



Colombia Information

Travel documents

U.S. citizens traveling to Colombia must have a passport that is valid for six months after their expected return date. Please check travel.state.gov to confirm passport validity requirements prior to your tour. Citizens of all other countries should contact their appropriate embassies to find out what specific documentation is required for them to travel. Due to internal flights, a complete group passport list must be sent to EF no later than 110 days prior to departure.

Vaccinations and health precautions

For the most up-to-date information on necessary vaccinations, we recommend you visit [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) or consult your physician.

Tour Director and bus drivers

You will have the same Tour Director during your entire tour. Bus drivers may change from day to day, so tipping for them should be considered on a daily basis.

Tipping

It's customary to tip your Tour Director and bus drivers as a token of appreciation. We recommend:

- \$6–8 per person per day for the Tour Director
- \$3 per person per day for the bus driver
- \$2 per person per day for local guides

We suggest you deposit the tip money into your bank account and withdraw it at the end of the tour. Then, present it to your Tour Director in the tip envelope provided by EF.

Safety

Always inform your Tour Director if you need to break away from the group at any point. Store valuables in hotel safe deposit boxes and refrain from carrying large sums of money or wearing valuable jewelry. Please be sure to read EF's *Travel & Safety Guide* before going on tour.

Currency

Colombia's currency is the Colombian Peso, but U.S. dollars can be used throughout the country. We recommend withdrawing local currency from a bank or ATM machine instead of using credit cards. Although most shops accept credit cards, the phone lines are much slower, which makes using them time-consuming. It may also cause delays in your group's schedule. Street vendors will require local currency for transactions. Traveler's checks are usually not accepted in Colombia. Be sure to notify your bank or credit card company that you will be traveling abroad, and ask what international fees you may have to pay. Visit xe.com for exchange rates and more information.

Transportation

Travel within cities will happen on modern, air-conditioned buses. Most airport transfers are between 30–60 minutes. While staying in Medellín, certain activities, including white-water rafting, will require day trips out of the city. Expect bus transfers on these days to be 1.5–2 hours each way. Flight transfers are necessary between Cartagena, Bogotá, Medellín, and Panama City.

Accommodations

Most hotels in Colombia are modern chain hotels, similar to what you'd expect at a Holiday Inn, but accommodations can vary from large and modern hotels to rustic lodges and family-owned bungalow-style hotels. Anticipate amenities resembling what you'd find in an equivalent hotel in the United States, including air conditioning, a swimming pool, and provided breakfast.

Students under the age of 20 will share rooms with two or three other travelers of the same gender. These rooms will have single or shared double beds (or a combination of the two). Students may also share rooms with students in the tour group who are not from their own school.

Adults will share twin rooms with other adults of the same gender, and the may share rooms with adults in the tour group who are not from their own school. Please note that groups may not all have rooms next to each other (some may even be on different floors) and that hotels may be located outside of the city center.

Public bathrooms

Bathroom facilities will be generally available everywhere you go. However, it's likely they will require a modest cost of roughly \$0.50 or 1785 Colombian pesos. Travelers are advised to bring travel toilet paper and hand sanitizer.

Phones and internet

It's easy to buy an international phone card in Colombia to make phone calls home, and your Tour Director can help you find places to buy them. If you plan to use your personal cell phone on tour, contact your wireless provider to see what fees you may incur for calling, texting, or using data abroad. Wi-Fi may not be available at all hotels in Colombia, and may be unreliable when available, even on the road. Travelers should plan to be without Wi-Fi for 1–2 days at a time. Consider buying a phone plan for more consistent and reliable connectivity.

Local food & water safety

Due to Colombia's location on the Caribbean Sea, much of the cuisine incorporates a variety of Caribbean flavors. Breakfast and dinner are included daily. For lunches, the average cost of a meal will be approximately \$7–10 dollars. Tap water is not considered safe to drink in Colombia. Bottled water will cost \$1–2 dollars and purified water will be provided to travelers during all included meals. Travelers should only drink water from pre-sealed bottles. They will also have the opportunity to fill reusable bottles from jugs purchased by EF. Travelers should avoid eating any food that is uncooked or may have potentially been washed with unfiltered water (raw vegetables, fruit, etc.)

Weather

Bogotá has mild daytime temperatures and cool evenings, while the weather is mild year-round in Medellín. Cartagena is hot year-round. We suggest you use sunscreen at all times, even when it is cooler, since Colombia is located near the equator. The rainy season is from March–May and September–November, while the dry season is from December–February and June–August. Please check weather.com for your destinations and travel periods.

Luggage

Fees for checking a bag on the international flights between the United States and Colombia are included in the price of your tour. Please contact the airline for baggage restrictions and regulations. Additionally, fees for checking a bag on any flights taking place while on tour in Colombia, or on flights connecting Colombia to other countries in Central and South America, are also included.

Packing

In general, we recommend packing layers as the temperature can fluctuate throughout the country. Pack as though you expect to sweat a lot—comfortable clothes suited for hot weather are a must. Despite the heat, light long-sleeved and long-legged clothes are excellent for providing protection against the sun. As you'll be hot regardless of whether or not you're wearing shorts and a T-shirt, having an additional shield from the strong rays of the sun is best. Evenings in certain areas can be cool, so heavier layers including long sleeves and sweatshirts are recommended. A rain jacket will be useful during the occasional rain showers.

For footwear, while open-toed shoes are good for the beach, hiking boots, sneakers, or other closed-toed shoes are highly recommended at all other times. You'll be doing a good amount of walking, and the cities of Colombia can be unforgiving on unprotected feet. Water shoes or sandals with straps are recommended if you'll be participating in activities such as white-water rafting. While your luggage doesn't have to be restricted, we'd always encourage you to travel light.

Note on specific activities

While white water rafting in Medellín, groups will experience rapids with difficulty levels of 2–3 (depending upon if it is dry season or rainy season). Groups will be divided into smaller groups of five to seven travelers per raft, each with their own local guide. All travelers must wear closed-toed shoes or sandals with straps—flip flops are not acceptable footwear for this activity.