

- **Where?:** Cartago, Valle del Cauca
- **Region:** Pacific
- **Material:** cloth



Photograph: [/www.bordadosdecartago.com/](http://www.bordadosdecartago.com/)

There is a good reason for calling the municipality of Cartago in the department of [Valle del Cauca](#) the "capital of embroidery". The town is known nationally and internationally for the excellent manufacture of embroidered textiles and apparel by Colombian artists who are true maestros of the thread and the needle.

The embroidery of the Valle del Cauca has developed in the course of several generations who have carefully transmitted the expertise to the point of making it a much appreciated regional tradition. Entire families in Cartago are devoted to this artisan industry, dividing design and embroidery tasks among daughters, mothers, and grandmothers who embellish blouses, skirts, headbands, ruanas (poncho-like coats), guayaberas (traditional tropical shirts), bed and table linens, etc.

### History of Cartago Embroidery

The art of embroidering originates in the Hispanic-Arab heritage.

The Spanish conquistadors brought the first hand-embroidered items to the American continent, including Cartago, a city they founded in 1540. Hand embroidery became an institution since 1890 when the Vincentine sisters began to teach it in the school they ran.

At the beginning, in colonial times, Spanish women were responsible for continuing the art of embroidery. Later on, mestizo women adopted the tradition and established small family enterprises that gradually obtained national and international acknowledgement and fame.



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### **Characteristic Motifs of Cartago Hand Embroidery**

Cartago embroidery uses the floral and geometric motifs that characterize Andalusian embroidery.

Cartago embroidery uses four basis stitches: flat, crossed, looped, and knotted. Almost a hundred stitches are derived from the above, among which the most known are: cross stitch, stem stitch, cord stitch, relief stitch, flat pass stitch, sand stitch, double Bastille, crow's foot stitch, arrow stitch, star stitch, angel stitch, among others.

Lately, natural materials from the Colombian flora, mainly banana leaf fibers and fique (a xerophytic monocot native to the Andean regions of Colombia) are being added to traditional embroidery and have become fashionable in the textile industry.

### **If you like Cartago embroidery, perhaps you would like:**

- Other handicrafts: [colombian textile work](#).
- Places: [Cali and Valle del Cauca](#) , and [Galima Darién Archaeological Museum](#).
- Activities: [Rural tourism](#) and [Birdwatching](#).