



Botero Museum in Bogotá

A diversity of cultures inhabited Colombian territory before the arrival of the Spanish, some as advanced and sophisticated as those that produced the statues of [San Agustín](#) , in the Department of Huila, the subterranean tombs of [Tierradentro](#) , in the Department of Cauca, or the “Lost City” (Buritaca 2000), in the [Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta](#) .

The Spanish arrived with the Conquest and colonization and brought slaves with them from Africa. For this reason Colombia is a multi-ethnic and pluri-cultural nation, where each region has its own characteristics that distinguish it from the others.

Thus you can talk of an Andean culture that strongly feels its European ancestry; of a Caribbean culture that is an amalgam of Indian and African inheritance; a Pacific culture with African roots, and of the culture of the Orinoquia and the [Amazon](#) that is basically Indian.

Diverse cultures inhabited the national territory before the Spaniards arrived

This complex process of mestizaje is not only expressed in the country’s traditions, handicrafts and cuisine, but also in its arts, from architecture, painting and sculpture to literature, film and photography, and including music, dance and theater.

Such is Colombia’s ethnic, linguistic and cultural wealth that it has over 87 Indian ethnic groups that represent 1.5% of the country’s total population and speak 64 native tongues that belong to 22 linguistic families; several million Afro-Colombians who represent nearly 16% of the population; over 30 million mestizo inhabitants with an immense variety of cultural expressions; nearly 12.000 gypsies who descend from Colonial times, and several immigrant groups in

different regions of the country. In the archipelago of [San Andrés and Providence](#) , the population is principally of African origin and whose language is English.

Colombia: A country of artisans and feasts



Flower Fair, Medellín

Colombian [handicrafts](#) are appreciated all over the world: the shoulder bag made by the Arhuaco Indians of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, the [sombrero](#) of [vueltaio](#) the plains of the Department of Córdoba, the [hammocks of San Jacinto](#) , in the Department of Bolívar, the figures decorated with [barniz de Pasto](#) , in Nariño, and the [pottery of Ráquira](#) in Boyacá, are just a few examples of homespun handicrafts that compete in beauty with so-called cultivated works of art.

Colombian music is enormously varied. That of the Andean region, undoubtedly of Spanish origin, is based on stringed instruments such as the guitar, mandolin and tiple, but to the south of the country it is enriched with the flutes and drums of the chirimías.

The lightheartedness of the Colombian people is evident in the variety of festivities, fairs, carnivals and cultural festivals held in the country

On the Caribbean coast the vallenato has imposed itself over ancestral rhythms such as the cumbia and bullerengue, and in Santa Marta, Barranquilla and Cartagena the champeta and reggaetón are dominant.

The Afro music of the Pacific regions, with its currulaos and alabaos, is based on the strong

beat of drums and the marimba, together with a melancholic accent of Indian origin. The Indian communities of the Amazon employ the sacred yurupari flute and maguare drums.

In every region, the joyfulness of Colombian people expresses itself in their festivities, fairs, carnivals and cultural festivals, like the following:

- the [Carnival of Blacks y Whites in Pasto](#) , at the beginning of the year;
- the [Manizales Fair](#) in January;
- the [Barranquilla Carnival](#) in February;;
- the [Biennial Bogota International Theater Festival](#) in Easter;
- the [Vallenato Legend Festival](#) in Valledupar, by the end of April;
- in June the [Colombian Folkloric Festival](#) in Ibague and the Bambuco National Pageant in Neiva;
- in August the [Medellin Flower Fair](#) ;
- in November the Cuadrillas de San Martin;
- the [November 11 feasts in Cartagena](#) ;
- and the [Cali Fair](#) at the end of the year.

Colombia: Educated and cosmopolitan



Cartagena Film Festival

We Colombians love good times and our cities have a dynamic culture, permeated by international tendencies. [The Cartagena Film Festival](#) and [Hay Festivals](#) , the Manizales Theater Festival, the [Bogota Book Fair](#) and [Jazz Festival](#) and the International Poetry Festival in Medellin are proof of that. Our capital cities are a part of the world's best DJ's tours. Our museums keep significant art collections; fashion events have an excellent reputation all over the world and there are many elegant nightclubs and restaurants throughout the country.

Bogotá, Cartagena, Medellín and Cali are cities that have made efforts to become more modern in order to offer tourists more cultural attractions and entertainment

The quality of our schools and universities is outstanding. This and our high tech hospitals, run by top professionals, attract more and more foreign visitors. The bigger cities' infrastructure has been updated with efficient mass transportation systems, broad avenues and parks that provide a natural relief for everyone to enjoy.

Bogota has become an attractive tourism destination. It is a big city offering excellent living standards. Medellin is a crossroad for textile production and a landmark of fashion design, and the kindness of its locals is as renowned as the beauty of its women. Southwards lies Cali, the happy capital of salsa music. The women here rival Medellin's in beauty and charm. Many other cities have been modernized to offer culture and fun to their locals and visitors.

Discover different expressions of Colombian culture:

- [Archaeological Tourism](#)
- [Feirs and Festivals](#)
- [Handicrafts](#)