San Agustín Archaeological Park

The San Agustín Archaeological Park, located on the Department of Huila, is the only place in the world highlighted by 500 imposing stone statues carved in accordance to the mythology of their Indian sculptors.

Most of the statues were part of the funerary paraphernalia of the ancient inhabitants of the area and were related to funerary rites, the spiritual power of the dead, and the supernatural world.

The monumental character of the stone statues and the tombs is a reflection of the complex thought system these unknown cultures carved and immortalized in stone.

The Park is made up of the following:

- the four *mesitas* (small man-made hills), where monumental funerary complexes, stone statues, tombs, and artificial monticules may be admired;
- the Bosque de las Estatuas (forest of statues), where 39 statues stand in the open air amid the flora of the region.

San Agustín Pre-Hispanic Societies

San Agustín Archaeological Park is a living example of the pre-Hispanic cultures that inhabited this region of Colombia for more than fifteen centuries.

The San Agustín Archaeological Park is a live sample of the pre-Hispanic cultures that inhabited this region of Colombia for over fifteen centuries. We know that they were civilizations based on agriculture. From the stone statues, the sarcophagi, and the tombs, we can assume they were people with a very high degree of development who expressed their religious and magical

beliefs through sculpture.

The gigantic statues were carved in stone following principles of design, abstraction, symbolism, and management of volume and space that any modern designer would envy.

According to research, the people of San Agustín, pressed by aggressive invaders, were forced to leave their lands and take refuge in the Amazon and Orinoco regions. Their disappearance took place sometime between 1300 and 1400 AD.

The Most Representative Figures in the Park

The San Agustín Archaeological Park possesses a large sample of figures carved in stone. The most famous ones are:

Stone figures in the San Agustín Archaeological Park

The Double Self

This representation of a warrior or guardian carved in stone in a naturist style is a dual being (two bodies and their heads integrated at one extreme into the frontal feline head).

Its symbolic power integrates masculine and feminine, and symbolizes the magic power of a shaman.

Eagle grasping a snake with its claws

Symbol of creation, and related to power and the political hierarchy.

El Partero (the male midwife), also called El Obispo (the bishop)

This is an enormous stone anthropomorphic figure shown delivering a child. It is four meters tall and weighs several tons. In the lower part of the statue, the mother is shown giving birth. This figure is a complete mystery. The male midwife looks to the east, in the direction in which the sun rises, thus representing life.

La Fuente de Lavapatas

La Fuente de Lavapatas

This is the most grandiose work of sculpture of the Agustinian cultures. This fountain is a complex maze of canals and pools carved in the bedrock of the stream. The surrounding reliefs combine representations of snakes, lizards, salamanders, iguanas, chameleons, toads, and turtles with human faces and shapes.

The fountain is a sacred site for religious ceremonies and ritual baths for the San Agustín culture. The canals, ditches, and pits through which the water flows intertwine forming a maze from which not a drop of water escapes. The Fuente de Lavapatas is a veritable work of art that evidences the knowledge on hydraulics and the high level of engineering reached by the ancient sculptors.

Additional information: ICANH: San Agustín Archaeological Park

If you are in Huila, you should also:

- Fairs in the region of Huila:
  Bambuco National Folk Festival and Beauty Pageant in Neiva
- Natural Parks of the Andean Region