

Rains and Recreo in Turipaná

August 13, 2014 by Kate Dana

Julius Caesar and the Roman Empire □
Couldn't conquer the blue sky
– “Weather With You” by Crowded House

Summers in coastal Colombia can be excruciatingly hot, and although August feels a little less scorching than July, it's still blazing most days. Attempting to beat the Barranquilla heat can be successful if recreational days are timed correctly to coincide with the weather. One idea is to catch the colorful bus (\$3,700 COP) near Centro Comercial Portal del Prado, and travel to Turipaná Comfamiliar, located between the beach towns of Playa Mendoza and Caño Dulce in Municipio Túbará.



If you've never visited the area before, hop off the bus at the sight of the water slides and the giant billboard announcing Turipaná. Head to the security gate, pay the \$3500 COP for entry, and take a short walk along the landscaped (but always slightly under construction) recreation area. After passing a few futbol fields, restaurants, and cute cabana houses, you will come upon a giant concrete-and-blue-tile *piscina*.

A ticket to enter the pool costs \$5,300 COP a person, but before planning a full day at the pool, take note: pool time... is pool *timed*. That's right, on Sunday, \$5,300 COP gets a single swimmer 1.5 hours of splash time, *nada más*. Upon arrival, you may find you are “in-between” pool entry times and have to wait. Already laughing at the irony of this adventure? Just relax and visit the adjacent beach, accessible by walking through a small coconut grove, to pass some time in the ocean before returning to the pool.

When the next hour change at the pool comes up, be sure to return to on time. Minutes after the gate opens, the pool may already be crowded and nearly lounge every chair occupied. Most of the large chaises are bolted down and several have no backrests, although parked under fiberglass umbrellas, these may be the most sensible ones available under the blazing sun, plus there is plenty of shaded grassy areas around the concrete.

On the day of this visit, one unplanned detail appeared... rain. As the drizzle began, it seemed hard not to laugh (again) at the irony of a timed pool day under thunderclouds rapidly gathering overhead. In minutes, the rain began to fall at a steady pace, yet the pool remained filled with families and friends having fun, not noticing at all the thundering rumbles from beyond the sky.

As the skies began to open up, a *salavida* (lifeguard) blew his whistle. In most parts of the US, this would signal clearing all swimmers, as the slightest threat of a storm means “Everybody out of the pool!” Nope – this whistle-blower was just telling the big guy handing out shots of Aguardiente that giant glass bottles aren’t allowed near the water. Laughter ensued as Señor Aguardiente offered a shot to the *salavida*, who politely declined, though he did look somewhat tempted by the libation.

At 3:15 exactly, the *salavidas* began blowing their whistles furiously like a sporting event gone wild. Waving people out, they cleared the pool in less than 10 minutes, including Señor Aguardiente. The fountains shut off and the water fell still as the rains began to subside. Waiting just outside the main gate, a group of

people carrying float devices, coolers (at least one with Aguardiente) and soggy towels from the recent rain, anxiously anticipated their swim time.

Returning from Turipaná to Barranquilla is simple, just walk to the main road and wait for the same colorful bus (\$4500 COP) at the small *tienda* across from the gate. If you plan to visit in the future, it may be worth noting these tips:

1. Enter through the beach side of Turipaná Comfamiliar and avoid the (unnecessary) \$3500 COP fee for the paved road to *la playa*. □
2. Visit on a Saturday, when pool time is 2.5 hours (opposed to Sunday's 1.5 hours) for the same price.
3. If bringing Aguardiente, buy it in the convenient Tetra Pak, made of a plastic-coated cardboard, to drink (in moderation) poolside while splashing around.

Finally, as you ride back to La Arenosa in the back of the bus, appreciate watching passengers doze off in their swimsuits and squishy clothes. Take time to sense a slight tone of gratitude among people enjoying a Sunday, feeling the breezes from the roadside, and simply being relieved, even temporarily, from the oven temperatures of Barranquilla.

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