

7-Day Colombia Itinerary: Cartagena, Medellín & the Coffee Triangle

Colombia's postcard trio sits on three different sides of the country, and this week threads all of them together — three nights inside Cartagena's walled, UNESCO-listed Old City on the Caribbean coast, two nights in Medellín taking in the outdoor escalators and street art of Comuna 13, and two nights in the coffee country around Salento, home to the world's tallest wax palms. Two short domestic flights connect the three legs, so no day is lost to overland travel.

DURATION

7 Days

BEST TIME TO GO

December – March

driest months on the coast and in the Andes

FROM

\$1,175 USD / person

for 2 people

Day 1

Arrive in Cartagena

Land at Rafael Núñez International Airport and settle into a restored colonial mansion inside the walled city — Cartagena's UNESCO-listed center is compact enough to explore entirely on foot for the next three days.

Private Transfer — Airport (CTG) to the Walled City

~15–20 minutes • Fixed rate \$25–30 USD per vehicle, up to 4 people

A short, flat-rate ride from the airport straight into the walled city's cobblestone streets — no meter, no haggling with taxi touts after an international flight.

Cartagena Connections cartagenaconnections.com • +57 5 664 5555

Check-In — Sofitel Legend Santa Clara Cartagena

From \$340–420 USD / night, for 2 people

A former 17th-century convent turned five-star hotel in the San Diego quarter, with a cloistered courtyard pool and Getsemani's alleys a short walk away — home base for the next three nights.

Sofitel Legend Santa Clara Cartagena sofitel-legend-santa-clara-cartagena.com • +57 5 650 4700

Dinner in the Walled City

Est. \$30–50 USD / person

On your own — the streets around Plaza Santo Domingo and Plaza San Diego are lined with candlelit courtyard restaurants serving Caribbean-Colombian seafood.

Day 2

A full day inside the walled city of Cartagena, starting with a tour of the star-shaped Castillo San Felipe de Barajas.

Walled City of Cartagena

~2.5–3 hours, self-guided

A local guide will meet you at the hotel and be oriented before the tour. Free Tour Card included.

Castillo San Felipe de Barajas

~1.5 hours, self-guided

The largest Spanish fortification in the Americas, approaching the city from the sea.

Getsemani Street Art Walk

~1–1.5 hours, self-guided • Free

Once Cartagena's roughest barrio, Getsemani is now a mural-covered "Ciudad Mural" — wander Calle del Pozo and Plaza de la Trinidad as the evening crowd fills the square.

Dinner in Getsemani

Est. \$25–40 USD / person

On your own — the neighborhood's reclaimed plazas are now dense with small kitchens and rooftop bars a short walk from the hotel.

Day 3

Islas del Rosario & Fly to Medellín

A full day on the water among the coral-reef islands of the Rosario archipelago, then an evening flight inland to Medellín, the City of Eternal Spring.

Islas del Rosario Full-Day Boat & Snorkel Tour

~8 hours (incl. transfers) • From \$65–75 USD / person

A speedboat departs Muelle Turístico La Bodeguita for the coral reefs and mangrove channels of Islas del Rosario.

Check-In — Click Clack Hotel Medellín

From \$150–190 USD / night, for 2 people

A design-forward hotel in El Poblado with a rooftop pool and bar looking out over the Aburrá Valley — home base for the next two nights, walking distance to Parque Lleras.

Click Clack Hotel Medellín clickclackhotel.com · +57 604 508 0000

Day 4

Comuna 13 & the Metrocable

Medellín's most talked-about transformation, seen up close — the outdoor escalators and graffiti staircases of Comuna 13 in the morning, then a cable-car ride over the hillside barrios to a cloud-forest park.

Comuna 13 Graffitour — Real City Tours

~2.5–3 hours · From \$20–25 USD / person

A guide who grew up in the neighborhood walks the outdoor escalators and graffiti-covered staircases of what was once one of Medellín's most dangerous comunas, now a showcase for street art and hip-hop.

