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Emerald Museum in Bogotá.

Green is a color that identifies Colombia as much as the colors of its flag. It is the green of vast prairies, [mountains and natural reserves](#); the green that colors fertile landscapes and borders rivers, streams and waterfalls; the green of the [Amazon forest](#) and the dense jungle that runs along the coast of the Pacific Ocean.

However, Colombia is also identified with a bright shade of green that is not usually seen by the naked eye because it is embedded in the mountains of the Eastern Range of the Andes, between the departments of *Boyacá* and *Cundinamarca*. It is the green of its emeralds, the most famous in the world.

Colombian Emeralds Are the Most Famous in the World.

The reasons for Colombia's international prestige are many. Being the largest emerald producer, with 55% of the world's total, is just one of them. Next on the list are Brazil and Zambia with 15% each. And it is not only a question of quantity. Their quality places them among the most coveted gems.

The Legend of Emeralds

Colombia Produces 55% of the Planet's Emeralds - Brazil and Zambia follow.

Like many other Colombian traditions, the history of emeralds has been attributed with fantastic anecdotes that dispute the veracity of the geology of Colombia's emerald zone. There is the legend that tells of the existence of *Fura* and *Tena*, a man and a woman created by the god Ares for populating the earth, while being faithful to each other, in exchange for eternal youth.

Fura

, the woman, did not remain faithful. She aged rapidly, and *Tena* soon passed away.

Ares took pity on the unfortunate beings and turned them into two crags protected from storms and serpents and in whose depths *Fura*'s tears became emeralds. Today, the *Fura* and *Tena* Crags, rising 840 and 500 meters respectively above the valley of the *Minero* River, are the guardians of Colombia's emerald zone. They are located 30 km north of the mines of *Muzo* - the country's largest producers.

***Boyacá* and *Cundinamarca*, the Emerald Zones of Colombia**

It is in *Muzo*, in the northwestern part of the department of *Boyacá*, that the largest deposits of this precious stone are found. Apart from *Muzo*, the mines of *Borbur*, *Coscuez*, *Chivor*, *Peñas Blancas*, *La Pita* and *Quípama* stand out. The latter is characterized mostly by mining done by informal miners called "*guaqueros*".
Gachetá and *Gachalá*, two municipalities in northeastern *Cundinamarca*, make up the rest of Colombia's most important emerald exploitation zone.

La Emilia, the biggest emerald found so far – 6,900 carats – was mined from Las Cruces mine, in the town of *Gachalá*, in *Cundinamarca*.

Working in the Dark

The brightness and sumptuousness of Colombian emeralds are preceded by the hard work of miners. It is an arduous task that dates back to before the birth of Jesus Christ.

Thousands of men represent the face of darkness during their long days in the mines in search of this green spell that is actually a beryllium stone that owes its special color to chromium and vanadium, two chemical elements that are very scarce and the reason for the color of the only crystalline green stone in the world.

Features of Emeralds

The value of an emerald is determined by its size, purity, and brilliance.

The miner's work is the initial work and the most complicated one in emerald processing. The gem's value is determined by its color, size, purity, and brilliance. With these features considered, the price of a stone may vary between ten and four million dollars, although, naturally, the very expensive ones are not easy to find.

Although green is the generic color of emeralds, not all of them have same tone, a characteristic that the experts identify carefully when it comes to evaluating them. Basically, five kinds of types are recognized:

- bluish green
- slightly bluish green
- very slightly bluish green
- slightly yellowish green
- deep green

Deep green is the most beautiful, scarce, and valuable, as well as the most exclusive – it is found only in the deepest depths of Colombia.

Colombian Emerald Museum Corporation (MEC) in Cartagena

Several types of emerald crystallization are found in Colombia, which are little known due to their scarcity. Their geological importance is an unequalled contribution to our cultural heritage.

For many years, there had not been a location in Colombia for collecting the variety of stones and the exotic pieces made from the most famous emeralds in the world.

That is why over thirty years ago, a group of people interested in rescuing the true historical, cultural, and natural values of emeralds got together to make available to tourists the Colombian Emerald Museum Corporation (MEC, by its Spanish acronym) in Cartagena.

Nowadays, the Colombian Emerald Museum Corporation makes known the evolution of this mineral, from its formation in nature to the final buyer. And it offers an exhibit of the most interesting specimens and the largest emeralds, in a wide range of colors: rice green, blue green, yellow green, some of them with the characteristic fire-like inclusion.

This interesting museum is simultaneously an educational and scientific site, as well as an institution that certifies the authenticity of Colombian emeralds.

To broaden the information on emeralds, the museum also opens its doors to literature and exhibits on art, sculpture, jewelry, handicrafts and photography, all of which have contributed to reconstructing the history of emeralds and enriching the sample.

[turistainternacional/Quehacer/informe ESPECIAL/esmeralda/esmeralda{/gallery}](#) **Information on Cartagena's Emerald Museum**

Location Historical center, *calle Don Sancho* N° 36-75, Cartagena de Indias Phone + 57 (5) 664 4075 E-mail museodelaesmeralda@hotmail.com

A Museum for Emeralds

It was only logical that the Colombian emerald, aside from being an iconic element sought after by men, women, jewelers, and carvers, have a solemn site for the diffusion of its history, characteristics, and processes. Emeralds had always been exhibited in prestigious national and international jewelry shops, but were lacking a place of their own. Thus was born the *Museo de la Esmeralda*

, or Emerald Museum, in *Bogotá*



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Emerald Museum in *Bogotá*

Inspired by Munich's Diamond Museum, this 670 m² site keeps a collection of over 3,000 precious stones extracted from the mines of *Coscuez*, *Muzo* and *Chivor*. The Museum also recreates the work of miners by means of an artificial adit where expert guides tell visitors about the exploration and exploitation of emerald deposits.

Travelers arriving in *Bogotá* now have another attraction for learning about Colombia and its riches and for understanding the value and meaning of the prestigious green gem that is exploited just a few kilometers from Bogotá: a museum on the 23rd floor of the

Avianca
Building (
Calle
16 by
Carrera
7).

Colombian emeralds – the tears of *Fura*, the Indian woman - are hidden in the crags to pose a challenge for the miner, a passion for the carver, and an obsession for those who yearn to wear them as accessories or fine ornaments. Beyond ostentation, wearing an emerald means telling about the good and lovely things in Colombia.

If you are passionate about this subject, we invite you to keep on reading:

- [Destination *Bogotá*](#)
- [Bogotá Video](#)
- [Bogotá Photo Gallery](#)