



TradeMissions

Education Mission to Latin America Bogota - Colombia Briefing Kit Date 2010



Emergency Contacts

See cover sheet

Hotels

See exhibitors kit

Entry requirements for Australians: Australians must have a passport and do not require a visa for touristic stays of up to 90 days.

Smarttraveller

www.smarttraveller.gov.au

Location

Bogota – Colombia

Colombia with its population of 43.6M is situated in the northwest of South America and has coasts on both the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. The country is bound on the east by Venezuela and Brazil; on the south by Ecuador and Peru; and to the northwest by Panama.

The central and western parts of the country are mainly dominated by the Andes Mountains. Towards the west, two-fifths of the country lies in the highlands of the Andes, characterised by towering mountain ranges which are separated by high plateaus and fertile valleys. These valleys have the main rivers of the country passing through them. East of the Andes, three-fifths of the country consists of portions of the llanos (grasslands) and selva (rain forest.) Along the shore of the Caribbean Sea lies a strip of lowland. The principal river of Colombia, the Magdalena, flows north between the Cordillera Oriental and the Cordillera Central.

The Colombian Government, in recent years has stepped up efforts to reassert government control throughout the country, and now has a presence in every one of its administrative departments.

Colombia experienced accelerating growth between 2002 and 2007, chiefly due to advancements in domestic security, rising commodity prices, and to President URIBE's promarket economic policies with foreign direct investment reaching a record \$10 billion in 2008.

The global financial crisis and weakening demand for Colombia's exports, saw the economy grow only 2.5% in 2008, and contracted slightly in 2009. The economy is expected to expand 2-3% in 2010.



Climate

Bogota

The Bogota climate is temperate, but considerable variations in temperature can occur during the day, with warm sunny mornings and cold nights. The average temperature is around 14.4°C all year round dropping to about 9°C at night and rising to around 18°C and higher when sunny. In the rainy season, there is less difference between day and night temperatures. The main dry season lasts from December to March, and the wettest months are April and October.

	Mar	Apr	May
Bogota			
Average Temp	16	18	18

Time Difference

Melbourne, Sydney	2	4	9	11	14	17	20	23
Bogota	10	12	17	19	22	1	4	7

Mobile Phones

COLOMBIA

Global roaming agreements exist with a few international mobile phone companies. Coverage is limited to urban areas. It is essential you check with your provider **before** you travel.

Electricity

Bogota – Colombia

110V voltage 60Hz frequency

The Type A electrical plug, or flat blade attachment plug, uses two flat parallel pins or blades. It is found in most of North America and on the east coast of South America on smaller devices that do not require a ground connection.



The Type B electrical plug has two flat parallel blades like the Type A, but also has a round grounding or earth pin that grounds the device before the power is connected. The neutral blade is wider than the live blade to ensure proper insertion.



General Trading Hours

Shop opening hours

- Shops of all sizes are usually open from 10.00 to 20.00. Most are open all day although some close for lunch from 13.00 to 15.00 or from 14.00 to 16.00.

Currency

Currency Exchange Rate

The unit of Colombian currency is the Colombia Pesos. An AUD exchanges for about 1,764.75 Colombia Pesos. (06/04/10)

Exchange rates may change at any time according to the market conditions. For current rates go to <http://www.xe.com/ucc/>

Currency

Cash, credit card and traveller's cheques are accepted in Columbia. When you need to exchange your foreign currency visit a bank, or exchange office.

It is recommended you use local currency in Colombia (Colombia Pesos).

Banks are open Monday to Friday from 09.00 to 14.00. The banks tend to be very full between 12.00 and 14.00, so you are recommended to go earlier in the morning.

Credit Card

Credit Cards are very widely used in Colombia. The most commonly accepted Cards are Visa, MasterCard and Diners Club and American Express. In remote rural areas you are recommended to carry cash since credit cards are will often not accepted.

