

Colombia - Walking in Colombia Culture and Light Trekking Tour 2023
Guided Tour
17 Days / 16 Nights



Walking in Colombia focuses on the Andean region, combining cultural and trekking activities along the itinerary. The program starts with a visit to the charming state of Boyaca, north from the capital, which has some of the best-preserved colonial towns still keeping their traditional way of life. Here we find a hidden jewel called Paramo de Ocetá, a relatively unknown highland with a fantastic circular hike through pristine nature. Then we will travel back in time to the archeological sites of San Agustin and its beautiful natural sceneries in the southern Huila's state with landscapes ranging from desert to green highlands. We also will enjoy the traditional city of Popayan on our way to the coffee area. At last, we will experience first-hand the coffee production, trek in the Los Nevados National park and enjoy the relaxing towns and landscapes that make this a must see in a trip to Colombia.

Itinerary Day to Day

Day 1: Arrival in Bogotá

Arrival at Bogotá Airport and private transport to your hotel.



Day 2: Bogotá City tour: Historical downtown, Gold Museum & Monserrate 6 – 7 hours

Full day private city tour to the historic part of Bogotá. After breakfast, enjoy the historic center of the city on foot. You are right in the middle of the charming colonial area known as La Candelaria, and you will visit the world famous gold museum, the Plaza Bolivar and go by cable car to the Monserrate Sanctuary, at an altitude of 3152 m, overlooking the city. A quick visit to the museum of the famous Colombian artist Botero is also an option.

Day 3: Boyacá's bridge & colonial towns of Nobsa & Monguí

Early departure from Bogota to the northern state of Boyaca. The road trip is very interesting, leaving the metropolitan life of the capital and immersing into rural Colombia. There will be a stop at the national monument: Puente de Boyacá, where the last battle of independence took place. Then onto the town of Nobsa, known for its traditional handicraft industry, being the "Ruana" or "poncho", one of the main products and a symbol of the Andean culture. This town also has one of the few wine productions in the country, which is more a curiosity than a wine tasting experience. After Nobsa, an hour trip to the town of Monguí, the day's final destination.



Day 4: Trekking: Paramo of Ocetá 5 hours

Today we will visit the paramo of Ocetá, located in the vicinity of the village, and one of the best preserved and hidden jewels of the Paramo ecosystem in the country. After a good breakfast, there will be a short transfer in 4x4 vehicles to the trailhead. The trail follows a circular itinerary, which lasts about five hours including breaks. The trail will visit: El Pedrisco, Frailejones' Valley, Ocetá's Canyon, Stone town, La Laguna Negra's viewpoint and the Penagos Waterfall. At the end of the tour, the vehicle will take the group back to the village. There will be time to enjoy a short tour around town, to appreciate the architecture and learn about religious history, in this very well-preserved colonial town.

Day 5: Guatavita Lake & Zipaquirá's Salt Cathedral

Early departure and drive back towards Bogota. On the way, visit to the legendary Lake Guatavita. Hike around the rim, while exploring the Muisca's legend of "El Dorado" and discuss the greed of the former conquests. Afterwards the road trip will head south to Zipaquirá's Salt Cathedral, an underground illuminated church built in an ancient and huge working salt mine. Arrival in the late afternoon in Bogota.



Day 6: Tatacoa Desert

Transfer to the airport and flight to Neiva. Meeting with the guide and drive to Villavieja. Check in to the hotel and some time to relax before heading into the Tatacoa Desert. Explore the desert with stops at different sites of interest. In case of clear skies, we will also visit the astronomic observatory. Return to Villa Vieja in the evening.

Day 7: San Agustín

During the morning hours we drive to San Agustín. It's a five hour long drive that takes us through beautiful natural sceneries. Arrival to the country side hotel in the afternoon.

Day 8: San Agustín's Archeological Parks

After breakfast private excursion to the archeological park of San Agustín and the surroundings. We will start with the visit to the San Agustín Park. This is one of the most important archeological sites of Colombia with many huge stone figures of a civilization that already disappeared when Europeans arrived to America. In the afternoon we will continue exploring by visiting Alto de los Idolos and Alto de las Piedras. Return to the hotel by the end of the day.

