Most of Colombia is safe and easy to visit. A drive through the countryside or a trip through the towns and villages is simple, and there are very few hazards.

The major cities - Bogota, Medellin, Cartagena, Santa Marta, Cali and Barranquilla – are safer than many other places in Latin America, and capital cities in other parts of the world. The same goes for the countryside surrounding them.

But of course, and as in the rest of the world, you should take a few sensible precautions, to make sure that carelessness doesn't spoil a perfect travel experience. Here are a few tips:

General precautions:

- Look after your belongings as you would in any other large city.
- Let guides local inhabitants and qualified tourist agents suggest the best places to go.
- Be extra wide-awake in crowded places – buses, concerts, malls etc. Make sure that all documents, cash, valuables, mobiles etc are tucked safely away.
- If you are going on a trip in the countryside, make sure that you have a guide or somebody qualified with you. Anyway, don't leave the main roads: Colombia's geography offers some complicated surprises, and it's quite easy to lose your way!

Transport:

- If you use public transport, take it from terminals and other designated starting points.
- If you want to take a cab, call one up, or go to an authorized rank or stand.
- If traveling in a private or hired car, never leave it parked on the street. Always use a parking lot or other dedicated facility. Most hotels, restaurants, airports and malls have safe parking of this kind.

Money:

- Travelers' Checks are not widely used. It is easier to carry credit or debit cards, or just cash.
- But, try not to carry all of them on you at the same time, and keep cash and valuables you don't need immediately in the hotel safe.
- If you need to change money, do so at a bank or official exchange bureau – and not on

the street; the banks and bureaus are in airports, shopping malls and in some hotels. The hotels themselves and the tourist information desks can point you to them.

Salud:

- If you have an allergy or health problems related to certain foods, always ask about the ingredients of the dish of your choice. Colombian cooking is very varied and uses a wide range of materials.
- Always carry your identity document with you (passport, citizenship card etc.) and medical insurance card or certificate.
- All major cities are well supplied with drinking water and sanitation services – even tap-water offers no problem. But some rural areas are not so well-covered and you should obtain water from special places or buy it bottled.
- Always ask whether your destination needs any special vaccinations or other health precautions. For example, yellow fever vaccinations should be taken a couple of weeks in advance of visiting some parts of the country; others may be prone to respiratory or virus problems (e.g. influenza) at some time of the year. For more details about vaccinations, look up Health in Colombia, or ask at tourist information desks or medical posts at airports and bus terminals.