ATM

Colombia

ATMs are widely available and can be used in English; however you should take money out during the day and to take a look around before using an ATM machine. Also check machines for possible criminal interference since card cloning is a problem in Colombia. For peace of mind most of Colombia's high street banks will have an ATM inside the branch.

Transport

Colombia - Taxi

The taxi networks in Bogota are extensive and very cheap. A (bright yellow) taxi journey across Bogota, can take up to a day but cost less than US\$15. If you order a taxi by phone the company will then give you the taxi registration number. Then the taxi will be waiting at the given address. You may need to give them a three or four digit code given to you when you book the taxi.

During the day some taxi ranks outside hotels, office buildings and government offices will only allow certified drivers and companies and will also take your name and details when you board the taxi. Taxis from city to city are easy to arrange by phoning ahead and agreeing the price, it will still be cheap by western standards and is safe and quite agreeable.

The meter in all taxis starts at 25, and then increases over distance. The number it arrives at corresponds to a tariff that will be on display on the front seat of the cab. Note that taxi and bus prices increase on Sundays, public holidays, early in the morning and late at night. For taxis there are also extra charges for baggage and for booking in advance by telephone. Unlike many other countries it is not customary to tip the taxi driver. It's up to the individual.

Many taxis are not allowed to travel outside of Bogota due to boundary restrictions with their licences. You should always make arrangements to travel outside of Bogota by taxi ahead of time. In some locations (Las Aguas in the Candelaria district of Bogota for example) you may find an individual acting as a tout for taxi drivers - they will offer you a taxi and lead you to a particular cab. They

then receive a small tip from the driver. Taxis (and much else besides) are much more expensive in Cartagena than in other cities

Useful Words and Phrases

- Yes: sí
- No: no
- Please: por favor
- Thank you: gracias
- You are welcome: de nada, de que
- Where: dónde
- When: cuándo
- What: qué
- How much: cuánto
- This: este
- That: eso
- Now: ahora
- Later: más tarde
- Open: abierto
- Closed: cerrado
- With: con
- Without: sin
- Good: bueno/a
- Bad: malo/a
- Big: grande
- Small: pequeño/a, chico/a
- Today: hoy
- Tomorrow: mañana
- The day after tomorrow: pasado mañana
- Yesterday: ayer
- More: más
- Less: menos
- Hello: hola
- Goodbye: adiós, chao
- Good morning: Buenos días
- Good afternoon: Buenas tardes
- Good evening: Buenas noches
- Good night: Buenas noches
- See you later: hasta luego
- Sorry: lo siento/disculpe
- Excuse me: con permiso/perdón
- How are you?: ¿cómo está?
- I (don't) understand: (No) entiendo
- Do you speak English?: ¿habla inglés?
- I (don't) speak Spanish?: (No) hablo español
- How do you say this in (Spanish)?: ¿Cómo puedo decir esto en español?
- My name is?: me llamo?
- What's your name?: ¿cómo se llama?
- I am Australian: australiano
- I want...: quiero...
- I'd like...: quisiera...
- I need...: necesito...
- I have...: tengo...
- I like...: me gusta
- Do you know...?: ¿Sabe...?

- Is there...?: ¿hay...?
- Do you have...?: ¿Tiene...?
- How do I get to...?: ¿Por dónde se va a ...?
- Where is...?: ¿Dónde está...?

Business Etiquette

Business tips for Colombia in brief

Initial correspondence with potential business partners should be in Spanish, as letters in English are more likely to be given lower priority.

The level of proficiency in English can vary among Colombian business executives - many understand and read more fluently than they are willing or able to speak, and therefore an interpreter may be useful.

Address people by their title and surname, or use Señor, Señora. 'Doctor/Doctora' is often applied to any accomplished or educated person, regardless of whether or not he or she has a Ph.D. or is a medical doctor.

Personal contacts do play a special role in Colombia and can make the difference between finding an open or closed door.

It may be customary for a woman to receive a kiss on the cheek from a business colleague. It is part of the Colombian welcome.

