Touring Colombia according to its annual schedule of fairs and feasts is one of the best ways of proving that the people are one of the country’s greatest assets. Every month, in some corner, there are reasons for celebrating and expressing the national cultural heritage by means of a variety of events.

Every month, in some corner, Colombia has reasons for celebrating and expressing joy.

{rokbox title=|Colombia fairs and feasts|}images/stories/turistainternacional/Quehacer/informeespecial/ferias/ferias_y_fiestas_de_colombia.jpg{/rokbox}

Colombia fairs and feasts / Photo by Flickr user ottonassar /

The festivities bring together the people’s traditions and collective enthusiasm. The people proudly make their own the values they live by and share them with whoever comes to witness that Colombian festiveness is a deep-rooted virtue that surmounts obstacles and is permanently present in those who build monuments to hope with their smiles.

Colombia pays homage to everything: music itself, women, coffee, saints, panela, rice, the sea, racial composition, and history. And every tribute involves a series of events and cultural expressions that make up the feast, the fair, or the carnival. Enthusiasm overflows from January 1st to December 31st in this tropical land.

January is precisely one of the most cheerful months of the season. Aside from the bustle of Christmas celebrations, many cities celebrate the holiday season simultaneously with other traditional festivities.

Accept our invitation to become acquainted with the most important events that fill the regions of Colombia with color and joy.

Blacks and Whites Carnival: Long live Blacks and long live

Whites!

{rokbox title=|Blacks and Whites Carnival|}images/stories/turistainternacional/Quehacer/informeespecial/ferias/blancos_y_negros.jpg{/rokbox}

Blacks and Whites Carnival / Photo Flickr user elroquero /

The phrase is the hallmark of the inhabitants of Pasto, a city in southwestern Colombia where the Blacks and Whites Carnival , recently declared by Unesco as Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, takes place during the first days of the year. Its origins go back to the time when the city was a necessary stop on the way to southern parts of the continent and, naturally, a mingling of races, peoples, and cultures took place.

the Blacks and Whites Carnival is considered the single most significant event in the country for cultural expression of different races.

It is said the carnival really starts on December 28 – Day of the Innocents - with a pre-carnival celebration that pays homage to water and the environment. Yet the most representative days of the actual carnival are the Castañeda Family Parade, the Blacks Day, and the Whites Day, on January 4, 5, and 6 respectively. Black paint, talcum powder, and the merriment and good humor of the pastusos are spread across Pasto, the noble city that leans against the mountains of the Galeras Volcano.

The Manizales Carnival A bullfighting feast in the coffee zone

January is also the time for the Manizales Carnival , a festival deeply rooted in Spanish tradition.

{rokbox title=|Manizales Carnival|}images/stories/turistainternacional/Quehacer/informeespecial/ferias/feria_manizales.jpg{/rokbox}

Manizales Carnival / Photo Flickr user FerPer /

It is characterized by the presence of beautiful women, bullfighters, minstrels, orchestras, and clever tango dancers who descend upon the capital of the department of Caldas to turn into one of the most important fairs on the continent.

The Manizales Carnival is a festival deeply rooted in Spanish tradition.

The International Coffee Pageant is also held during the Fair - a tribute paid to the bean and the beverage by lovely contestants coming from many countries. The beauties become the schedule's outstanding characters, and their presence captures the attention of all when they go up to the Ruiz Snow Peak , when they pass by in the Dew Wagons, and when they attend the popular parties and the bullfights.

The Barranquilla Carnival Four days of partying

{rokbox title=|Barranquilla Carnival|}images/stories/turistainternacional/Quehacer/informeespecial/ferias/carnaval_barranquilla.jpg{/rokbox}

Barranquilla Carnival / Photo Flickr user alexfel /

Lent determines the dates of the Barranquilla Carnival . The four days that precede Ash Wednesday are the most outstanding of the celebrations whose tastes, rhythms, and colors begin to be perceived on the eve of December 8, when the city is lit up by thousands of candles and lanterns, in addition to the rays of the sun. It is spectacular.

The carnival shows through original dances and costumed parades, the cultural and racial mixing that characterizes Barranquillla.

