.VAOVA

NED COLOMBIA BOARD TRIP
JUNE 2023

NED | NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY

SUPPORTING FREEDOM AROUND THE WORLD

/ VA-O-VA

Def: Expression used to state when someone must go to a place with no choice or room for excuses.

Finally, you're almost here!

Nothing makes us happier than your visit to Colombia.

You're about to experience an uncommon and exciting trip. You'll enjoy an itinerary specially designed for you, and customized directly by you, which makes it a unique trip no matter the size of group. We've prepared many surprises, locations, and exclusive events; most of all, we've opened the doors so you can discover Colombia through the stories of its artists, entrepreneurs, leaders, and local communities.

We hope you find this country as extraordinary as we do and that you get back home inspired, recharged, and thinking of coming back very soon.

The VAOVA Team

This guide was made with ♡ to help you have an unforgettable experience in your trip.

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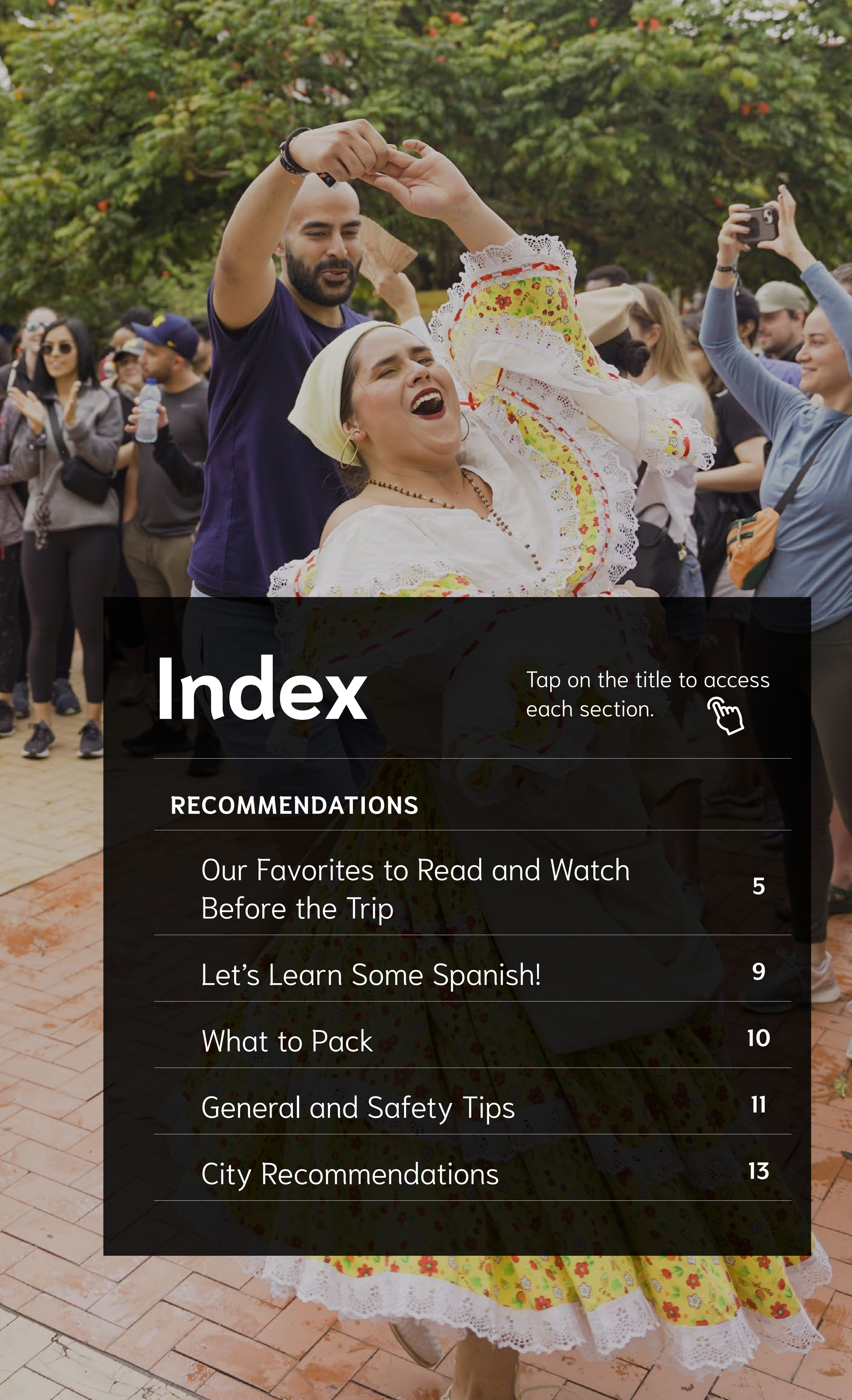

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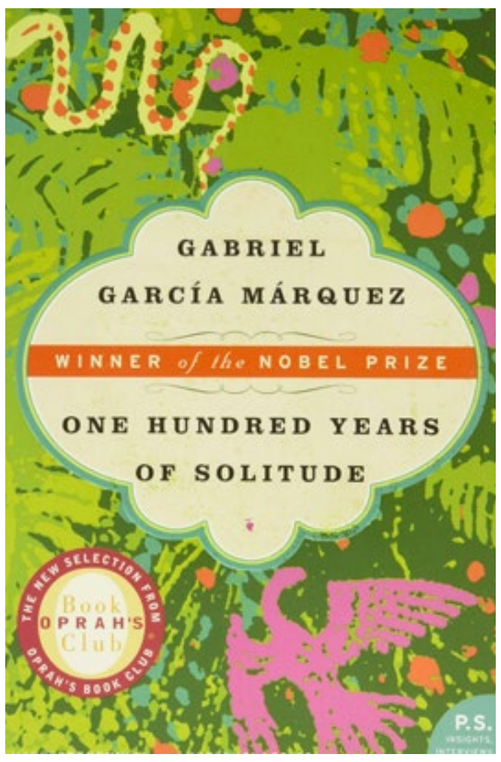
Recommendations

Our Favorites **to Read and Watch Before the Trip**

Books:

