

# Barranquilla, Colombia Travel Tips

## Weather in August

Avg Low – 78 Avg High – 89

The sun will rise at 6:00 am and set at 6:00 pm

August will be cloudy for much of the time.

It rains 9.8 days in August so expect some rain on several days.

**Humidity will be near 90% all the time.**

There will be a mild breeze much of the time, about 8.5 mph.

**Use sunscreen**

**Bring lightweight rain gear**

## Safety - You will be safe but follow a few rules and use common sense.

- Travel at all times in groups.
- Don't carry valuables like jewelry and cash in plain sight. Phones are a high value target for petty theft. Check your surroundings before checking for something on your phone.
- Don't use (unlicensed) street taxis. Download the Uber or Cabify app to order taxis. The drivers are registered and so is every single ride you take.
- Don't walk around at night, use a taxi.
- Like everywhere, alcohol, drugs and women can get you in trouble. **Don't go looking for trouble!**
- Always keep in mind the saying "**no dar papaya**"
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"No dar papaya" is a popular saying in Colombia which translates to "don't give papaya." This basically means: don't give someone the opportunity to take advantage of you.

- **Covid is always a concern – Bring masks. They may be required in some places.**
- **Drink only bottled water.**
- **Eat only cooked food.**
- Salads can be eaten if rinsed properly. You need to ask first.
- **If you eat street food, go to those places that seem popular (crowded).**
- Don't expect to be able to use a credit/debit card all the time. Some places may require cash which is available at ATM's.
- **M on a bathroom door does not mean Men**

## Keep Your Cool in Colombia

Colombians do not like public displays of anger, frustration or drama. It is considered very unattractive and unwanted. In Barranquilla you'll have 2 kinds of reactions if you show anger in public: 1) You'll be totally ignored or 2) you'll be punched in the face by a local who thought your anger was directed at him.

## Cocaine is a Taboo in Colombia

Cocaine is a big taboo in Colombian society as the conflict it initiated has taken an immense toll on the people and many families lost their loved ones. **When traveling to Colombia, avoid joking about drugs. It can be very insulting. Talking about Pablo Escobar can be offensive.** Avoiding this topic altogether is the safest way to avoid hurting someone's pride and feelings.

## **Learn Some Spanish – a Few Words Go a Long Way**

English isn't widely spoken in Colombia. Less than 10% speak English. Hotel staff usually do speak some English and they will be able to help you out with most things you may need if you don't speak any Spanish. Learn a few words before you travel to Colombia. **We have a number of spanish speaking people in our tour. They will be your best friends!!**

The locals definitely appreciate any effort you make towards speaking their language and your travel experience will be so much better if you can ask someone about their day.

If you already speak Spanish, look up Colombian slang on the internet. It doesn't take long and helps.

## **Communication Works Differently in Colombia**

Language tends to be more formal in Colombia. For example, Buenos Días, como estás? Como estás tu familia? Tu perrito? Tús hijos? ("Good morning, how are you? How is your family? Your dog? Your kids?"). You can't skip the greeting and formality for the sake of efficiency and brevity. Even in short face-to-face encounters. Also don't just say "hola" ("hello"). "Muy buenas tardes, señora" ("a very good afternoon, madam") is much more the local custom. Mañana does not mean tomorrow here... it's more like some time in the future and "ahora" ("now") means sometime in the next hours. If you want something to be done right now, you have to use "ya" ("already").

## **Money in Colombia**

ATMs are in English and Spanish and the surcharge is about equal to US\$ 3.00.

Bring a debit/credit card to get cash, and be sure to **let your bank know where you will be.**

**Using ATMs is a much better option than trying to exchange money.**

**You Get the Best Exchange Rate By Using Cards or at ATMs .** If you have card with no international transactions fees, it will be even better.

## **There are phrases you need to know if you plan to pay for things with a Credit Card.**

In the USA and many other countries, all you need to do when purchasing a product is hand over your card and the cashier will swipe and you're done. Here in Colombia, the payment systems are very different and so the cashier is required to ask you questions when paying with a credit card. The first question they will ask after you hand over your credit card is "ahorros, corriente, o credito?" you will respond with "credito." (ahorros is savings, corriente is checking, credito is credit). The second thing they will ask you is "cuantas cuotas?" you will answer with "una." Cuotas are like installment payments. So even if you are purchasing a loaf of bread, they will ask how many installments you'd like to pay in. Cuotas only work with Colombian cards so no matter what, your card will only be charged one quote – but you still have to answer 😊 The third thing they will ask you is "últimos dígitos?" you will answer with the last 4 digits of your credit card number. Definitely memorize the last 4 digits of the card you plan to use (or write it down somewhere) because if you don't know, they will need to take the card out, find the numbers, and then start the payment process all over again. Lastly, they will ask you "quieres una copia?" aka do you want a copy of the payment receipt. If you need a receipt by all means answer si or just say no, and just keep the "factura" or the detailed bill.

## **In restaurants, payment is made at the table**

In the USA it's common for the waiter to take your card away where they will charge it without you being present? That doesn't happen in Colombia. The waiter will actually bring a portable credit card system directly to the table. All you have to say after you ask for the check is "datáfono" so that they know you are paying by card and not by cash ("efectivo"). **Never give your credit card and see it go out of sight – that is not normal!**

- A mid-range restaurant meal will cost about \$10. US Less at a cheaper restaurant.
- Fast Food (McDonalds, Burger King) will be about \$5 US
- Tourist areas will be more expensive.
- To have a good meal at a food court 2,4 - 6 USD = 10 000 - 25 000 COP
- Lunch set with a drink and a burger from 1,9 USD = 7 900 COP
- Sandwiches 0,97 USD = 4 000 COP
- Subway sandwich from 1,7 USD = 7 000 COP
- Chicken grill 1,4 - 4,8 USD = 5 800 - 19 800 COP

### **It's Important to Understand the Colombian Peso**

The local currency is the Colombian Peso (COP\$) and the denominations are in mil, Spanish for thousand. Menus at restaurants and cafes might list a cappuccino for \$5.000 – this means the cost is 5mil. In common parlance, the mil is often dropped. 1\$ (peso) is divided into 100 centavo.

There are 8 different coins: \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, \$100, \$200, \$500, \$1000.

There are 6 different bank notes with the following values: \$1000, \$2000, \$5000, \$10000, \$20000, \$50000. Be especially careful with large banknotes: \$50000, \$20000.

**The current exchange rate of Colombian Peso (COP) is about : \$1 USD = 4,375 COP.**

### **Haggling is Accepted -**

This is especially true for street vendors. You are going to stick out as a tourist so you will get a high price.