COLOMBIA: LOOKING FORWARD/LOOKING BACK

AUGUST 13–24, 2020

THURSDAY, AUGUST 13: BOGOTÁ

- Arrive in Bogotá and transfer to the Sofitel Bogotá Victoria Regia for check-in.

- Bogotá, Colombia, is a city of the future with a troubled past. It was born of conquest in August 1538 by the conquistador Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada—who arrived in pursuit of El Dorado, the mythical city of gold—developed under colonialism, reborn in revolution, and tried by political uncertainty, corruption, and strife. Yet since around the year 2000, Bogotá has emerged from a difficult past as an innovative city with a robust economy. Indeed, The Economist’s 2013 global-livability report shows Bogotá with the sharpest rise in livability of any other city in the world. It’s a time of peace and reconciliation in Colombia, with Bogotá leading the way to the future.

- We’ll have an early-evening reception for fellow travelers to meet, followed by a light dinner.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 14: BOGOTÁ

- We’ll attend a morning meeting with historian Sergio Castillo, who will offer us a framework for understanding Colombia’s recent history.

- After the briefing, we’ll depart the hotel and drive to the Paloquemao market, which is recognized as the Mecca of food sites in Bogotá, bringing together suppliers of meat, vegetables, fruits, packaged goods, seafood, and flowers from all over the country. We’ll experience the multitude of colors and the rich smells of a wide variety of produce. The market is a must-visit for fruit lovers who wish to delve into the full range of exotic produce Colombia has to offer.

- We’ll then head back into the heart of Bogotá, to the La Candelaria neighborhood, where the city was founded, and walk through its cobbled streets. Here, the city’s rich history is ever-present, exemplified by La Candelaria’s many colonial churches, squares, and convents. Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant.
• Visit the Center for Memory, Peace and Reconciliation and meet with Laura Cuellar, who has been part of the Strategic Projects division since late 2016. Learn about Victims Law, which was passed in 2011 to address 20-plus years of paramilitary, guerrilla, and state violence, and to support reconciliation initiatives.

• Meet with Mr. Jozef Merkx, who is the head of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Colombia to learn about the organization’s work.

• Enjoy dinner tonight at Club Columbia.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 15: BOGOTÁ

• Visit the Gold Museum, which provides an excellent understanding of the city’s historical artistic soul. The museum features the largest collection of pre-Hispanic goldwork in the world, as well as pottery and other archaeological artifacts of the indigenous population. Myths that recur in so many forms of Colombian art can be found here—shamanic animal-men, jagged geometric patterns, and the origins of magical realism.

• Travel by cable car 1,600 feet up to the Cerro de Monserrate, where we’ll visit an important pilgrimage site. After enjoying panoramic views of the Rio Bogotá and La Candelaria, we’ll head to a nearby mansion that was given to Bolivar in 1820 in gratitude for liberating Colombia from the Spaniards. The home is filled with beautiful period pieces, including one of his swords.

• Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant.

• After lunch, stop at Casas Riegner, one of the main supporters of local art, whose mission statement is “the promotion and dissemination of contemporary art within Colombia and abroad.” Meet with Felipe Villada who will talk about some of the emerging young Colombian artists.

• Stop by Peace Bridges International (PBI), an independent NGO whose mission is to provide a protective space for human rights defenders. Learn about PBI’s work in Colombia.

• Dinner will be at your leisure this evening.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 16: SAN AGUSTÍN

• We’ll take a morning flight to Pitalito and from there drive approximately 45 minutes to the newly opened Hotel Monasterio de San Agustín.

• This region was inhabited by two enigmatic indigenous cultures that created fantastic sculptures using volcanic rocks approximately 5,000 years ago. They lived in the adjacent river valleys of the Magdalena and the Cauca. Divided by impassable peaks, the two rivers were these peoples’ transportation system. San Agustín, where the rivers joined, was where the two tribes met to trade, bury their dead, and worship. A now-extinct volcano close by left volcanic rock, from which local tribe members used to carve towering statues. These statues were used as part of funerary rituals, and, today, statues in the forms of pumas, snakes, and warriors still loom over the lush green hills surrounding San Agustín.

• This afternoon will start with a visit to the Archaeological Museum of San Agustín, which provides an excellent introduction to the site and the area’s culture. We’ll continue on to the San Agustín Archaeological Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site, where 130 monuments are displayed, as well as the Fuente de Lavapatás, a ceremonial fountain where images of serpents, lizards, and human figures are carved in a
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Labyrinth of ducts in the rocky bed of a stream. Archaeologists believe the baths were once used for ritual bathing and the worship of aquatic deities.

- From here, we’ll walk to the Alto de Lavapatas, the oldest archaeological site in San Agustín, where imposing statues guard ancient tombs. The prehistoric site also offers a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside.

- After lunch at a local restaurant, we’ll visit a number of less-known sites, including the Alto de las Piedras, which features tombs made of rock slabs with signs of red, black, and yellow coloring. Doble Yo is one of the most famous statues, which, on closer examination, is actually composed of four separate statues. Nearby, at La Chaquira, divinities are carved into the mountainside and overlook the stunning gorge of Rio Magdalena.