Business attire is mostly suit and tie for men and suit or dress for women. Evening functions are similarly dressy unless advised otherwise. Colombians view a person's clothing as an indicator of status; err on the side of conservatively well dressed.

Making appointments

Colombia

As a foreigner, always be punctual for your business meetings. Colombians may arrive 15 minutes late for the meeting but expect you to be on time. This is just normal protocol.

Business appointments are made in advance, preferably one week before arriving.

Colombians write their calendar date similar to many European and other South American countries. Write the day first, then the month, then year (i.e., April 11, 2010 is written 11-4-10).

Lunch is the preferred choice for a business meal.

Business hours are generally from 9:00 AM to 5:00PM Monday through Friday. Store hours generally are from 9:00 AM to 12:30 PM and from 2:00 PM to 7:00 PM Monday through Saturday. Bank hours are from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM Monday through Thursday and from 9:00 AM to 3:30 PM on Friday. For social occasions, punctuality is relaxed and the proper protocol is being 30 minutes late.

Outside the business arena Colombians tend to be spontaneous rather than planners.

Business dress

Colombia

Colombians judge people by the quality of their clothes and have a somewhat conservative taste. Dark-colored suits are more preferable, especially dark gray and dark blue. In rural areas and the coastline, the dress code is more casual and colorful.

Business cards

Your business cards should be printed in English on one side and the Spanish version on the other side. Present the Spanish version to your Colombian colleague.

Business titles are important so address your Colombian colleague directly by using his or her title.

Using First Name and Titles

An individual can be addressed by using the titles "Mr." ["Señor"], "Mrs." ["Señora"], or "Miss" ["Señorita"] followed by his or her surname. Sometimes, a person can be addressed by his or her professional title and surname. Nevertheless, the use of professional titles is not as common. The best policy is to ask a person how he or she prefers to be addressed.

Conversation in Colombia

- The customary business greeting begins with handshaking and a polite greeting before and after the meeting.
- Colombians pay attention to body language and are very good listeners.
- Colombians are verbose by nature and known to become emotional during discussions where feelings take precedence.
- Humour is welcome in business discussions as well as anecdotes.
- Conversations to avoid: terrorism, illegal drugs, politics in general, religion, discussing bribery, and negative comments about bullfighting.
- Good topics for conversations: culture, soccer, history, literature, emeralds, coffee.

Deal-Making

What you should know before negotiating

Colombia

- Colombians usually observe rules of hierarchy and prefer to follow an agenda.
- Formality in Colombian business is expected, especially inland. Along the coast less formality is acceptable. Make your greeting. Small talk before and after meetings is vital towards building a sense of trust and goodwill.
- Colombians make decisions by consensus.
- The meetings are usually conducted in a dignified and calm manner. You should never criticize anyone openly. Avoid situations where several people speak at once.
- Colombians pay close attention to people's feelings so be wary of depending only on facts and figures. In Colombia, personal relationships make or break business deals.
- Always be cognizant of how your behaviour is being perceived by your Colombian colleagues.
- Your assumptions should always be tested by asking direct and indirect questions.
- Colombians appreciate compassion from foreign colleagues so don't hesitate to show it.
- It would be beneficial if you have a local contact who can introduce you to the Colombians you are to conduct business with as well as pick you up from the airport.
- If travelling within Colombia, leave all company logo apparel at home for safety reasons.
- Most business people speak English. When presenting materials and documentation, use visual aids as much as possible. It is best to check prior to presenting if a translator is required to avoid causing discomfort.
- When forming your negotiation team, take time to select the proper members. Colombians like to build personal relationships with team members, so changing the team members could cause a delay in the negotiation process.
- Colombians' payment ethics are generally good but they have a tendency to be late payers.
- Colombians move at a slower pace when it comes to making decisions so be patient.
- Everything is negotiable until the contract is signed.

