



Archaeology and history of Colombia /Pic. [mario_carvajal](#)

Archeology and History

Colombia has a long history going back before the Spanish Conquest, and there are several sites that bear testimony to its fascinating Indian past. In [San Agustín](#) , in the southern part of the Colombian Andes, monoliths of volcanic stone representing gods and warriors are preserved, and nearby, in the area of [Tierradentro](#) , the visitor can enter a complex of underground burial chambers.

From one of the bays of [Tayrona National Park](#) , on the Caribbean coast, you can ascend the foothills of the [Sierra](#) , following a path of stone slabs that leads to the ruins of Pueblito, a settlement built by the Tayrona people, one of the most advanced cultures of pre-Hispanic America, which left an invaluable inheritance of objects fashioned in gold that can be admired, together with a wealth of articles from different cultures, in the different branches of the Gold Museum and other museums in different towns around the country.

Colombia has a valuable past in colonial architecture and culture that is preserved in many towns and villages

Pre-hispanic Colombia

Over twelve cultures inhabited Colombian territory before the Spanish Conquest and left vestiges of the surprising level of development they had attained. Towns and stone paths, enigmatic statues, burial urns and impressive gold and pottery objects, constitute part of an inheritance that allows us to learn about their beliefs and way of life.

The Muisca Indians were farmers on the highland plains that they inhabited. They were excellent goldsmiths and potters who left invaluable treasures. The myth of [El Dorado](#) that inspired the Conquest of the continent, had its origin in the investiture of the new Cacique, who

covered in gold dust, went out on a raft towards the center of the lake of Guatavita accompanied by his priests.

Pottery and gold working was also notable among the Quimbaya, Sinu, Tayrona and Calima tribes. Their work can be admired in [Bogota](#) at the Gold Museum of the Banco de la Republica, the Archeological Museum Casa del Marqués de San Jorge and the National Museum; at the Museum of Quimbaya Culture in Armenia; at the Museum of the Tayrona Culture in [Santa Marta](#) and at the Museum of Sinú Culture in [Cartagen](#)
[a](#) . You can buy perfect reproductions in specialized stores made with the very same techniques employed by the cultures that created them.



La Candelaria district, Bogotá /Pic. [trevino](#)

Colonial Colombia

Towards the third decade of the 16th century, the founding of the main towns commenced. Land was distributed among the conquerors, the exploitation of the salt, gold and emerald mines was organized and Christianity was established. Coexistence between the Spanish colonizers and their African slaves gave rise to a process of mestizaje.

Santa Cruz de Mompox is just a few hours away from Cartagena de Indias, a port on the Magdalena River whose privileged location made it an important trading post and one of the stateliest towns of the period. This is evident in its constructions, especially religious buildings such as the church of Santa Barbara or non-religious ones such as the Pinillos School, whose architecture reflects the European conventions of the time, little understood perhaps by local craftsmen but which produced enchanting and harmonious lines.

The capital of the Spanish Viceroyalty was established in Bogota, home of the government and ecclesiastic hierarchy. In the barrio of La Candelaria and adjacent areas, old mansions and churches are preserved that house their treasures. Many have been turned into museums and churches where you can admire the artistic and cultural expressions of our forebears.

Popayan and Tunja preserve a colonial sector full of charm: their churches are adorned with baroque reredoses clad in gilt while the cities' narrow streets, quiet squares and stately houses give one the sensation that time has not passed.

Colombia has a rich architectural and cultural history that is still preserved in many cities and towns around the country.

For its strategic position and for being the principal marketplace for slaves in the New World, Cartagena de Indias was coveted by English corsairs who regularly tried to take it. Fortresses were constructed that made it the best-protected port in South America. The historical center is preserved within the walled sector, with important civil and religious buildings, treasures for which it was declared a World Heritage Site.

Honda was important as a stopover for people and goods in their ascent to Bogota in Colonial times and until the 19th century, and still preserves its lovely architecture and its steep and narrow streets.

Throughout Colombia there are towns and villages recall their importance of their founding during the colonial period, such as Pamplona in Norte de Santander, Giron and Barichara in [Santander](#), Villa de Leyva in Boyaca and Santa Fe de Antioquia near [Medellin](#)

. At sites where decisive events occurred in the nation's emancipation from Spain, relics commemorating the wars of Independence are displayed.

The mixture of races has enriched Colombia with valuable cultural expressions in music, art and literature, as the work of writers and artists attest, which can be admired in the country's museums, art galleries, libraries and public spaces.