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TRAVEL

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Journey Outside Of Bogota For Some Of Colombia's Treasures

By: Valarie D'Elia

Tourism is picking up in Colombia, South America, despite the fact it remains on the U.S. State Department list of travel warnings. NY1's Valarie D'Elia filed the following Travel With Val report.

Zipaquirá is a small town about an hour outside of Bogotá, Colombia. Zipaquirá is famous for its Cathedral of Salt, a former salt mine that has become an underground place of worship. It has all the Stations of the Cross carved out of salt, along with several naves.

Zipaquirá is Colombia's premier attraction and it does not disappoint. A popular stop for lunch is the local restaurant called Funzipa that is in a cavernous restored stable. All the dishes are "comida típica" and the potatoes, coated in salt, are boiled in huge circular pans fired by coal ovens. A traditional dish is the "sancocho" a kind of corn stew.

Food is generally inexpensive and plentiful, as you will pass by many outdoor restaurants with hanging slabs of beef. At the local restaurants, you should have pesos on hand because they don't take credit cards.

Next, it's on to Guatavita lagoon in the countryside. It is a sacred place discovered by the Chibcha Indians and carries many legends. If you are traveling with children, one of the growing facets of the tourism industry is paying a visit to a working farm.

The town of Tabio is known for its artisans, and if you can connect with the right people, you might luck out like me and get invited over to a private home to inspect some handmade goods.

Best of all, these side trips will have you back in Bogotá in time for an evening street snack. A delicious fresh fruit cup of mango, pineapple, and papaya costs just \$1.00.

For information on escorted day tours from Bogotá, go to ColombiaQuest.com.

Now here's a D'Elia's Deal you don't want to miss for air inclusive packages to Colombia, go to latinamerican4less.com.

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