El Cocuy Natural Park /Pic. julianasur

From the window of an aircraft, the Sierra Nevada de El Cocuy looks like a strand of very white pearls shining in the Andean sunshine. El Cocuy National Natural Park is located in the central-eastern section of the eastern Andes mountain range, under the jurisdiction of the departments of Boyacá, Arauca, and Casanare. The Sierra is a chain of over 25 snow peaks along an extension of just 30 kilometers. Most of this beautiful, majestic range - the greatest mass of ice in Colombia - may be explored on foot.

Majestic mountains draped in white.

For many, many years the Sierra, also known as Güican and Chita, has been a favorite destination of international and Colombian mountaineers and climbers, a fact which has made it possible to spread the message of this natural and protected area. The Sierra is the ideal place for lovers of rock, ice, and snow, and fans of hiking and camping. It is possible to admire mountains and páramos, and the forests that cover the valleys nestled among the snow peaks. For all of the above, El Cocuy is sure to delight the most daring adventurers.

Characteristics

- It is a valuable water reserve.
- Its extension is 306,000 hectares.
- Its peaks range between 600 and 5,330 meters above sea level.
- The park encompasses the Sierra of El Cocuy, Chita or Güicán; and the highest peaks of the eastern Andes mountain range.
- It has 18 snow peaks and glacial lakes.
- Mean temperature ranges from 24º C to - 3º C.
- The main rainy season goes from January to March. There is a rainier season from May to June.
- The biomes of six thermal floors are represented in the area: hot, warm, cold, páramo, super-páramo, and snow.
- The fauna is characterized by its great variety: tapirs, corn monkeys, all of Colombia's registered felids, and a great number of birds.
- The Tunebo Indian community inhabits the foothills of the Sierra; occasionally members of

other tribes arrive from other reserves.

How to get there

- From the southwest: by the Tame - Sacame route (2 hours).
- From the northeast: the trip takes one hour from Curabá to El Chuscal (U'wa Indian Reservation).
- From Bogotá: through the Carretera del Norte to Tunja. From there, the Duitama - Belén - Boativa - La Univta - San Mateo - Guacamayas - Panqueba - El Cocuy road.
- From Bogotá: through the Carretera del Norte to Tunja. From there, the Duitama - Belén - Tipacoque - Capitanejo - El Espino - Panqueba - El Cocuy road (between 11 and 12 hours).

Attractions

- High mountain hiking.
- Rock and snow climbing.
- Ritacuba, Pan de Azúcar, El Castillo and Púlpito del Diablo snow peaks.
- Lakes like Los Verdes, Grande de la Sierra, La Isla, La Plaza, and El Avellanal.
- Hot springs in Güicán.
- Fauna: spectacled bear, páramo tapir, royal eagles, and pumas.
- Flora: frailejones and timber trees, such as amarillos, cedars and totumos.
- U'wa Indian reservations in the northeastern part of the park.

Access to the park

Consult your travel agent or visit www.parquesnacionales.gov.co

Lodging

Visitors may lodge in the homes of tourist guides and peasants.

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