Visas and permits

Passengers from countries that have a restriction need to apply for a tourist visa in the Colombian consulate of their country of origin to be able to travel to Colombia.

Restriction on visas to enter Colombia

There is no nationality restriction to travel to Colombia. A visa is required, except for citizens of the following countries (who stay strictly for tourism purposes and for a maximum of 90 days): Argentina, Australia, Austria, Barbados, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Chile, Denmark, Ecuador, El Salvador, Germany, Finland, France, Great Britain, Greek, Guatemala, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxemburg, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Poland, Republic of Korea (South Korea), Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, United States, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Foreigners of countries that have no restriction when they travel to Colombia, if they travel only for tourism, may stay in the country for up to 90 days from the date of entry that is indicated on the immigration seal, which is stamped on the passport by the official at the port of entry.

Those who wish to visit the country for work or study must apply for a visa or permit at Colombian consulates abroad. The visas may be temporary or resident. The former are given to people who enter with no intention of living in the country, the second is given to those who intend to live there permanently. Before traveling you should consult the nearest consular or diplomatic agent concerning the procedures and requirements of Colombian law of each case.

For further information, consult the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Other documents or papers that are worth having during your trips are:

- Student card
- International driver's license
- Vaccination certificates
- Travel or medical insurance
- Recent passport-size photographs
- Photocopies of passport, credit cards, insurance, etc.

24 hour stay

Neither a visitor's visa nor an entry permit is required when the passenger is in transit for a maximum of 24 hours.

Stay for up to ninety (90) calendar days

- Travelers from those countries that have no restriction to enter Colombia and the purpose of whose visit is tourism.
- The permit is issued by the immigration authority at the port of entry.

You can complement this information by consulting Decree 2107 of October 8, 2001, by logging on to www.minrelext.gov.co or call (+57 1) 5662008

Extension of stay

You can apply for an extension of up to ninety (90) calendar days at the office of Immigration Affairs, Calle 100 No. 11-27 in the city of Bogota.

Student or work visa

If you travel to Colombia to study or work, you should apply for a visa or permit at the Colombian consulate in the country of origin.

All information with regard to procedures and requirements of Colombian law should be provided by a consular or diplomatic agent.

Colombian embassies and consulates abroad

How to travel to Colombia?

You can travel to Colombia:

By air:

Avianca is the Colombian national airline that operates internationally. Airlines that frequently fly to Colombia include **Aerolíneas Argentinas**, **Air France**, **Air Plus Comet**, **American Airlines**
,
Delta Air Lines
,
Iberia
,
Mexicana de Aviación
,
United Airlines
and
Varig
, among others. Consult your travel agency.

Approximate flight time to Bogota from some world capitals:

- Buenos Aires: 6 hours 10 minutes
- Mexico City: 4 hours 15 minutes
- Caracas: 1 hour 25 minutes
- Los Angeles: 8 hours 15 minutes
- New York: 4 hours 15 minutes
- Miami: 3 hours 30 minutes
- Madrid: 10 hours 30 minutes
- Paris: 12 hours.

International Airports:

- Bogotá - El Dorado (BOG) is located in the city. There are buses that leave every 20 minutes for the city center (traveling time: 30 minutes).
- Barranquilla - Ernesto Cortissoz (BAQ) is located 7 km from the city.
- Cali - Palmaseca (CLO) is located 18 km from the city.

- Cartagena Crespo (CTG) is located in the city.
- Medellín - Rionegro (MDE) is located 45 km from the city.

An exit tax of US$ 66 must be paid by all Colombian citizens and foreigners whose stay in Colombia was longer than two months. In the case of shorter stays, the exit tax for foreigners is US$ 33.

Depending on the itinerary, some airlines, such as Air France, American Airlines and Avianca, include the cost of the tax in the cost of the ticket. The exit tax must be paid at the airport, at the time of departure, in cash and in only one currency (Colombian pesos or US dollars, excluding US$ 100 bills).

Log on to http://www.aerocivil.gov.co/ in order to obtain further information regarding air traffic in the country.

By land

Railway: There is no international rail connection. Road: The Pan American Way is interrupted at the Darien Gap, a jungle region between Colombia and Panama. Cars are generally shipped from Panama to a Colombian port. There are roads between Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador. Both borders are served by several national and international bus services. A driving license, national obligatory insurance and car ownership card is normally required at border crossings.By ship: There are shipping companies that dock in Colombia, both passenger ships and cargo ships that also take passengers. Delta Cruise Lines ships leave from United States ports in the Gulf of Mexico, and cruise lines of the French Line, Italian Line, Pacific Steam Navigation and Royal Netherlands SS leave from different European ports. Cartagena is quite an important port in the Caribbean and ships of the Sun Line, Princess Cruises, Delta Norwegian American, Holland America, Wetours, Sitmar and Costa dock there. There is a short sea passage between Puerto Obaldía in Panamá and Sapzurro on the Colombian Caribbean coast that can be crossed by launch.