- We’ll have dinner at the hotel in the evening.

MONDAY, AUGUST 17: POPAYÁN B, L, D

- This morning we’ll head northwest toward Popayán, stopping at the Parque Nacional Natural Puracé, which lies within the territory of the Puracé indigenous people and is a geothermal land of waterfalls and a snow-capped, inactive volcano. Also stop at Isnos where we will see traces of pre-Colombian life, such as ancient drainage ditches and roads, amongst an array of more funerary monuments. Please note that the drive is about 4 hours and is partly unpaved and bumpy in sections. The surrounding area is lush and mesmerizing and we will stop for photos en route.

- Enjoy lunch en route before arriving in Popayán, known as the “White City” due to its chalk-white buildings, and check into the Hotel Dann Monasterio.

- This graceful colonial town, located at the midpoint in the journey that gold would make between Lima, Peru; Quito, Ecuador; and the Colombian port of Cartagena on the Caribbean on its way to Spain. Its historic center is one of the most beautiful and well-preserved in Colombia. We’ll admire Popayán’s stunning churches, which were built in the 17th and 18th centuries.

- Meet with Adolfo Conejo with the Consejo Regional Indigena del Cauca - a local community group. CRIC’s mission is to recover ancestral territory of indigenous people, strengthen economic and community enterprises, and protect the rights of indigenous people and their customs.

- Enjoy a traditional dinner tonight at El Camino Real.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 18: PEREIRA B, L, D

- We’ll depart early this morning and drive to the mountain town of Silvia. Every Tuesday, the indigenous Guambiano people come to the town’s market to sell their produce. The Guambiano, one of the most traditional indigenous groups in the country, practice basic farming methods and still maintain their own language and traditional dress.

- Drive about three hours to Cali, the capital city of the region. Joining us for lunch will be Berenice Celeita from NOMASDEC. Founded in 1999, the Association for Social Research and Action (NOMADESC) is a human rights organization involved in social, trade union, civic, indigenous,
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afro-descendant, agricultural and women’s issues.

• After lunch enjoy a salsa class with Jacaranda dance troupe, winners of many international salsa competitions.

• Continue on to the area of Colombia officially known as the “Coffee Axis” — the best coffee growing region of Colombia, if not the world. Over a drive of about four hours, we’ll see this beautiful landscape dotted with coffee farms and poncho-wearing coffee workers.

• Arrive in the early evening to the newly opened Hotel Boutique Casa San Carlos. Enjoy dinner at the hotel restaurant.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19: PEREIRA

• Drive to Salento, a quaint town with colonial architecture, which is the base for a visit to the Cocora Valley. The people of Salento are famous for ignoring a government mandate to paint their houses red or blue based on their political affiliation, and instead painted the town in a multitude of bright colors.

• After a short tour of Salento, drive to the Valle de Cocora and enjoy a brisk and hilly walk amongst magnificent native wax palms, the largest palm in the world. Afterward enjoy lunch at El Portal de Cocora, which features sweeping views.

• Visit Finca El Ocaso Salento, a coffee farm, to learn more about the coffee industry. Colombia is the world’s third largest producer of coffee and the only country that grows Arabica beans exclusively. Savor some coffee while admiring the stunning views.

• We’ll return to Pereira for dinner.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20: MEDELLÍN

• This morning, we’ll take an early flight to Medellín, located deep in the fertile Aburrá Valley in the Andean highlands. Flying in to Medellín, we’ll see the heart-stopping beauty of the city, which is nestled among rolling, verdant mountains. Surrounding towns and villages perch atop sheer slopes—some wooded, others carpeted with steep meadows. The heart of Medellín dates back to 1616, when Spanish colonists built the region’s first houses in the El Poblado district in the southern part of the city. From there, the city spread north through the Aburrá Valley as it expanded. Historic buildings dot city center, including colonial gems like the La Veracuz, La Candelaria, and Saint Ignatius churches.

• Upon arrival, we’ll drive a short distance to Comuna 13, formerly Medellín’s most dangerous barrio. These days, Comuna 13 is an internationally renowned example of how innovative urban-regeneration projects can be used to transform and revitalize communities. Most recently, Medellín finished installing a series of outdoor escalators in the neighborhood to connect the hilly neighborhood with the rest of the city and provide safer, more efficient public transportation. Since the installation of the escalators, violence has practically vanished in this area due to a so-called “electric escalator” cease-fire between gangs in the area.

• Walk up some steep streets in Comuna 13 to meet with Dr. Marta Dominquez Mejia, a professor at the Universidad de Antioquia, who will discuss urban violence and issues concerning political participation.

• Drive to the Metrocable stop at Santo Domingo to learn how public transit has transformed this neighborhood, a once-blighted area. We will have lunch at a local restaurant.

