



Los Nevados Natural Park / Picture: [www.parquesnacionales.gov.co/](http://www.parquesnacionales.gov.co/)

At approximately 5,000 meters above sea level, the five towering snow-capped peaks of Quindío, Santa Isabel, El Cisne, El Ruiz, and Tolima are the heart of one of the most astounding natural mosaics in Colombia: Los Nevados Natural Park.

The highest peaks in Colombia's Central Mountain Range are located in this majestic place. The cold and turbulent winds whisper the secrets of artists and goldsmiths of the Quimbaya Tribe, which previously inhabited the region. The park's unique combination of snow, sand, fauna and vegetation form a landscape of unending contrasts.

The park's snow is the source of large rivers that provide water to Colombia, nurture the spirit of its people and drive the economy. Water from the peaks and high plateau feed the drainage basin of the coffee-growing region to the west and the Department of Tolima and Magdalena Plain to the east. This beautiful and prolific water source fuels more than 50% of Colombia's national coffee production, as well as production of crops such as rice, corn, sorghum, and cotton.

The park is comprised of 58,300 hectares of ecological reserve and is home to unique birds such as the Bronze-tailed thornbill hummingbird and a native parrot species

There are also many lakes that have formed in the craters where glaciers previously existed. Some of the most spectacular are Otún, La Leona, and Verde Lakes.

### **Ascent to the Top of Nevado del Ruiz Volcano**

Also called Cumanday (Smoking Nose), this volcano peaks at 5,321 meters above sea level and covers approximately 100 square kilometers. It is the most well known of the park's highest peaks and the only one accessible by vehicle.

Visitors can make the ascent to highest point of its snowfields and explore its spectacular

craters, La Olleta and Alto de la Piraña. Its hot springs with their high-temperature sulfur waters are another natural attraction.

### **Verde Lake: a glacial mirror**



Verde Lake / Picture: [www.parquesnacionales.gov.co/](http://www.parquesnacionales.gov.co/)

Lake Verde lies between the Ruiz and Santa Isabel peaks. The beauty of its emerald-green water attracts national and international tourists and has appeared on the cover of famous international publications.

### **Otún Lake**

Formed by volcanic eruptions and glacial movement, it is mainly fed by melting ice from Nevado de Santa Isabel. Due to the majestic beauty of this lake located at approximately 3,900 meters above sea level, it was a center of worship for the Quimbaya culture.

Its waters are teeming with trout and other fish species that are apt for sports fishing. The water is filtered through the floors of caves formed by volcanic flows and feed the Otún River, the water source for the city of Pereira.

### **Valley of Tombs or Desert of Solitude**



Ascent to the top of Nevado del Ruiz Volcano

According to legend, this mystical place was a pilgrimage destination for the Puya and Quimbaya. To visitors and guides, it looks like the surface of the moon. Many people claim that it is an area of concentrated energy, and UFO sightings have been reported here. Visitors to the Soledad Desert direct their prayers and requests to a circle of hundreds of rocks with the hope of replenishing their energy.

The park is an excellent destination for people who are looking for sports such as mountain climbing, ice and rock climbing, sports fishing, bird watching and hiking nature trails. There are also options for visitors who want to see the snow, play sports, or participate in extreme sports.

Visitor service in the park is particularly concentrated in the Northern sector, at the Brisas, Chalet Arenales, and Refugio del Ruiz sites

Los Nevados Park is accessible from all departments in which it is located. Access roads provide visitors the opportunity for some beautiful and breathtaking scenery. Some of the most recommended routes start in the city of Manizales, just 30 minutes by air from the country's capital. The Manizales – Murillo - Refugio Brisas road is a one hour (10 km) route that leads travelers to the inner edge of the snowfields.

Taking the Manizales – Murillo - Refugio Brisas route, Otún Lake is only a four-hour trip.

The park has two designated camping areas:

- One is located in Los Arenales del Ruiz sector
- and the other in the Lake Otún sector.

Why are you waiting to visit Los Nevados Natural Park? Find out more about this place and key recommendations for your trip:

[Los Nevados Natural Park: a land of snow-capped peaks](#) and [National Parks of Colombia](#)

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