



5 Things to Love About Living in Colombia

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Like every place in the world, Colombia has many things about it to love and to not love. For many, these expressions of good and bad often accompany the feeling of extreme euphoria or distinct disparagement. Fortunately, in Colombia, most people agree: the good almost always outweighs the bad.

1. THE BEST FRUITS AND MOST AMAZING JUICES

Imagine a place where lush, tropical fruits, grown in abundance and harvested by local farmers, are made available every day, often whirled together with ice, water, and sugar, to be sipped as juice. With flavors as curious as their names – *lulo*, *nispero*, *zapote* – it is often difficult to choose just one. In Colombia, people eat fruit and drink fresh juices throughout the day. In 2016, eight ounces of fresh-squeezed orange juice at a U.S. restaurant cost an average of \$5.00. In Colombia, the same juice costs about \$2,000.00 COP (around \$1.50 USD), for twelve ounces. That's a delicious difference worth tasting, and definitely something to love.

2. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND EASY TRAVEL OPTIONS

In Colombia, many people live their entire life without owning a car, never knowing the costs of insurance, gas, maintenance, or the potential for accidents, yet they are able to travel easily almost anywhere. In most Latin American countries, including Colombia, public transportation has existed for decades, meeting commuters' needs with alternatives, including buses for both inner city and distance routes. The options for travel in most Colombian cities include UBER, taxis, *colectivos* (shared taxis), and, in some areas like Medellin, a high-tech metrocable.

3. IT'S ALWAYS WARM (ON THE COAST)

Boasting over 3,208 kilometers (1,993 miles) from La Guajira at the top of South America, to Chocó, near the edge of Panamá, the coast of Colombia is a mecca of sun-filled days and breezy nights. Of the five regions, the Caribbean is the warmest, with an average high of 35° C (95° F). Some days in cities like Barranquilla, the humidity can make it feel like baking in an oven under a wet towel; however, there is also no need for heavy coats, no black ice, and no digging the sidewalk out from under ten feet of snow, all of which explains the warm glow of the coast.

4. 18 (OR MORE) HOLIDAYS A YEAR

Like most places in the world, Colombians enjoy a celebration, and people love to take time off from work. It's been said Colombia's calendar now includes as many as thirty-eight holidays, however, many of these, like Valentine's Day, have only recently been added, and not all of them equal a day off. Popular holidays include *Día de la Madre* (Mother's Day) and *Día de la Mujer* (Women's Day), as well as regional holidays, such as the Battle of Boyacá and the Independencia of Cartagena. Overall, the observed holidays (with time off from work and school) in Colombia hover around eighteen per year, making it a land of celebration compared to many other countries in the world.

5. THE MOST DELICIOUS COFFEE IN THE WORLD

Real Colombian coffee has a distinct and aromatic flavor that must be tasted in order to be appreciated. Most often served black with several spoonfuls of sugar, in little cups, coffee, sometimes referred to as *tinto*, is available in *tiendas* (corner stores), in popular Juan Valdez Café locations and even peddled in the street by guys carrying thermoses of dark delight. However prepared, served or promoted, most people agree that Colombian coffee is superior to all others. Once tasted, you may never feel the same about your Starbucks dark roast.

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