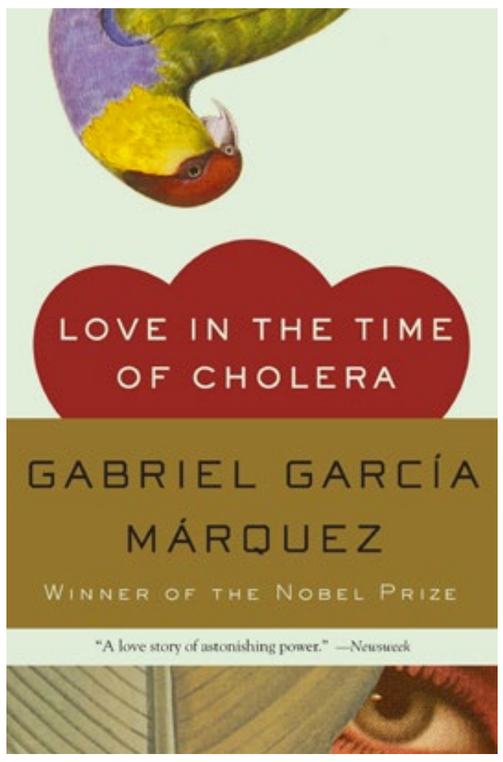


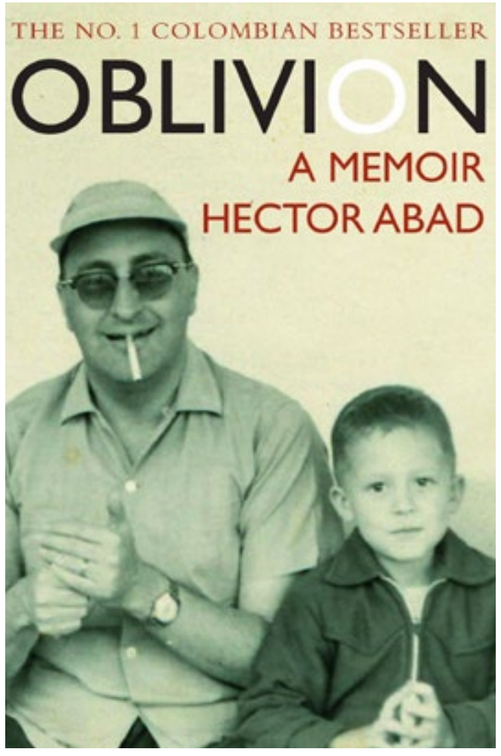
One Hundred Years of Solitude, Gabriel García Márquez (book for which he earned the Nobel Prize of Literature in 1982):

Often referred to as one of the most important literary pieces in the world, it tells the multi-generational story of the Buendía family, whose patriarch, José Arcadio Buendía, founded the fictitious town of Macondo.

Love in the Time of Cholera, Gabriel García Márquez:

A novel about the enduring love of a couple in Cartagena, who reunite after decades being apart. Adapted to the screens in 2007.



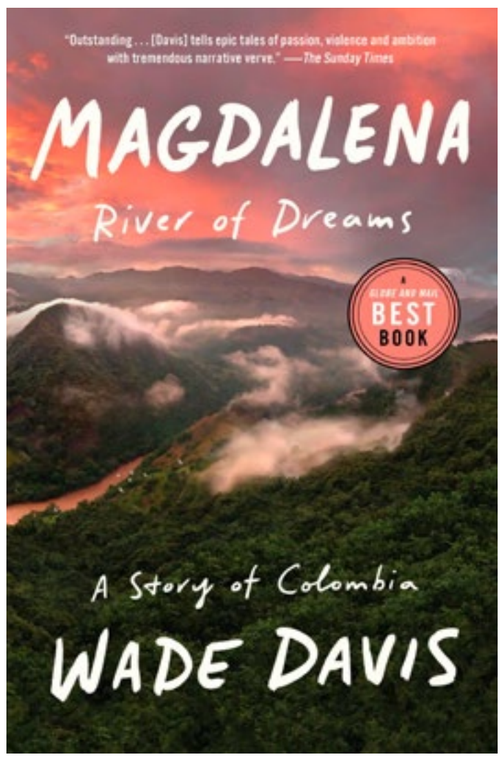


Oblivion: A Memoir, Héctor Abad Faciolince:

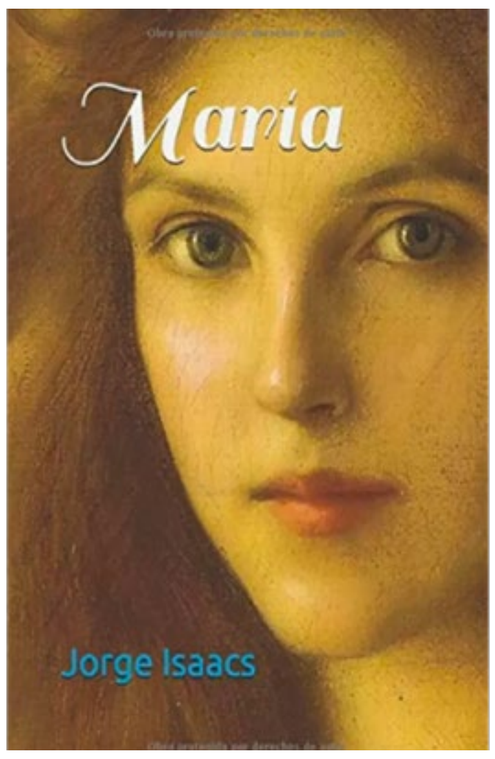
The heartbreaking story of the author's father, Héctor Abad Gómez – a doctor and human rights activist, during Colombia's most terrifying years of violence. You can also find its film adaptation on Netflix.

Magdalena: River of Dreams, Wade Davis:

Canadian/Colombian anthropologist, ethnobotanist, author and photographer Davis, narrates his journey through Colombia's most important waterway,the Magdalena River, and how it is intertwined with our country's political history. A must for adventurers.



Our Favorites **to Read and Watch Before the Trip**



María, Jorge Isaacs:

Published in 1887, this novel is considered one of Latin America's most important Romanticism literature pieces, and tells the story of the miserable love between two teenagers in Colombia.

The Book of Warmth, Country Brand:

Written by ProColombia as a gift from our country to the world, the book compiles the true stories of more than 40 Colombians that reflect the warmth of our people.

