



Colombia

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Capital

Bogota

National Symbols

The National Flag



Colombia's flag is a tricolor flag horizontally divided in a proportion of 2:1:1 starting with yellow, blue and ending in red. According to historians yellow represents the richness of the land, blue the immensity of its oceans and red the blood shed by patriots in quest for independence.

National Animal



Although not officially recognized, the Condor of the Andes has been adopted as the national animal, and it has been an important part of the national Coat of Arms

since 1834 as a symbol of greatness and liberty.

National Tree



The Wax Palm of Quindío was chosen in 1949 as the national tree and was officially established as national symbol in 1985. The tree only grows in the Colombian Andes.

National Flower



The Cattleya trianae Orchid is endemic to Colombia, and was chosen as the most representative flower of the Colombian territory in 1936 principally due to the color of its petals which are yellow, blue, and red, the same colors as the flag.

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History

Colombia was "discovered" by Alonso de Ojeda in 1499. The first Spanish settlements appeared on the northern coast in 1499 and then afterward, the country was slowly colonized. During the 19th century, patriots who believed in the human rights proclaimed in France developed independence movements in Nueva Granada (former name for the Colombian territory which included what we know today as Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia.) and then the war of independence began, led by Simon Bolivar.

The first independent country was known as the Great Colombia. Due to internal purges and ambitions, Venezuela separates in 1829 and Ecuador in 1830 and the current country was established under the name of Republic of Nueva Granada and after several changes, adopted its official name in 1886.

Colombia's recent history has been marked by violent periods in which political interests have ruled over the population's wellbeing. A especially crude and violent period started in 1948 with the assassination of a popular leader, Jorge Eliecer Gaitan. This period is known as the "violencia" during which the guerrillas were born as political armed parties and still exist nowadays, although over different policies.

During the final years of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, there have been several efforts by the government and third parties to end the violence. Despite all the political confrontations, Colombia is recognized as the most stable democracy in this part of the continent.

Government

Colombia is a republic where the executive branch is the head of government and state. The public power is divided into three main branches: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial. The Executive branch is directed by the president and vice-president, elected by means of private ballot for a four year period. The Legislative branch consists of a two chamber Congress made up by the Senate, 102 nationwide benches, and the House of Representatives, 166 benches proportionally representing the population in each department. The Judicial branch is ruled by the Supreme Court of Justice for civil, criminal and labor affairs and the State Council for state administration affairs.

Traditionally, the major political parties have been the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party, but recently, due to the open democracy policy of the constitution, many new and strong parties have been created as alternatives to existing political opinions.

Provinces

Colombia is a republic divided into 32 local divisions called Departments.



Colombia

Social Recognition

Historic Figures

Simon Bolivar

Perhaps the most recognized patriot is Simon Bolivar. Although not Colombian born, he led the wars of independence and created the country.



Antonio Nariño

Antonio Nariño was a Colombian philosopher and writer. He started the revolutionary ideas which led to independence from Spain.



Francisco de Paula Santander

Francisco de Paula Santander a general who fought the Spanish with Bolívar, became the first official President of Colombia.

Social Figures

Fernando Botero

A famous artist and sculptor, was born in Medellín, on April 19th, 1932. He started his career as a newspaper illustrator, with a very strong tendency to mockery and nudity is worldwide known for his "fat people", a technique which exaggerates human proportions in his work.

Gabriel García Marquez

Born in Aracataca on March 6th, 1927. Literature Nobel Prize winner in 1982. His extensive work reflects a combination of reality and fiction in which everyday matters merge into a world of imagination and humor.

Manuel Elkin Patarroyo

Born in Ataco on November 3rd, 1946. A world renowned scientist developed a synthetic vaccine against malaria with a proven effectiveness of over 50% in humans.

Holidays

The nation's holidays are 20th of July, Independence Day; August 6th, Battle of Boyacá and November 11th, Cartagena's independence.

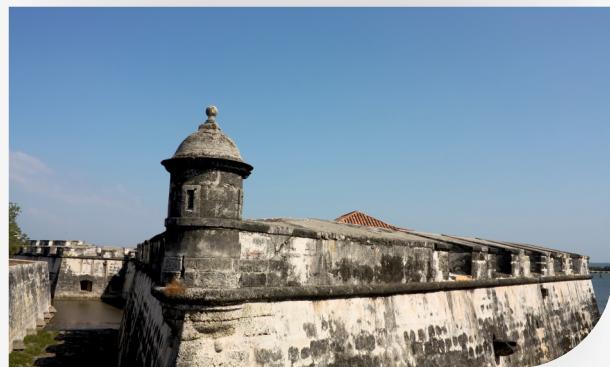
Colombia is perhaps the country with the most festivals and carnivals in the world. Main carnivals are "Carnaval de Barranquilla" held in February, "San Pedro y San Pablo" in Neiva held in June and "Festival de las Flores" which takes place in Medellin in August.

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Tourist Sites

Colombia has 52 protected zones which make part of the National Parks System and include different weathers and climates.

Cartagena de Indias



Founded on June 1st, 1533 by Pedro de Heredia, was one of the most important sea ports for the Spanish Empire through which most of the gold and silver was shipped to Spain. It also was an important slave market.

The city was often besieged by British mercenaries but was never defeated. It was declared Patrimony of Humanity by UNESCO in 1984 and a preferred tourist destination by people around the world.

The Lost City



Recently discovered in "Sierra Nevada de

Santa Marta", it is a perfectly preserved Indian settlement from before the arrival of the Spanish in the 16th century.

It is said to date from 800 B.C. and probably abandoned around 1550 after the Spaniards arrived.

In 2007 it was voted by Colombians as #5 in Colombia's 7 Wonders.