Day 9: Popayan

We will continue the journey to Popayán. The city is right in the middle of the rolling green hills of the Valle de Cauca. Popayan is also known as the "White City" due to the elegant whitewashed colonial buildings. The spirit of the city is centered around the bustling university life. At arrival check in to the hotel. In the afternoon, we will do a short city tour visiting all the major sights of the old city including beautiful churches (Iglesia San Francisco and Iglesia La Ermita) and visits to the old colonial mansion, Casa Mosquera, where Colombia's liberator Simón Bolívar once stayed. Finally we will end the day with an ascent to the peak of El Morro del Tulcán to enjoy the view over the city.



Day 10: Popayan – Salento (with optional visit to Silvia Market)

Early departure from Popayan towards Salento. Arrival in the afternoon to hotel in the outskirts of Salento located in a stunning setting in a convenient distance to the town. Afternoon free to enjoy the settings. Optional visit to SILVIA MARKET: If you are lucky to be here a Tuesday, we will make a visit to the Silvia Market. This is a very authentic market, mainly staffed by the indigenous Guambiano Indians, who live in the nearby areas and have largely maintained their traditional way of life. It is, by no means, touristy and it's a great opportunity to learn more about the life style in the country site. Continue to journey to Salento. It is a relaxed, colorful village surrounded by green mountains, and is the gateway to the Cocora Valley.



Day 11: Cocora Valley

Full day excursion to Cocora Valley. The guide will meet you in the morning and take you to a very interesting hike to the Cocora Valley. During this private tour you will get familiar with Colombia's National Tree, the wax palm (*Ceroxylon Quindiuense*). It's the biggest palm in the world with heights up to 60 meters. The wax palm was qualified by the Alexander Von Humbolt Institute as "endangered" as well as the yellow eared parrots that only make their nests in these palms. The length and strength of the tour depends on the physical shape of the visitor and therefore the exact route will be determined together with the guide according to the interests. Whether you are a nature enthusiast or not, this day is very likely going to be one of the most beautiful memories you will bring back home.

Day 12: Salento – El Cedral and Trek to “La Pastora” (2460 m) 5.9 km + 355 m

Early morning transfer from Salento to the city of Pereira (two hours), located at the heart of the coffee area. Before heading into the mountains, there will be a short stop in Pereira to buy some snacks and any last minute things that you may need. Then the drive takes about two hours by the margins of the Otun River, passing the rural areas of “La Florida” and “La Suiza”, until the head of trail known as “El Cedral” (2105 m). From this point, the group will follow a very nice trail with a moderate ascent rate for two and a half to three hours to “La Pastora” refuge, located in the cloud rain forest, the place to spend the night.

Day 13: Trekking: “El Jordan” Farm (3195 m) 7.7 km + 735 m

After breakfast the team will join the same trail as the day before. The trail goes through the cloud rain forest, starting very gently and slowly the steepness will increase, reaching the day's goal “El Jordan” farm after approximately four hours hike. This farm is located at an idyllic place between volcanic hills covered with dense vegetation and decorated with waterfalls of crystal clear water. This is one of the most beautiful days of the program, due to the changeable nature and weather.



Day 14: Trekking: El Otun Lake (3933 m) 9 km + 738 m

Today's hike continues up the same river valley, ascending as the landscape changes into dramatic volcanic eroded terrain. After two hours, “El Bosque” crater valley opens up with its colorful crops and meadows surrounded with high basalt walls in a semi-circular shape. Here the group will take a short break to enjoy the scenery and grab a quick bite. The trail will keep on ascending by the valley, following a series of ridges that lead up to “El Mosquito” Lake. On the way, it is possible to get a first view of the distant volcanoes like: El Paramillo del Quindío and Nevado Santa Isabel. Once at the Mosquito Lake, the terrain will be much gentler until the Otun Lake's drain. The Otun Lake is the biggest water mass in the national park and one of most beautiful too. From the drain, the hike will take about 35 minutes to Otun's camping spot (3933 m), which is located by the National Park's huts. The rest of the day is to enjoy the place, walk by the lake's shores and get lost in the extent gardens of Frailejones, an endemic plant from the northern Andes.



Day 15: Trekking: “Campo Alegre” Farm (3970 m) – Coffee Farm

Today’s itinerary can be done by one of the two trails that depart from the Otun Lake’s camping place. The guide will decide which trail to take according to the physical and weather conditions.

