



ICYE

NATIONAL PROFILE

COLOMBIA

2025-2026





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Information on the host country.

History.

Pre-Columbian Era and Spanish Arrival

(Before 1499–1538): Indigenous cultures like the Muisca, Tairona, and Zenú thrived with advanced social structures, agriculture, and metallurgy. Spanish colonization began in 1499 with their arrival on the Caribbean coast and intensified in 1538 when Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada founded Santa Fe de Bogotá, reshaping indigenous societies.



Colonial Period and Independence (1538–1810):

Colombia, part of the Viceroyalty of Peru and later New Granada, relied on natural resource exploitation using indigenous and African labor. Inspired by Enlightenment ideas, independence movements emerged, culminating in Bogotá's proclamation in 1810 and Simón Bolívar's victory in 1819 at the Battle of Boyacá.

Gran Colombia and Early Republic (1819–1831):

Colombia joined Gran Colombia under Bolívar but dissolved due to political differences, forming the Republic of New Granada in 1831. This period saw political instability and the struggle to consolidate independence amidst fragmentation.





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Civil Wars (19th–Early 20th Century): Frequent conflicts, especially between liberals and conservatives, climaxed in the Thousand Days War (1899–1902), leading to Panama's secession in 1903. Colombia's economy shifted to coffee exports, but modernization was slow, and social inequalities persisted.

20th Century and Modernization (1914–Today):

Despite political and social reforms like women's suffrage (1954), Colombia faced challenges, including "La Violencia" after Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's assassination in 1948 and decades of armed conflict. The 1991 Constitution marked democratic progress, and the peace process with FARC in 2016 signaled advancements. Today, Colombia balances economic growth with ongoing social and political challenges.



Geography, Biodiversity.

Climate

and

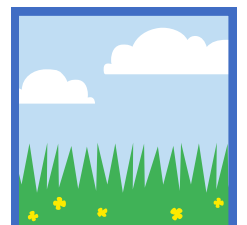
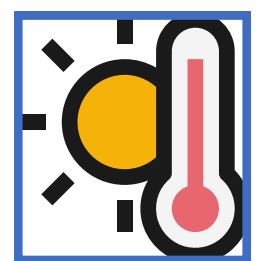
Colombia is located in the northern part of South America and follows the GMT-5 time zone. It shares borders with Panama, Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela. Additionally, Colombia has coastlines along both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, making it one of the few countries with access to two oceans. The capital city of Colombia is Bogotá, a high-altitude city located in the Andean region. Other well-known cities include Medellín, recognized for its innovation and culture, and Cartagena, famous for its colonial architecture and Caribbean beaches.



Climate Zones in Colombia:

Colombia is one of 13 countries that lie on the equator. Because of this, Colombia has no seasons and does not experience extreme climate changes during the year. However, the country does have the privilege of enjoying a great variety of climates thanks to its mountainous relief. In Colombia it is possible to go from summer to winter temperatures in little more than an hour. Colombia's climates can be classified as follows:

- Warm:** Characterized by high temperatures, regular rainfall and humidity. The annual average always stays well above 24 °C. Some of the products grown in this climate are cocoa, cotton, pineapple and bananas.
- Temperate:** This is the climate that changes the most throughout the year, but remains within a very pleasant range. The average annual temperature is 20°C. Some of the products grown here are coffee, cereals, avocado and flowers.
- Cold:** Limited to the high areas of the Andes mountain range, the average annual temperature is around 14°C. Some of the products grown here are carrots, blackberries, curuba, potatoes and onions.
- Páramo:** These are the highest habitable areas just before the snow-capped peaks, and are mostly rainy and extremely cold. The annual average is well below 10 °C.



Colombia's unique geography and climate zones make it one of the most biodiverse countries in the world, hosting a wide range of flora and fauna across different ecosystems. This diversity is also reflected in the nation's cultural richness, influenced by the varied landscapes and climates found throughout the country.



