average temp for the country generally above 74°F. The country rises from the Caribbean and Pacific oceans up to almost 19,000 ft above sea level at the highest peaks.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Southwind strongly recommends that you purchase optional coverage to protect your trip investment. Having coverage provides peace of mind and is important in case of unexpected trip cancellation due to illness or health/medical condition/injury requiring medical treatment by a physician. Other benefits can include tour delay/interruption from flight issues, weather events, strikes, medical quarantine or emergency accident/illness with evacuation to nearest treatment by US standards. Southwind recommends the **Worldwide Trip Protector Deluxe** from Travel Insured International. We can provide an eQuote on request tailored to your trip. A policy can be purchased directly from TII online or by phone with their customer service in CT at 800-243-3174. You are also welcome to arrange travel insurance coverage through any provider of your choice.

NEXT STEPS: Please contact Southwind to speak with a personal Travel Advisor to help fine tune your travel plans and to receive a custom itinerary with a land cost quote based on your travel dates. You can reach us by filling out our Private Trip Request form, by email at info@southwindadventures.com, by phone at 800-377-9463 or by text to 303-972-0701.

Reservations can be made up to 60 days before departure, provided tour services and hotels are available. Due to the popularity of Cartagena and the limited number of boutique hotels in the city's historic center, we recommend making reservations at least 4-5 months in advance for non-holiday or about 1 year prior for holiday departures. Once your trip is confirmed to operate, you will receive pre-departure planning materials, flight booking assistance and advice to help prepare for your exciting vacation.

We look forward to having you travel with us in Colombia!

Southwind Adventures, Inc

Your Latin America Travel Specialist since 1990
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