

- **Place:** Popayán, Cauca
- **Region:** Pacific
- **Date:** April 13 - 19, every year (varies according to Christian calendar)
- **Duration:** 8 days



Holy Week in Popayán

Holy Week celebrations are very similar to the ones in Sevilla and Valladolid in Spain, and date back to colonial times. The main events are the famous processions. This tradition, brought directly from the Iberian Peninsula, was transmitted to the inhabitants of this Colombian region by the conquistadors who brought with them to America their Catholic rites and beliefs and implemented these cultural expressions in the occupied lands.

Popayán is the religious center of Colombia, with the highest number of churches per capita. These were built during the 17th and 18th centuries.

Holy Week Processions

Holy Week processions in Popayán are a 400-year long tradition. According to the Spanish chroniclers of the time, religious parades began to appear around 1566; that is, 30 years after the foundation of Popayán. Since that time and up to the present, the right to participate in the procession as an effigy bearer is generally passed from fathers to sons and is considered a privilege.

In the course of the years, the Holy Week processions in Popayán became enriched with the arrival of beautiful images by artists from Spain and Quito who devoted their inspiration to the different scenes of the passion of Christ.

The most representative processions are the following:

The Palm Sunday Procession After the blessing of the palms, which takes place during a ceremony in *the Capilla de Belén*, the participants form a procession goes down a cobbled road, by the name of Los Quingos, to the basilica. The faithful wave white handkerchiefs and

flags to proclaim the royal character of Jesus. The Good Tuesday Procession During this evening procession, the effigy bearers carry four images from the church of Saint Augustine to the center of the city in the midst of the sounds of a solemn requiem that precedes them. They are met at the church by a cortege of red-robed acolytes bearing incensories and a large crucifix. The Good Friday Procession This is the most symbolic procession representing the drama of the passion of Jesus before his crucifixion. The image of death is a skeleton; a group of men armed with hammers, chisels, and other tools represent the men who took down the body of Christ from the cross. Finally, there is the Holy Sepulcher, made from ivory and tortoise shell, and in which the body of Christ was put to rest.

The

Small Processions

The processions in Popayán are shorter than average, but they follow the city's main streets and are quite a spectacle.

These are processions where the bearers are not adults, but children between the ages of five and eleven. Their effigies are small-scale replicas of the effigies carried by adults.

Just like their parents in the big processions, the children dress in the traditional attire of the bearers; the smallest ones act as priests, policemen, the mayor, and councilmen.

These small processions follow a shorter route, but they also walk along the main streets in the city, and are a show in themselves.

Festival of Religious Music

In addition to the parades, the city organizes a festival of religious music. Musical groups of the genre come from other parts of Colombia and from foreign countries to perform in the beautiful colonial temples.

If you enjoyed the Holy Week processions in Popayán, you should also spend time:

- Holy Week celebration in: [Pamplona](#) and [Mompox](#)
- Or maybe [Birdwatching in the Western Range of the Andes](#)
- And [Natural Parks of the Andean Region](#) .