Films/Documentaries:

El Sendero de la Anaconda, Wade Davis – Martin Von Hildebrand (Netflix):

This documentary narrates the return trip that Wade Davis, author of Magdalena: River of Dreams and One River, takes with anthropologist Martín Von Hildebrand, through the Amazon Rainforest and Apaporis River, following the legendary botanist Richard Evans Schultes' memories.

Our Favorites **to Read and Watch Before the Trip**

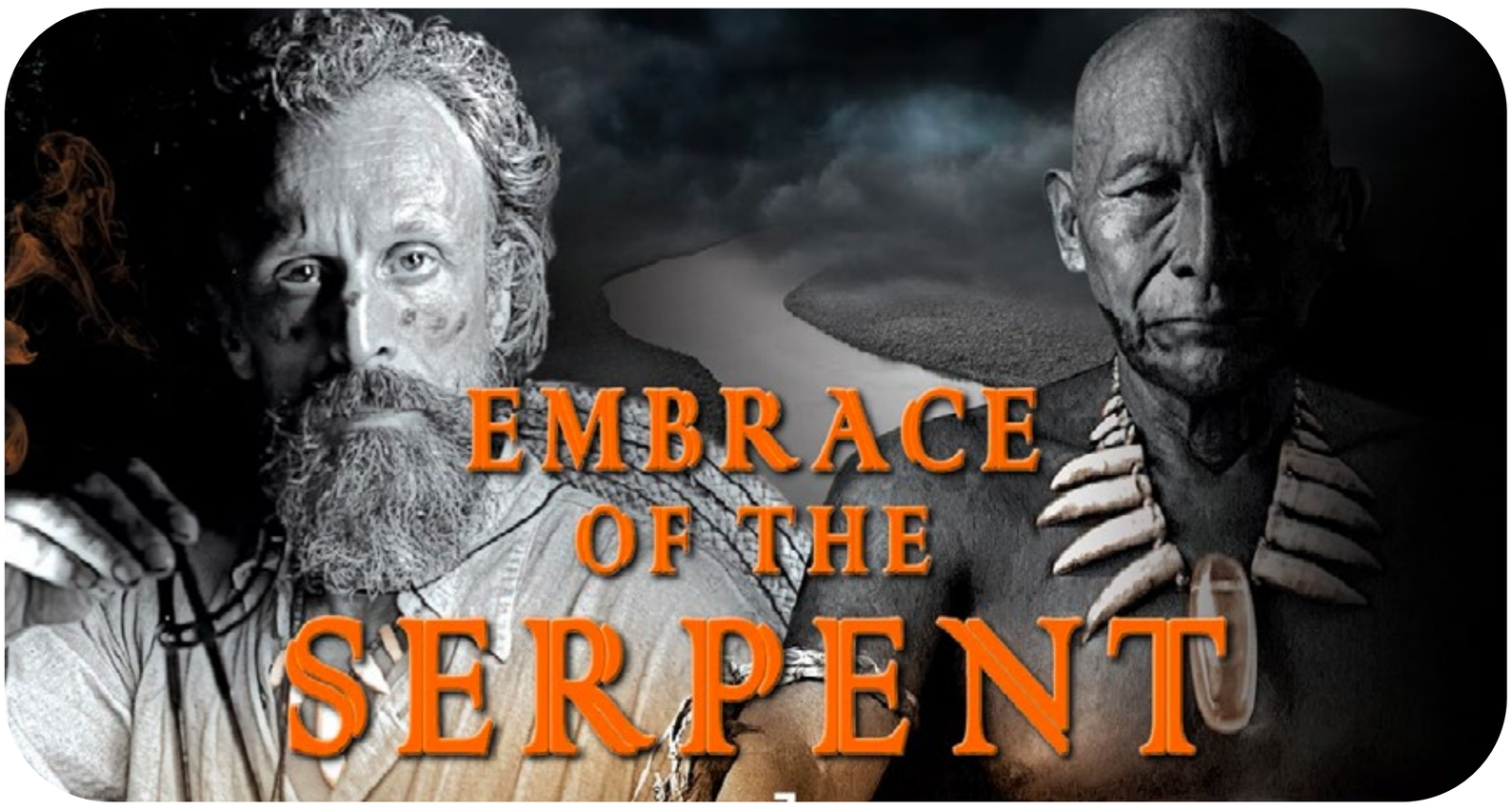
Encanto, Disney:

2022's Disney animated hit, which compiles the best of Colombia under this story filled with magical realism, colors, music, and history.

The Colors of the Mountain, Carlos César Arbeláez:

Arbeláez was awarded Winner in New Directors Award at the San Sebastián International Film Festival for this movie that portrays the life of kids in the Colombian countryside surrounded by the armed conflict.

Our Favorites **to Read and Watch Before the Trip**



Embrace of the Serpent, Ciro Guerra:

It is the first Colombian movie to be nominated at the Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film. The film follows the story of the relationship between Karamakate, an Amazonian shaman and last survivor of his people, and two scientists who work together over the course of forty years looking for a sacred healing plant in the Colombian Amazon Rainforest.

El Testigo, Jesús Abad Colorado (Netflix):

Heartbreaking but much needed documentary by photojournalist Jesús Abad Colorado, narrating the stories behind his most emblematic photos of Colombia's decades of conflict.

Let's Learn **Some Spanish!**

¡Hola! Our official language is Spanish. Use this dictionary to get around like a true local!

Hello!
– ¡Hola! / ¡Buenas!

Hey!
– ¡Quiubo!

My name is...
– Mi nombre es...

How are you?
– ¿Cómo estás?

I am well, thank you
– Estoy bien, gracias

Nice to meet you
– Mucho gusto

I am from (the USA, England...)
– Yo soy de (los Estados Unidos, Inglaterra...)

Please
– Por favor

Thank you very much
– Muchas gracias

How much is it?
– ¿Cuánto cuesta?

What's the best price I can get it for ...?
– ¿A cuánto me lo dejas?

Can I pay with credit card?
– ¿Puedo pagar con tarjeta de crédito?

Thanks, it was delicious!
– ¡Gracias, estaba delicioso!

Good morning
– Buenos días

Good afternoon
– Buenas tardes

Good evening
– Buenas noches

Cheers!
– ¡Salud!