1. *By the western lake’s trail 9.5 km + 206 m – 169 m:* Morning hike back to the lake’s drain and then walk on a trail/dirt road that follows the western margin of the lake up to the “La Asomadera” mountain pass (4139 m), the border between the states of Caldas and Risaralda and the best place to see the Otun Lake, then following the same old road/trail descending along pasture fields, gently losing altitude until reaching the northern park entrance known as Potosi, a few minutes later the final destination: “Campo Alegre” farm (3970 m). There will be a transport

waiting to take the group down (three to four hours) to a coffee farm in the Manizales area.

2. *By the eastern lake’s trail 10.5 km + 304 m – 267 m:*

This trail follows the eastern shore of the lake and ascents towards a higher point at the Asomadera ridge, passing through well-preserved native vegetation and scenic waterfalls. Once on the ridge (4237 m), the trail descends by a series of small lakes down to the lower Asonadera pass (4139 m), joining the western trail, as described above, following an old road (only used by the National Park authorities) down to the northern park entrance known as Potosi and on to “Campo Alegre” farm (3970 m). There will be a transport waiting to take the group down (three to four hours) to a coffee farm in the Manizales area. This trail is more demanding than the other one, in time and physical effort, not that much in distance.



Day 16: Coffee Farm: Coffee tour 3 – 4 hours

Relaxing morning at the beautiful Hacienda Venecia, an authentic coffee farm with exclusive coffee production. The farmhouses now restored to a hostel and a hotel, featuring charming paisa architecture. The Venecia coffee farm has won several prizes for its excellent coffee and for this day, it has included a coffee tour to see how the coffee is produced and processed, as well as how to make really good espresso! Night at the coffee farm.

Day 17: Manizales/Pereira Airport – Flight to Bogotá and Onward International Connection

Pick up at the coffee farm and transfer out to Manizales’ airport (45 minutes) or to Pereira’s airport (one hour). Flight to Bogota and onward international connection. End of services.

Route



Technical Characteristics:

Route Profile: Medium. You will be hiking on a trail with continuous line and balanced ascent. The terrain is partially steep, fall hazard is possible. Some sure footedness and experience with hilly terrain would be of benefit.

Total Distance: 42 km

Travel Season: Any date on request from January 2 to December 31, 2023

Tayrona National Park Closure: Due to new local indigenous communities' regulations, the Tayrona National Park will close three times a year in the following periods: February 1 -15; June 1 - 15 and October 19 - November 2

Prices per Person:

Double Occupancy	\$ 4250.00 USD
Single Occupancy Supplement (only in cities and towns - not possible in refuges and mountain huts/farms)	\$ 450.00 USD
Domestic Flight Tickets**	\$ 70 - 250.00 USD
Tour Leader (for groups up to 4 people)	\$ 1600.00 USD

*Group rates available for this tour. As this is a guided tour, the pricing improves with more people participating. Please ask us for details

**Approximate price per person for all the needed domestic flights in the program. Please note that the final price of the tickets will be confirmed upon reservation.

Accommodation:

3* hotel and mountain tents

Included:

- Local English speaking cultural guide from day 2 to 11
- Local English speaking mountain guide from day 12 to 15
- Local assistant mountain guide only for Los Nevados' trek from 4 people or more from day 12 to 15
- Private transfers out and into Bogotá
- Private transportation throughout the entire program
- National Park entrance fees & archeological sites
- 3 nights in shared double rooms in hotel in Bogota
- 2 nights in shared double rooms in hotel in Mongui
- 1 night in shared double rooms in hotel in Villa Vieja
- 2 nights in shared double rooms in hotel in San Agustin
- 1 night in shared double rooms in hotel in Popayan
- 2 nights in shared double rooms in hotel in Cocora Valley
- 2 nights in shared double rooms at Coffee farm in Manizales
- 3 nights in shared tents at campsites
- Shared coffee tour at coffee farm
- Quality mountain tents – 2 people per tent
- Group common campsite equipment
- Mules for group campsite equipment, food and personal gear (Packing and weight allowance – Information will be sent)
- Included meals specified in the itinerary (16 breakfasts, 7 lunches and 6 dinners)

Not Included:

- Domestic and international flights
- Meals not mentioned in the program
- Alcoholic and soft drinks
- Personal expenses and Tips
- Everything not mentioned in the "Included" list