Gorgona Island /Picture jennimarcela /

Gorgona is a veritable Eden from the point of view of diversity, as well as an invaluable place for scientific research. Located in the Pacific Ocean, and as part of the department of Cauca, sadly it used to be known for the high security prison established there during the seventies. The typical species of the tropical rainforest, coral formations, an enormous variety of marine species, and colonies where different migratory birds nest are found on the island.

Gorgona is not only a paradise for the scientists who come to study the unique species of the island. Travelers and nature lovers can find a great variety of attractions: interpretive paths, exuberant flora and fauna, beautiful beaches, archaeological and historic ruins, and sites for snorkeling and scuba diving. In the area surrounding the park, particularly in the Afro-Colombian town of Guapi, on the coast, the cultural offering is interesting, and the cuisine, diverse and exquisite.

Characteristics

- Gorgona is a 24 km² oceanic island.
- It is an important marine and insular ecosystem.
- It is rich in freshwater currents. In the southwest area, the Tunapuri Lake, extends over an area of 5,000 m².
- Gorgona is a 49,200 hectare reserve that includes the Island of Gorgonilla, three islets and the surrounding marine area.
- The months with the highest rainfall are September and October; the lowest rainfall occurs in February and March. There are no dry periods.
- Relative humidity is 90%.
- Average temperature is 27º C.
- Eighty five percent of the island is covered by dense tropical jungle.
- The island has an area of 24 square kilometers. It belongs to the Department of Cauca and lies 56 kilometers from the coastal village of Guapi.
- In the southwest, you reach Tunapuri Lake, covering an area of approximately 5,000 m².
- Forty botanical families have been identified. Oaks and laurels stand out, as well as coconut groves near the beaches.
- The fauna is rich in reptiles, marine turtles and babilla alligators.
- There is a diversity of marine species due to the optimum conditions of the water: dolphins, porpoises, sperm whales and humpback whales.

- Corals are the basis of the biological marine wealth.
- Gorgona was discovered by Diego de Almagro around 1527. Francisco Pizarro gave the island its the name for the large quantity of poisonous snakes that inhabit it.
- In 1959 the State acquired rights to the island and established a penal colony voy that operated until 1982, when the decision was made to protect the island.
- It was declared a national park in 1985.

How to get there

- From El Piñal pier in the city of Buenaventura, the journey by marine transport services takes an estimated 12 hours.
- Motor boats must be authorized by the Ministry of the Environment and Territorial Development, due to the fact that there is no wharf.
- From Guapi, the journey is made on 10-passenger boats.
- Access to Guapi is through Cali or Popayán.

Places and trails to explore

- The Old Prison Museum keeps the artifacts used by inmates during the time when the island served that purpose. It is located in the lodging area.
- Hike of Playa Palmeras trail: a two-hour hike between the Azufrada, Piedra Redonda and Palmeras beaches
- Interactive and Environmental Interpretation Center
- The Sendero del Pan: a trail that leads from the village to the Interactive Center and the Archaeological Museum.
- Yundigua: a natural aquarium where visitors can snorkel or free (breath hold) dive.
- El Planchon, El Viudo, Las Montañitas and El Horno are scuba diving areas.

Access to the park

Gorgona Island /Picture jennimarcela /

Ask your travel agent or visit http://www.parquesnacionales.gov.co

Lodging

- Camping is not allowed, due to the presence of snakes.
- The Humantatay Visitors Centers can lodge 83 people in 16 rooms.

The colombian Pacific is an exceptional destination for nature. Don´t miss:

- Nuquí destination
- Chocó Sun and Beach
- Diving Pacific