Where can I find ...?
– ¿Dónde puedo encontrar..?

One black coffee, please
– Un tinto, por favor

So cool
– ¡Muy chévere!

Does this dish contain (gluten / dairy / nuts)?
– ¿Este plato contiene (gluten / lácteos / nueces)?

I am allergic to (...)
– Soy alérgico/a a (...)

I don't understand
– No entiendo

What to **Pack**

Colombia's weather is unique and we want you to be prepared!

Medellín: Andean region, subtropical, at 4,905 ft. ASL.

78°F 62°F

Bogotá: Andean region, highland, at 8,660 ft. ASL.

64°F 46°F

Our favorite travel essentials:

- [ ] Sweater
- [ ] Long pants
- [ ] Tennis shoes
- [ ] Cap / hat
- [ ] Sunscreen
- [ ] Light jacket
- [ ] Comfortable walking shoes
- [ ] Summer clothes
- [ ] Sunglasses
- [ ] Face Mask

General and Safety **Tips**

~

APROX

$1 USD **$4,200 COP**

SEE THE EXCHANGE RATE TODAY

Cash

Carry with you about $300,000-$500,000 COP (75-125 USD) in small bills for taxis, emergencies, snacks, etc

Credit Cards

Are accepted by all formal establishments, but some places might require a minimum amount to process your payment.

Street food vendors and most taxi drivers **don't** accept credit cards.

AMEX

Is NOT widely accepted.

Money Exchange

Don't exchange money at the airports (the rate is not as good). We will offer the ability to exchange dollars for cash in Medellín upon arrival.

Tips

At restaurants, they are automatically included in your bill, it's always 10%.

ATMs

Are widely available. Inside airports and next to hotels also. Avoid withdrawing money from ATMs on the street, try to use the ones at shopping malls.

Remember

1 Our team

- We will be accompanied by 2 plain-clothed security escorts during the entire trip
- We will have a doctor available in every hotel

2 Safety Recommendations

- When transferring at night, please use UBER Comfort instead of walking
- Keep your phone away while on the street
- We will have transportation throughout our activities, but if you need transportation, Uber works fine in both Medellín and Cartagena. Please use UBER Comfort.
- Avoid wearing flashy jewelry and carrying your phone in your back pockets. Carry your phone/personal belongings in a bag, purse or backpack.
- Avoid taking your passport out with you. Your driver's license will work perfectly as an ID.
- Do not drink tap water, especially in Cartagena.
- Drugs are illegal in Colombia.

IMPORTANT NUMBERS:

- Country code: **+57**
- Police, firemen, ambulances: **123**

City Recommendations

How to?

Tips for using this Guide

1. We have divided the content based on the destinations you're going to visit.

2. This guide is interactive! When you find a text that looks like this, it means there's a hyperlink that will take you to another part of the guide or to an external source of information.

3. You'll find this button: Tap and it'll take you to the place's location on Google Maps.

4. You'll find the following icons in the highlights sections:

nightclub	dinner	bar	lunch	brunch

Use them to choose the place you want to visit!

5. Follow us on our social networks and check out our website!

/Vaová Travel @vaovatravel www.vaovatravel.com

This guide was made with ♡ to help you have an unforgettable experience in your **#ColombiaTrek**

Middle

A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

Medellín through the years

During the 80's and 90's, Medellin was ruled by organized crime and was known as the world's most dangerous city. The rise of drug-trafficking mafias, like the infamous Medellin Cartel ran by Pablo Escobar, unleashed a social and political crisis that shook the city's foundations.

However, Medellin has been able to shake off its past reputation to become a successful and unprecedented example of social and urban transformation in the region. In 2012, thanks to the joint work of all sectors, which started to see Medellín as a possible solution instead of a problem, it was considered the world's most innovative city.

This change of mentality led to the city's redesign. Using urban planning as a tool to enhance the interaction between the city and residents, Medellin became more efficient, improved its infrastructure and saw an unparalleled boost in social development. The new Medellin features urban spaces that seem to be taken from The Jetsons, like the famous Ruta N and Biblioteca España buildings and the Metrocable transport system.

There's also a world-class innovation hub dedicated to tech development. Plus, the city serves as the headquarters of several domestic and international companies, that have found in the kindness and courage of its people the perfect key for success.

Despite its impressive transformation, many tourists arrive in the city to follow the footsteps of Pablo Escobar, who has become a pop icon thanks to media recreations, like Netflix's TV series, Narcos. This is great! Just be careful not to make jokes about the city's drug- related past. It's still a sensitive issue left from a very painful time in Colombian history. Beyond that, there's nothing more to be said. Enjoy Medellín, the warmth of its people and its amazing nightlife. And, please don't leave without having a bandeja paisa!

Carmenza

La Silletera

She works for weeks to put together huge arrangements of flowers portraying folk-tales, characters, and scenes of Colombia's history and daily life. Carmenza puts her heart into her work making sure that every "Silleta" is unique and a piece of art of its own. Watch out for her as she passes by with her colorful dress carrying them proudly on her back.

- **HUMBLE**
- **ARTISTIC**
- **DRIVEN**

60 years ago, a silletero from Santa Helena– a town near Medellin- decided to invite a group of his friends to the city to display the extraordinary artworks they made out of flowers as a way of getting resources for their families. It was such a success, that the event continued to be held through the years, becoming one

***SLANG** / *"mijo/a"*: Translates to "lad/lass", and it's a popular term amongst some people to refer to others with fondness.

SHE RECOMMENDS: LOCAL EXPERIENCES

- ☐ **Arepa Antioqueña**: Very thin corn dough grilled and served to accompany almost every dish.
- ☐ **Bandeja Paisa**: Typical dish of the region, made of beans, ground beef, rice, eggs, pork rinds, plantain and avocado. Try it at Ajiacos y Mondongos / Calle 8 #42-46
- ☐ **Orquideorama**: Orchid is Colombia's national flower, so no surprise there's a place dedicated to it. Orquideorama is located at Medellin's Botanical Garden.

of the most distinctive festivals of the country. Today Medellín's Flower Festival fills the city with colors for 10 full days.

Silleteros work with more than 25 different kinds of flowers to put together huge arrangements that can weight more than 60kg (132lbs) and be up to 5 meters (16ft) in diameter. These arrangements are the stars of the parade.