Real City Tours realcitytours.com · +57 300 275 3401

Metrocable & Parque Arví

~3 hours round-trip · ~\$3 USD / person (metro + cable-car fare)

Medellín's public cable-car system climbs straight from the metro line over the hillside comunas to Parque Arví, a cloud-forest reserve with trails and a small artisan market.

Metro de Medellín metrodemedellin.gov.co · +57 604 444 0505

Dinner in El Poblado

Est. \$25–45 USD / person

On your own — Parque Lleras and the streets around it hold Medellín's densest concentration of restaurants.

Day 5

Guatapé & El Peñón

A day trip east to Antioquia's most photographed town — 740 steps up a granite monolith, then the candy-colored zócalo streets of Guatapé's lakeside old town.

Full-Day Tour — Guatapé & El Peñón de Guatapé

~9 hours (incl. transport) · From \$50–60 USD / person

A van tour east from Medellín to the reservoir town of Guatapé, with time to climb El Peñón's 740-step staircase, cruise the lake by boat, and wander the tiled zócalo streets of the old town.

Real City Tours realcitytours.com · +57 300 275 3401

El Peñón de Guatapé Climb

~45–60 minutes round-trip · COP 25,000 (~\$6 USD) entry

A staircase built into the rock's east face climbs to a viewing platform 200 meters up, with the flooded reservoir and its green islands spread out below.

Lunch in Guatapé

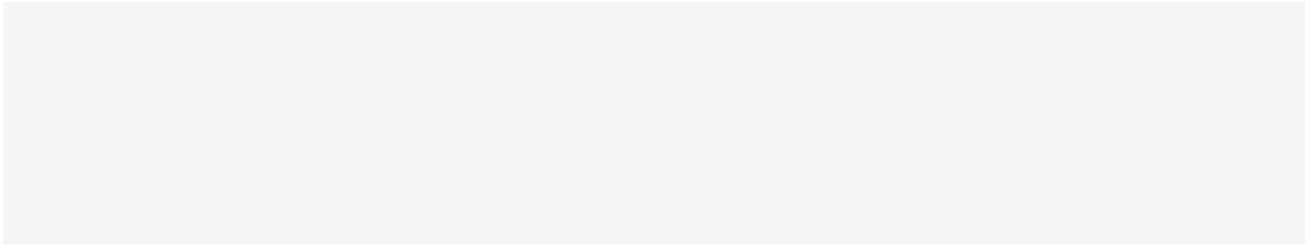
Est. \$15–25 USD / person

On your own — lakeside restaurants along the malecón serve fried fish and patacones with a view of the water.

Day 6

Fly to the Coffee Triangle & Salento

A short flight over the Andes to the heart of Colombia's coffee country, then an afternoon settling into Salento's colorful main street.



Cocora Valley, Coffee Farm & Departure

A last morning among the world's tallest wax palms and a coffee farm tour before the transfer back to Pereira for the flight home.

Willys Jeep — Salento to Valle de Cocora

~25 minutes · COP 8,000 (~\$2 USD) / person each way, shared jeep

Vintage green Willys jeeps line up in Salento's main plaza and leave once full for the wax palm valley — the classic and cheapest way to reach the trailhead.

Cootransar (Salento Jeep Cooperative) · +57 6 759 3535

Valle de Cocora Wax Palm Hike

~3–4 hours round-trip · Free (Acaime Nature Reserve add-on ~\$5 USD)

A trail climbs through pasture into cloud forest past the world's tallest palm trees — the wax palm can top 60 meters — with an optional detour to the Acaime hummingbird reserve for hot chocolate and cheese.

Coffee Farm Tour — Finca El Ocaso

~1 hour · \$12–15 USD / person, English-language tours available

A working family farm just outside Salento walks you from coffee cherry to cup, with a tasting at the end — the best-established of Salento's coffee tours.

Finca El Ocaso fincaelocaso.com · +57 311 745 1682

Private Transfer — Salento to Pereira Airport (PEI)

~1 hour · From \$45–55 USD per vehicle, up to 4 people

Build in buffer time for the mountain road down from Salento — request pickup at least three hours before an international connection.

Colombian Highlands colombianhighlands.com · +57 315 585 4157