Local time

Time in Colombia is based on Greenwich Mean Time with a difference of five or six hours, depending on the season. When it is 12 noon in Colombia, in London it is 5pm, in Madrid 6pm, in New York 12 noon and in Los Angeles 9am. In summer the difference increases one hour.

Consult world time

Geographical location

Colombia lies between latitudes 4º south and 12º north, and between 67º and 79º longitude west. It is an equatorial country whose climatic variations are determined by trade winds, humidity and especially by altitude: the higher up you go, the colder it is. Please consider this information when you travel to Colombia.

There are only two seasons, and virtually throughout the country there are two rainy periods – from April to June and from August to November – and two dry periods. However, the country enjoys constant luminosity throughout the year, with an equal number of daylight and nighttime hours.

Temporary imports

Non-resident travelers in Colombia may temporarily enter the following articles duty-free:

- Articles for personal or professional use or goods that will be used during the stay in the country.
- Such articles or goods must be listed on the Baggage and Money Declaration.
- On ending the stay in Colombia, the articles or goods must be taken out of the country by the traveler.

Currency

The official currency of Colombia is the peso ($). Entering or taking out money, in this denomination or in any other, is restricted and should be declared on entering or leaving the country.

Currency exchange The exchange of foreign currency should be made exclusively in hotels, banks and bureaux de change, never on the street. The exchange rate fluctuates from day to day and has the U.S. dollar as the official reference rate, which is also the currency most used in the market. Payment is made on the basis of the official daily rate, after discounting commissions and services, which vary between 2 and 3%. Cash points The capital cities of the country have an extensive network of cash points. The majority are in service 24 hours and

provide the option of the English language. The transactions generally permitted are: credit/debit balance, withdrawals, transfers and cash advances. Avoid giving the card to strangers or revealing your personal PIN code. Cash points are strategically located, particularly on thoroughfares and in shopping malls. Some, such as Cirrus, Visa and Master Card, permit international debit and credit transactions.Debit cards The larger stores and shops, supermarkets, and higher-class hotels and restaurants accept such cards. Credit cards The majority of hotels, restaurants and commercial establishments accept international credit cards. The most frequent are Visa and Master Card. Only some places accept American Express and Diners Club. Traveler's checksBefore acquiring them in the country of origin, it is advisable to check on the existence of representations or branches in Colombia. The traveler's checks most used are those of American Express and Citicorp. In the more exclusive hotels you can make payments with them but they are not commonly used in commercial establishments.

Telecommunications and Internet

- International calls: Dial 00 + (9) or (7) + country code + area code + number.
- National calls: Dial 0 + (9) (5) or (7) + city code + number.

Codes for calls from outside Colombia:

- Colombia: +57
- Arauca: 7
- Armenia: 6
- Barranquilla: 5
- Bogotá: 1
- Bucaramanga: 7
- Cali: 2
- Cartagena: 5
- Cúcuta: 7
- Florencia: 8
- Ibagué: 8
- Leticia: 8
- Manizales: 6
- Medellín: 4
- Mitú: 8
- Mocoa: 8
- Montería: 4
- Neiva: 8
- Pasto: 2
- Pereira: 6
- Popayán: 2
- Puerto Carreño: 8
- Puerto Inírida: 8

- Quibdó: 4
- Riohacha: 5
- San Andrés: 8
- San Andrés del Guaviare: 8
- Santa Marta: 5
- Sincelejo: 5
- Valledupar: 5
- Villavicencio: 8
- Tunja: 8
- Yopal: 8

Public phone services

There are widespread public phone services for making both local and countrywide calls. Public call boxes are available throughout the country that operate with coins and occasionally with pre-paid cards.

Mobile telecommunications

There are three companies that provide mobile telecommunications:

- Movistar (www.movistar.com)
- Comcel (www.comcel.com.co)
- Tigo (www.tigo.com.co)

How to call from a cell phone (valid for the three cell phone operators)

- From one cell phone to another: ten digits of the cell phone number.
- From a cell phone to a fixed line: 03 + city code + local number.
- From a fixed line to a cell phone: 03 + 10 digits of the cell phone number.
- From a cell phone to a landline abroad: an International Direct Dialing Prefix (005 or 007 or 009) + country code + city code + local number.
- From a fixed line abroad to a cell phone: International Direct Dialing Prefix + 57 + the 10 digits of the cell phone number.

Internet

The majority of the hotels in capital cities provide Internet service. In the large and intermediate cities, there are cyber cafes where you can rent a PC with an Internet connection for an hour or fraction of an hour at a modest price.

Health tips

Most frequent illnesses are mountain sickness, stomach problems, malaria and yellow fever in some forest areas. Before travelling to jungle regions, you must have the yellow fever and tetanus vaccines at least 15 days in advance.

Drinking water

Although major cities have excellent running water services, we recommend you to avoid taps, and rather drink bottled water.