The craft that originated to decorate church altars, today is emblematic for the city. The term silletero comes from the chair-like structures (sillas) that hold the flower arrangements while they carry them on their backs, formerly used to transport merchandise across the rugged Andean topography.

VAOVA's highlights

Restaurants

Ganso y Castor:

Located in Provenza, known as the "foreigners' neighborhood", this little restaurant run by Trujillo family, prefers to offer a small yet high-quality menu than one packed with average dishes. Vaova recommends their brunch and specially their eggs benedict.

Al Alma:

A breakfast and brunch cafe with healthy dishes and excellent service. While Al Alma offers freshly roasted coffee on their menu, they also have a Coffee Shop with export-quality products.

La Cruda:

La Cruda is a lovely small place located in one of Medellin's most vibrant nightlife districts. It offers its visitors delicious traditional Mexican cuisine. Vaova recommends the fish tacos, the pork tacos and the burrito bowl. Don't leave without trying one of their handcrafted cocktails.

El Botánico:

A mediterranean food restaurant with an awesome nature-inspired atmosphere. The décor relies heavily on plants, so you'll feel you are having your meal inside a garden. El Botánico has been considered one of Antioquia's best bars, so you cannot leave without trying their cocktails.

Romero Cocina Artesanal La 10:

Romero is a delightful Italian restaurant that has been innovating with casseroles, their menu staples, although pasta and pizza are also delicious.

Naan:

The best place to have really good Indian food in Medellin. They serve traditional Indian dishes, including some delicious samosas and pakoras, as well as some of India's world-famous staple meals, such as chicken tikka masala. They are also up for innovation mixing Indian flavors with some of the best local ingredients.

OCI:

One of Medellin's most contemporary proposals to enjoy leisure time and do what we like to do most: eat. With a menu that changes every 5 months, you'll be in for a surprise with the best ingredients of the Colombian Pacific and Asian species. Plates are served to share the center of the table! The best way to get to enjoy all the flavors they have to offer.

Mekong:

Located in a space of unexpected design that makes you reinvent how you take in the space, Mekong is the perfect place disconnect from the burgeoning metropolis and get lost in an ultra-cool oasis inspired Thai culture. Vaova recommends the red curry, the grilled octopus or the specialty ribs.

678 Korean BBQ House:

The perfect introduction to Korean Cuisine, with unique flavors that'll transport you back to ancestral lands. Specialized in BBQ, the ingredients are served draw to the center of the table so you can cook them for yourself. A true asian experience!

Alambique:

One of the hidden gems in Medellín, Alambique is known for its artisanal approach to fusion gastronomy, carefully prepared dishes, and warm services. Their food and drinks are ideal to share.

Restaurante Kaime:

With the motto “a better life”, Kai offers vegan dishes that reflect the balanced way of life that their creators promote, with varied options that will surprise even the non-vegan diners.

Moshi & Sushi Bar:

While Moshi is an Asian-inspired restaurant, it successfully fuses its inspiration with Colombian cuisine, especially Caribbean food. Their Omakase tasting menu is one of the most popular in the city.

El Cielo:

A dazzling environment, high-end service, and signature cuisine make El Cielo one of the most influential restaurants in Medellín. Their dishes combine avant-garde and traditional Colombian techniques. Its Washington branch recently won a Michelin Star.

Fast food

If you're in a hurry and don't know what to eat, we recommend the following food chains around the city!

Home Burgers:

The Colombian Shake Shack. A fast casual place to have the best artisan burgers in town.

CULTURAL LANDMARKS

Museo Casa de la memoria:

Located in the heart of Medellín, this space was created to give memoirs from the national armed conflict a physical and symbolic home. The Museum promotes artistic actions that aid the reconstruction, awareness, and inclusion of regional historic memory.

Botero Plaza:

This public space is home to 23 sculptures by renowned artist Fernando Botero, who was born in Medellín. It is the biggest collection of Botero sculptures.

Botanical Garden:

A natural landmark of its own, the Botanical Garden of Medellín has become one of the city's mandatory tourist destinations. It occupies 14 hectares of the city, and it's the home to more than 4,500 plant species. Orquideorama, one of the world's biggest collections of orchids, is located here. The Botanical Garden opens every day from 9:00am to 4:30pm and admission is free.

Mercado del Río:

The first gastro-market in Colombia, with more than 30 different restaurants, breweries, bars, cafes, and Enoteca del Río, which is a great option for wine lovers. This is one of the most innovative and diverse gastronomic experiences in Medellín.

Comuna 13

Formerly known for its crime related history, Comuna 13 is a true example of urban and social transformation. Over the past seven or eight years,it has undergone a complete change: it went from gang violence, police raids, cartels and illegal trafficking to graffiti, street art performances and walking tours.

Attractions

Guatapé:

Guatapé boasts several attractions that make it a one-of-a-kind destination: an emerald-green water reservoir that's perfect for sailing and practicing water sports; the star attraction, La Piedra or The Rock, a gigantic stone formation towering 200 meters high, which provides the best view in the zone; and the colorful streets of the lively town of Guatapé. We cannot leave behind Guatapé's great typical food and warm villagers. This beautiful town is just 2 hours away from Medellín by car.

Santa Fe de Antioquia:

One-hour-and-a-half drive away from Medellín you'll find one of Colombia's proudest towns, Santa Fe de Antioquia. Its colonial architecture and perfect weather have made this town a tourist hub. You won't believe how many beautiful churches and cathedrals this small town hides. Don't forget to visit the Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, the town's main church.

Arví Park:

Arví Park was built to serve as an ecological hub for those who celebrate nature. Here, you can go hiking, have a picnic with your friends, take yoga classes and engage in a whole bunch of other activities. Parque Arví is accessible by the Metrocable. You just have to take Line K at Acevedo Station towards the Santo Domingo interchange and transfer to Line L, which takes you straight to the park. Parque Arví is open Tuesday to Sunday from 9:00am to 6:00pm. You can also book a night hike.

Provenza:

This beautiful neighborhood is very popular amongst travelers thanks to its restaurants and bars. Making it Medellín's quintessential nightlife district.