• After lunch take the metro-cable - a new ski
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- Check into the NH Collection Royal Medellín hotel. Later enjoy dinner at Restaurante La Provincia.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 21: MEDELLÍN B, L

- This morning, meet with Mr. Nicolas Bedoya, who has been working deep in the Andes in a region that has been strategically important to FARC. He has been documenting the period of transition, examining plans for a major coca crop substitution program and delving into the struggles around energy and the environment.

- Later, we’ll again admire the work of artist Fernando Botero, known for his paintings and sculptures of figures of exaggerated volume. His works provide a useful commentary on Medellín’s sense of self and the body. In the southwest corner of the central Parque Berrio is his Torsos Femeninos, a bronze sculpture of a very inflated female form nicknamed La Gorda (The Fat Lady) by locals. Botero gave the sculpture to the city in 1987—the first of many donations by Botero, who was born here in 1932. On nearby Botero Plaza are more of his bronzes—of men, women, a cat, and a Roman soldier.

- Drive to the Botanical Garden—the city’s green lung. This 35-acre garden showcases Colombia’s fauna and flora, with hundreds of plant species grouped into themed spaces like tropical forest, vertical garden, and an “Orquideorama,” an architecturally dramatic space with over 400 orchid plants. Enjoy lunch at En Situ Restaurant located in the heart of the Botanical Garden.

- We’ll then stop at a former steel mill, built in the 1930s, which has reborn as MAMM, or the Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín, in 2009. Its staggering exhibition spaces showcase contemporary Colombian artists like Beatriz González, Carlos Rojas, and the hometown expressionist Débora Arango with astutely curated exhibitions.

- Dinner is at leisure this evening.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 22: CARTAGENA B, L

- This morning, depart on a one-hour flight to Cartagena.

“The city, his city, stood unchanging on the edge of time: the same burning dry city of its nocturnal terrors and the solitary pleasures of puberty, where flowers rusted and salt corroded, where nothing had happened for four centuries except a slow aging among withered laurels.”

- So Gabriel Garcia Márquez described Cartagena, his adopted city for much of his life, in his novel Love in the Time of Cholera. The description largely stands the test of time, just as the city itself. The 16th-century colonial city still perches, walled and turreted, on the Caribbean shore. The bougainvillea tumbling from the balconies in the narrow streets...
still “rusts,” the salt still corrodes, and the air is still full of solitary pleasures.

- Learn exploring the inner section of the Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage site, with a walking tour. We’ll learn about Cartagena’s colonial history and stroll through the immaculately restored colonial core of the city where the upper class lived. To the southwest is the large triangular Plaza de la Aduana, once the seat of power in colonial times. It is surrounded by stately colonial mansions, and a statue of Christopher Columbus presides in the center.

- Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant.

- Continue on to visit the City of Women, a drive about an hour from Cartagena. More than 6 million Colombians have been displaced from their homes since 1985, with more than half of them women, many of whom were widowed by the war and faced raising children alone. Patricia Guerrero, a lawyer from Bogotá, founded an organization called the League of Displaced Women. She successfully secured international funding for the organization to build a community known as the City of Women. It aims to restore the right to housing to some of the country’s most vulnerable members and their families. This grassroots group is run by and for the women who are victims of the conflict between the government, right-wing paramilitaries, crime syndicates, and leftist armed rebel groups.

- Return to Cartagena and check-in to the Tcherassi Hotel and Spa. Enjoy dinner at a restaurant near the hotel.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 23: CARTAGENA B, L, D

- This morning we’ll visit the Bazurto market, which will afford us a glimpse into the day-to-day life of real cartageneros. Anthony Bourdain brought a small corner of the market to fame in his TV show No Reservations. It’s not a trip for the fainthearted though—the smells and visual experiences are unique!

- After shopping, enjoy the opportunity to prepare and cook your own lunch alongside a local chef.

- Continue on to the Nohra Haime Gallery and visit with artist Ruby Rumié’s, whose work includes painting, sculpture, photography, video and installation.

- Enjoy some free time before a festive farewell dinner at El Santisimo.

MONDAY, AUGUST 24: DEPARTURE

- Transfer to the airport for flights to the United States.
**PRICING**

- **DOUBLE (per person):** $6,890 + $480 internal air
- **SINGLE SUPPLEMENT:** $1,280

*Rates are based on standard accommodations. Suites, superior rooms and other upgrades carry an additional fee.

**INCLUDED**

- Accommodation, based on double occupancy, in hotels as listed
- Meals as listed in the itinerary, including bottled water
- Bottled water on the bus at all times
- All sightseeing and excursions in a private air-conditioned bus
- All private events and speakers (or similar) as listed
- All entrance fees listed
- Services of an English-speaking local tour manager who will travel with the group from the beginning to end
- Services of local guides in certain cities
- Cocktail reception at the hotel in Bogota
- Meeting rooms as listed
- Porterage
- Basic gratuity to tour manager, guides and bus drivers

**NOT INCLUDED**

- International airfare to and from Colombia
- Internal airfare – listed as $480
- Passport fees
- Excess luggage charges
- Travel insurance
- Items of a purely personal nature
- Any item not listed