Gift-Giving

- Gifts are given for birthdays and Christmas or the Epiphany (January 6th). In Colombia a girl's 15th birthday is considered an important milestone.
- If you plan to give gifts in Colombia, here are some handy tips:
 - When going to a Colombian's home, bring fruit, a potted plant, or quality chocolates for the hostess.
 - Flowers should be sent in advance.
 - Do not give lilies or marigolds as they are used at funerals. Roses are liked.
 - An imported alcohol (especially spirits) is very expensive and makes an excellent gift.
 - Wrapped gifts are not opened when received.

Entertaining in Colombia

Colombians are known for their generosity and hospitality and may even invite you to their home. When coffee is offered at someone's home, always accept it because it is considered rude if you don't.

Normal protocol for social occasions is to be at least 30 minutes late.

When it comes to making the first toast, always allow the host to make it.

Typically, the person who has initiated the invitation will pay for a meal in a restaurant, although you may have to fight for the check even though you have issued the invitation.

Dinner is normally around 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM. Dinner parties usually begin at 8:00 PM and dinner will probably be served between 10:00 PM to 12:00 AM.

Colombians like to dress formally for their events.

South American Cuisine Today



Colombian food is characterized by its blending of European cuisine with aspects of African and indigenous cuisine.

There is no official “national dish,” but the arepa and bandeja paisa can be considered staples of Colombian cuisine. Other well-known regional dishes include the sancocho, ajiaco, the lechona Tolimense, the mote de queso, and tamales.

Fritanga is a set of dishes that is similar to a barbecue and is eaten throughout the entire country. Fritanga usually includes grilled beef and chicken, pork feet, leg of lamb, ribs, and different types of sausage such as morcilla (blood sausage), chorizo, longaniza, and chunchullo (fried cow intestines) accompanied by mini potatoes and arepas.

Staples of the Colombian diet include tubers such as potatoes and cassava, along with meat such as beef, chicken, pork, or fish. Grains such as corn and rice are widely consumed. The plantain is an important element of the Colombian diet, as are vegetables such as onion, garlic, pepper, and tomato. Legumes such as beans, peas, and lentils are eaten very frequently.

A myriad of fruit species grow in Colombia, and many fruits considered “exotic” commonly grow in Colombian forests and in the countryside. The climate and geography favor a great variety of crops, as well as a great variety of both freshwater and saltwater fish.



Medical Contact Details

Bogota

Hospital Universitario San Ignacio

Kra 7 No. 40-62, PBX 5946161 NIT 860.015.536-1. Bogota, Colombia

T: Call Centre 6513910

<http://www.husi.org.co/default.aspx>

Instituto de Inmunologia del Hospital San

Cra. 10 Calle 1a

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Colombia

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Travellers to the capital city of Bogota may need time to adjust to the altitude of 8,600 feet, which can affect blood pressure, digestion, and energy level, and cause mild dyspnea with exercise, headaches, sleeplessness, and other discomfort. Travellers should drink liberal fluids to maintain hydration, and should avoid strenuous exercise until they have acclimated to the altitude. Travellers with circulatory or respiratory problems should consult a physician before travelling to Bogota or other high-altitude locations.

Health Warning

YELLOW FEVER

Yellow fever is a viral disease of short duration and varying severity that is transmitted primarily by various mosquito species. The following link covers background; occurrence; vaccination requirement for travel; treatment; avoidance; quarantine measures; yellow fever vaccination certificate.

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/health-publth-strateg-communic-factsheets-yellow.htm>

Yellow fever is a quarantinable disease in Australia. People who are one year of age or older must hold an international vaccination certificate if, within six days before arriving in Australia, they have stayed overnight or longer in a declared yellow fever infected country in Africa or South America, which includes Colombia. Travellers should seek medical advice on vaccination for their individual medical circumstances, particularly about the suitability of yellow fever vaccine for infants, pregnant women and those who are immuno-compromised.

References

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<http://www.dfat.gov.au>

Austrade

<http://www.austrade.gov.au>

International Business Culture and

Etiquette

<http://www.executiveplanet.com>

Lonely Planet

www.lonelyplanet.com

Wikipedia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/>

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<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

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<http://www.alloexpat.com/>

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