Nightlife

Burdo:

Perfect for having nice drinks and a quick bite. Known for its delicious gin tonics and margaritas, it's also the perfect place to try the tataki medallions, pork ribs and its famous Machete burger, wrapped in bacon.

Bolívar:

Bolívar is a favorite amongst local partygoers. It opened recently and has become a great place to dance to tropical and electronic music and toast with a nice bottle of aguardiente.

Salón Amador:

As soon as you enter this bar and listen to any of its waiters or bartenders, you'll travel back to the 1910s. Salón Amador used to be open in the 1920s and it's now reopened as one of the hottest nightclubs in town.

Panorama:

This rooftop bar has a great location and features an awesome tropical design and a very nice atmosphere. It's perfect to have some drinks while chilling out with your friends.

Belisario:

The perfect spot to spend your night. Enjoy gourmet Mexican food with a nice cocktail on the side. Furthermore, Belisario has an awesome surprise for those looking for party after dinner: La Oculta, a hidden nightclub where you'll surely shake your hips until morning.

El Social:

The perfect place to start the night and get to know true paisa's culture. A corner where locals meet to have some beers before moving to the actual party!

Perro Negro:

You won't be the same after a night of dancing at El Perro Negro. In this underground nightclub the reggaeton rhythms will take you away until dawn.

Fonda La Chismosa:

Party at a typical Fonda Antioqueña, the place to meet with locals, hear traditional colombian music and have local drinks and food. This places is the go to place if you want to grasp the real essence of Medellin, but be warned: only cash is accepted!

Bogotá

A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

Bogotá through the years

Long before Colombian independence, Bogotá already stood out for its geopolitical relevance, as the capital and mission control of the Viceroyalty of New Granada –a huge colony under Spanish rule that covered the currents territories of Panamá, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador and northern Perú. So, it's not surprising that the city's historical center is one of the most charming in the region; you just have to stroll through it to get a glimpse of the city's amazing past. However, you will also notice that the 20th century did leave its mark on our city with events that shook its foundations and shaped the memory of its residents. One of them was the infamous Bogotazo, in which political leader,

Photo by : Sady González, *Many riots where caused by the assassination of Gaitán, on April 9, 1948.*

Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, was murdered under 'mysterious circumstances'. The Bogotazo still lingers in the memory of Bogotanos, since it unleashed a violent upheaval that destroyed the city and killed hundreds. The Bogotazo is believed to have triggered the armed conflict that has troubled the country for more than half a century. After an intense period of social and political turmoil, Bogotá managed to become a model of civic culture.

Thanks to the administrations of Jaime Castro, Antanas Mockus and Enrique Peñalosa, which aimed at raising citizen's awareness and boosting their sense of belonging, Bogotá entered a period of social transformation in which violence plunged to record lows and city infrastructure became more efficient. Some of the most creative and effective measures implemented by these administrations included mime artists that lectured pedestrians and drivers

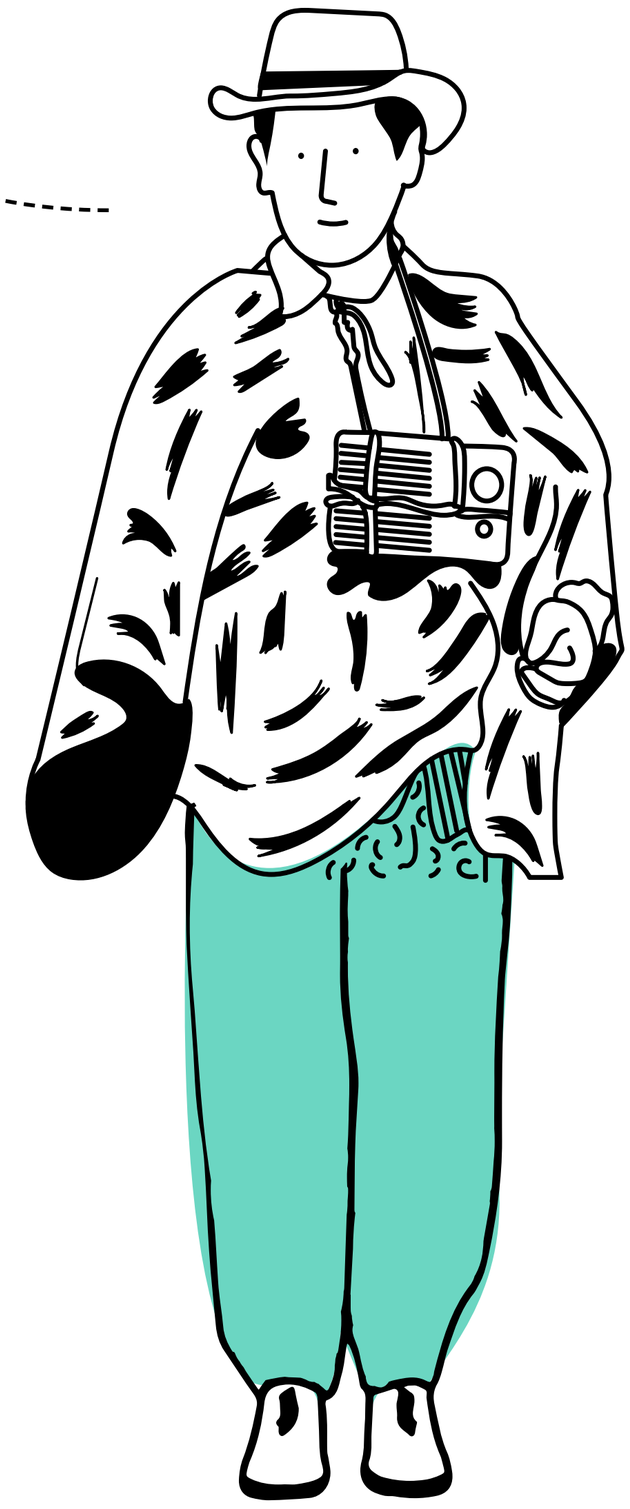
on civil culture without uttering a word, the use of "referees" that showed wrongdoers penalty cards at the city's intersections, and a law that limited last-call for alcohol service to 1:00 a.m, thus decreasing alcohol-related violence. This era is still remembered by many of those who witnessed the birth of the city's pride and joy –we are sure you've seen it on your way from the airport: the red and long Transmilenio public transport system– and a shift towards a greener culture with many parks and bike routes being opened. During the last decades, Bogotá, like the country itself, has left its bad reputation behind to become one of the most important business hubs in the region, catching the attention of investors and tourists alike thanks to its huge commercial and cultural offer.