The carnival marks the transition from feast to spiritual introspection. A time for expressing, through original dances and costumed parades, the cultural and racial mixing that characterizes Barranquillla. Cumbias, porros, fandangos, mapalés, and chandés are some of the rhythms that are sure to be heard everywhere across the city.

To the beats of this musical wealth, hundreds of costumed groups enthusiastically dance along the city streets from the pre-carnival to the grand events of the carnival proper: the night of the Guacherna, the Battle of Flowers, and the Grand Parade, events that are complemented by theater plays, the so-called “litanies”, and the orchestra festival. It all comes to an end with the death and burial of Joselito Carnival. But only for a year… until the next carnival.

For it colors, joy, and cultural value, Unesco declared the Barranquilla Carnival a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity

Ibero-American Theater Festival: theater from all over the world in Bogotá

Ibero-American Theater Festival of Bogotá has become an important encounter where over 600 spectacles from all continents converge on Bogotá.

{rokbox title=|Ibero-American Theater Festival of Bogotá|}images/stories/turistainternacional/Quehacer/informeespecial/ferias/festival_de_teatro_de_bogota.jpg{/rokbox}

Ibero-American Theater Festival of Bogotá / Photo Flickr user jfcastro /

Inspired by well-remembered and beloved actress and director Fanny Mickey, the Ibero-American Theater Festival of Bogotá has become an important encounter where over 600 spectacles from all continents converge on Bogotá, making it a great world stage for the scenic arts.

Every other year, between March and April, hundreds of theater companies stage imagination-inspiring original works in Bogotá streets, plazas, and halls. The first festival took place in 1998 as a contribution of the cultural sector to the 450th anniversary of the founding of the Colombian capital.

Festival of the Vallenata Legend: Echoes of accordions

{rokbox title=|Festival of the Vallenata Legend|}images/stories/turistainternacional/Quehacer/informeespecial/ferias/vallenato.jpg{/rokbox}

Festival of the Vallenata Legend

Ever since 1968, the bellows of accordions open up to mark the start of the Festival of the Vallenata Legend , scheduled for the final days of April and the first days of May.

To enjoy the best accordions sounds, you have to visit Valledupar.

Hundreds of vallenato groups come together to compete in the various contests that began to be added to the religious celebration of the Vallenata Legend forty decades ago.

Together with the cumbia, the vallenato is the most recognized Colombian music in the world as well as the reason why each passing year increases the interest of international travelers in becoming acquainted with the roots of an earthy rhythm as merry as it is romantic.

The Bambuco Folk Festival and Beauty Pageant: the best contest of this Andean dance

Since colonial times, the department of Huila has been celebrating the feasts of Saint John and Saint Peter.

{rokbox title=|The Bambuco Folk Festival|}images/stories/turistainternacional/Quehacer/informeespecial/ferias/bambuco.jpg{/rokbox}

The Bambuco Folk Festival

Towards the end of June, it is Neiva's turn to deck itself with its traditional Bambuco Folk

Festival and Beauty Pageant
, where the main events are float parades, orchestra presentations, and the competition to select the national bambuco queen, the winner of which is the beautiful girl who most gracefully and skillfully dances the bambuco.

The Fiestas de San Pedro, in honor of Saint Peter, are just as well known as the above and congregate the traditions and hospitality of the region’s inhabitants with thousands of visitors who decide to pegarse la rodadita (roll down the mountain) - a popular saying for inviting the world to come and become acquainted with the city of Neiva.

The Flower Fair: Colombian flower creations

Medellín, a place with no seasons that turns August into spring.

{rokbox title=|Feria de las Flores|}images/stories/turistainternacional/Quehacer/informeespecial/ferias/feria_de_las_flores.jpg{/rokbox}

Feria de las Flores /Fot. Usuario de Flickr Teleantioquia /

In August, Medellín is the site for the Flower Fair , a tribute to the so-called “silleteros”, men and women flower farmers from the township of Santa Elena who carry their wares on their backs. At fair time, these products are turned into original, beautiful, and pleasant-smelling flower creations.

The Silleteros Parade is precisely the most important in a series of events that includes horseback parades, antique car parades, soirees, orchid and bird exhibits, and a minstrel contest.

The Cali Carnival: Simply salsa

with salsa and the overflowing enthusiasm of the caleños the year ends just as happily as it began.