Today, Bogotá is one of Latin America's most vibrant capitals. With an area of more than 1,000 square miles and a population of almost 10 million, Bogotá is the fifth largest and the fourth most populated city in South America. So, don't be fooled by the colonial layout of its historical center: Colombia's heart beats at full speed to the rhythm of the latest trends. With an average temperature of 58 F, you will dive into our city's history and cosmopolitanism without breaking a sweat.

Eulalio

El Campesino

Welcome,
su mercéd!*



He never stops. He strives everyday to hand pick the best ingredients for you, guaranteeing the perfect crop on your table. Eulalio carefully guards every part of the plantation processes, from potatoes to tomatoes. You will find him working from dawn to dusk in the outskirts of the city.

It's four o'clock in the morning and the day has just begun. Campesinos collect the fruits everybody eats, he harvests the land everyone admires and milks the milk every child drinks: Colombian diet starts with them. Agricultural products (e.g. tomatoes, corn, beans, milk, potato, etc.) represent 40% of the staple Colombian market basket and comprise some of the main ingredients of Colombian cuisine.

- **HARD WORKER**
- **STRAIGHTFORWARD**
- **WILLING HELPER**

***SLANG**
"Su mercéd":
A traditional greeting from the *Cundiboyacense* region of Colombia, mostly used by people from the past generations.

HE RECOMMENDS: LOCAL EXPERIENCES

- ☐ **Pan de yuca:** A delicious gluten-free bread made out of cassava and fresh cheese.
- ☐ **Tejo:** A traditional game where players throw steel disks towards a clay court that is rigged with gunpowder-stuffed packets (mechas) that are ready to explode.
- ☐ **Hot chocolate:** Have a cup of hot chocolate at La Puerta Falsa while the sun sets. Don't hesitate to try it with bread and fresh cheese.
- ☐ **San Jerónimo ice cream:** The most famous and traditional ice-cream in the country, made with natural ingredients.

Campesinos are surrounded by myths, some of which have been passed on by their indigenous ancestors, and some other that were inherited from the Spaniards who colonized Colombia 500 years ago. Campesino folklore is a mixture of many cultures and is ever-changing, depending on the region you visit. But, in the end, all campesinos have one thing in common: they all nurture a land that gives them life, food and the knowledge to take care of it.

For them, land means everything. Land provides them with food, teaches them working skills and reinforces their knowledge, traditions and culture. That's why campesinos been one of the communities most affected by the Colombian war. Since the 1920s, they started to fight for their rights to the land they have taken care of for centuries. This resulted in several political movements that demanded a public policy to give campesinos property over their land, so many organizations started to work to distribute Colombian lands fairly. None of this mattered when the war started, since the war started precisely because of this. Violence stripped campesinos of their lands, and made them pursue a brighter future in the city –a strange and unfriendly place where they weren't supposed to work or add value to the community. Now, as many other campesinos, strive to regain everything they'd lost and show Colombians the hard-working and cultural force they are.

VAOVA's highlights

Restaurants

Gamberro:

This is one of the best Mediterranean food restaurants in town. It's a great place to have some drinks and spend time with your friends. The first floor has a nice bar vibe and the second floor has big tables for big groups up to 8-10 people. Vaova recommends the cochinillo, a tender piece of roast pork with crispy skin and the Torrija for dessert. Have it with a nice glass of wine or a big mug bursting dark artisan beer.

Di Lucca:

One of the most popular restaurants in Bogotá thanks to its high-quality, authentic Italian dishes and affordable prices. Di Lucca's pasta is 100% fresh and its pizzas are a staple in town. Vaova recommends the Pappardelle Al Teléfono, large and broad pasta noodles topped with a tomato and cheese sauce.

Casa:

Located in Casa Bermúdez, a building considered national architectural heritage and the inspiration for its name, this restaurant provides versatile cuisine in a unique atmosphere. The seafood-based dishes and signature cocktails are especially recommended.

El Bandido Bistro:

Every Thursday and Friday this amazing bistro offers live music. We are sure you'll love the vibe inside while you have delicious dishes and enticing drinks. We highly recommend you try the Octopus Carpaccio as a starter and the pork chops or the Entrecote de Paris as your main courses.

Harry Sasson:

There's no doubt that star chef Harry Sasson's eponymous restaurant is the most famous haute-cuisine joint in Bogotá. A beautiful colonial house surrounded by buildings, Harry Sasson is considered one of the best restaurants in the country. Yes, it's pricey, but you won't regret a penny. Vaova recommends anything cooked on the wood grill or on the robata (Japanese grill)

La Brasserie:

A French restaurant that is known for its ability to surprise its customers with creative food and desserts, with a menu that is as varied as their wine offer and that has consistently been recognized among the most popular in Bogotá

Salvaje:

The savage side of Japanese gastronomy. This top end restaurant combines the tradition and mystique of japanese cuisine with flavors and techniques from every corner of the world. Its unique arquitectonic design and decoration end up creating a great ambience for an exciting dinner.

Masa:

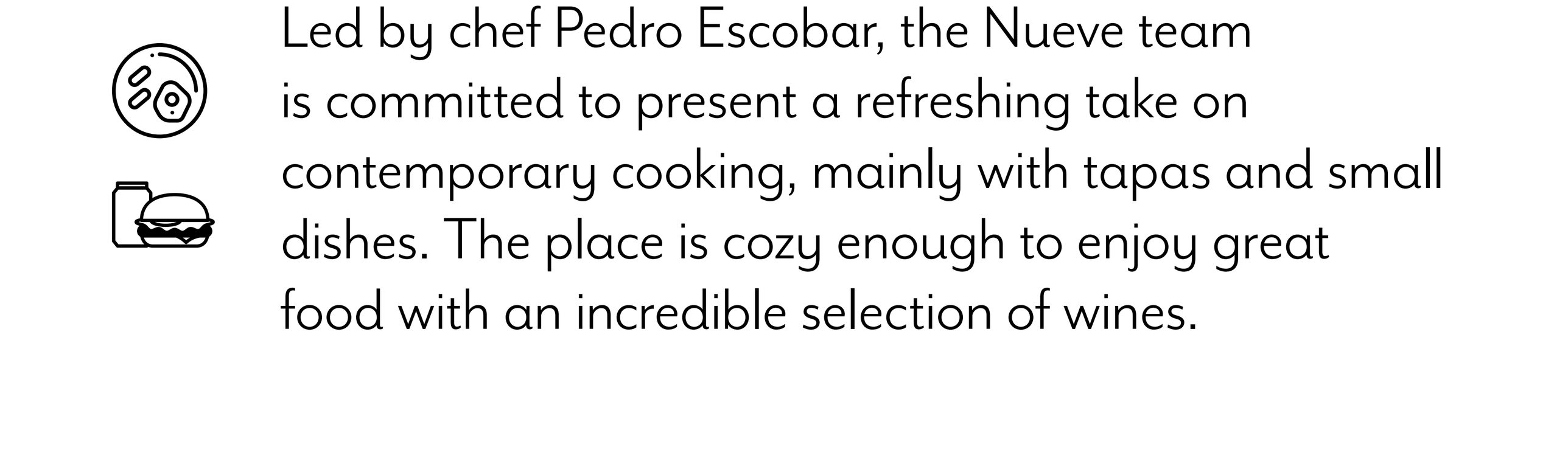
Fresh breads, pastries and salads are the highlight of this casual dining experience. Whether you're in for brunch or a casual lunch, Masa won't let you down. Vaova recommends grabbing the peanut butter acai bowl, the grilled cheese and the shakshuka eggs for brunch, the almond croissant or the carrot cake if your in for a coffee stop or making your own delicious salad if having lunch or dinner.

Bagatelle

An always-open place where locals enjoy french pastries and bakery in a londonese style coffee house, La Bagatelle offers casual dishes of the best quality. Whether you want to try local pastries and other colombian breads, or enjoy an international plate, La Bagatelle is the go to place.

Nueve:

Led by chef Pedro Escobar, the Nueve team is committed to present a refreshing take on contemporary cooking, mainly with tapas and small dishes. The place is cozy enough to enjoy great food with an incredible selection of wines.



Mesa Franca:

A relaxed environment that contrasts with high-quality Colombian food. Their offer is based on powerful local flavors and ingredients, and the staff is ready to further explain the details and ideas behind every dish.

Cafe Bar Universal:

A stylish restaurant inspired by contemporary European cafes, this place is filled with art and excellent gastronomy. Their menu works with fresh and non-frozen food, which guarantees a different experience with each visit.

Castanyoles by Four Seasons:

The first restaurant opened in Colombia by the recognized hotel group, and one of the best Mediterranean options in Bogotá. Their dishes and ambiance particularly highlight the Spanish culture, and the service is unmatched.

CULTURAL LANDMARKS

Museo del Oro (Gold Museum):

This spectacular museum displays an impressive collection of items made of gold and other metal alloys from the pre-Hispanic cultures in Colombia. Everything within the walls of this museum was made or is inspired by Colombia's native civilizations, some of them already extinct. The Gold Museum contains the biggest collection of gold artifacts in the entire world.

* Our City Tour takes you here.

Botero Museum:

This museum has been opened since November 1st, 2000, welcoming 1,000 visitors per day. It was created when Colombia's greatest artist, Fernando Botero, donated himself 208 works (including 123 of his own making) making it one of the most important art exhibits in the country. The collection includes paintings by Picasso, Miró, Monet and Renoir.

Salt Cathedral of Zipaquirá:

The Salt Cathedral of Zipaquirá is an underground church built within the tunnels of an old salt mine, 200 meters underground in a halite mountain near the town of Zipaquirá. Best of all, it's only one hour away from Bogotá by car. Described as "a jewel of modern architecture", this underground church is a key element of the cultural, environmental and religious heritage of Colombian people.

*Our Salt Cathedral Tour takes you here.

La Candelaria:

This charming and historic neighbourhood is the place where the first settlements of the city took place. As the city began its expansion, this place consolidated itself as the city center and it conserved its traditional colonial architecture. Street art, colorful houses and authentic bars and restaurants have made it a must place to visit in the city.

*Our City Tour takes you here.

Andrés Carne de Res:

Andrés Carne de Res is a mind- blowing restaurant with bright lights, theatrical service and a Latin atmosphere. There's no party place like this. The dining room extends into an indoor and outdoor discotheque for late-night revelers. Andrés Carne de Res offers its visitors much more than a meal. We recommend the Mandarino cocktail made of vodka and frozen tangerine juice, although there's always room for aguardiente if you want to toast with the locals.

El Ghetto Bar:

A collection of spaces that seek to be the meeting point of the different artistic vanguards. This nightclub hosts 4 different ambiances each with is own name, thematic decoration and musical style.

Other night clubs you might be interested in:

Video Club / Electronic

El Coq / House & Techno

Theatron / Gay bar with 13 different environments and biggest night club in Latin-america

Best Shopping spots

Casa Santamaría:

An exclusive place that provides different experiences in fashion, culture, and design, and is known as the home of “emerging design” in Colombia. A great option to explore indie creativity, especially from women-owned businesses, as well as a privileged Colombian coffee bar.

Casa Precis

Born as a flagship and evolved in a creative hub for Colombian designers and Latin American brands, Precis displays curated pieces that ensure unconventional innovations. Their motto, stronger together, articulates powerful emerging designers in a concept store fashion.

El Retiro Shopping Mall

One of the best high-profile shopping centers in Bogotá, known for its diversity in design, fashion, and gastronomy. It hosts exclusive brands, trends, and a welcoming environment, and its location is both practical and convenient for shopping in general.

Verdi

A textile studio that draws its inspiration from Colombian artisanal tradition and its owners' family history. All their luxury products are handcrafted, combining natural fibers with metals, and include pieces from interior design, fashion, and art.

Alelí Home Decor

This boutique has it all: room architecture, furniture, décor, art, and gastronomy. Alelí is a store known for its interior design creations, which are crafted by Colombian artisans and indigenous communities. They also have a Garden Café, which completes a warm and imaginative scenario.

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