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Colombia is a country noted for its rich biodiversity, with an estimated 56,343 species, many of which are endemic, such as plants, amphibians, orchids, butterflies, freshwater fish, reptiles, birds, palms and mammals.

Colombia's outstanding positions in biodiversity:

- **1st place:** Bird and orchid species.
- **2nd place:** Richness of plants, amphibians, butterflies and freshwater fish.
- **3rd place:** Species of palms and reptiles.
- **4th place:** Species of mammals.



These achievements underscore the value of its biodiversity, although significant challenges remain due to threats to species and the effects of climate change.

Political System.



The 1991 Political Constitution of Colombia defines the country as a unitary, social republic based on democracy and the rule of law, where power resides in the people through suffrage and political participation. The president, elected democratically, governs within a framework that prioritizes human rights and social justice. The election of Gustavo Petro in 2022 marked a historic shift as the first leftist president, focusing on social justice, reducing inequality, and environmental sustainability. Vice President Francia Márquez, the first Afro-Colombian in this role, brings representation and activism for marginalized communities and environmental protection to the administration.

Armed Conflict and peace process.

1960 - 1980: FARC (GUERRILLA) During this time, the FARC, an extreme liberal guerrilla group, was conformed as a way to fight the government. Later, more armed groups formed such as M-19, ELN, etc. Theses groups were linked with drug trafficking.



1990 - 2000: INCREASED VIOLENCE

Another armed group was created to fight the FARC: they where called AUC. It also began a more violent internal war in the country, specifically in the rural areas (little government presence). This has been the period with more victims.

2012 - 2016: PEACE PROCESS Although there were a couple of peace processes that started in the early 2000's, none of them were successfull until the Government of Juan M. Santos. In 2016, after more than 50 years of violence, the Peace process was finalized and bilateral ceasefire began.





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2017 - TODAY: PEACE Since 2017, the government created different institutional entities with the objective of working with the victims and their families, ex-combatants, etc. The aim is to understand what happened, held people accountable and study the changes we need so it never happens again.



COMISIÓN DE LA VERDAD

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is charged with uncovering and revealing past wrongdoing by the government, and the FARC in the hope of resolving conflicts left in the past

EL TESTIGO-DOCUMENTARY

This documentary is based on the work of Jesús Abad Colorado, a Colombian photographer. He dedicated his life to recording the pain of communities so that no one would forget the absurdity of wars.



<https://www.comisiondelaverdad.co/hay-futuro-si-hay-verdad>



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Economy.

Colombia is a country with a very varied economy, that is, it has different industries that help the country grow and develop.

One of the most important sectors for Colombia's economy is oil and gas, which represents 40% of the country's exports. The areas where most oil is extracted are in the departments of La Guajira, Sucre and Cesar. Another important sector is mining, which has to do with the extraction of metals such as gold and coal.



In addition, the agricultural sector is very relevant, as Colombia produces products such as coffee, bananas and flowers, which are sold to other countries. Agriculture also creates many jobs in several regions of the country, such as Valle del Cauca, Tolima, Quindío and Nariño. These three sectors: oil, mining and agriculture, are fundamental for Colombia to have a strong economy and continue to grow.

Culture and Identity.

Colombian traditions are practices passed down from generation to generation that include customs, beliefs and legends that are part of its culture. These celebrations reflect the country's identity and strengthen the sense of belonging, both inside and outside Colombia.

Main Colombian traditions:

Barranquilla Carnival: The second largest in the world, recognized for its history, culture and music.





Carnaval de Negros y Blancos: Held in Pasto, it symbolizes ethnic unity with rituals such as the Carnaval del Agua and black and white makeup.

Holy Week Processions in Popayán:

Of great religious importance, they recreate moments of the Passion of Christ and are one of the oldest celebrations in the country.



Flower Fair: In Medellín, with the silletero parade as the main event, representing the traditions of Antioquia.

Cali Fair: Festival dedicated to salsa and joy, celebrated every December, being a symbol of Cali's culture.

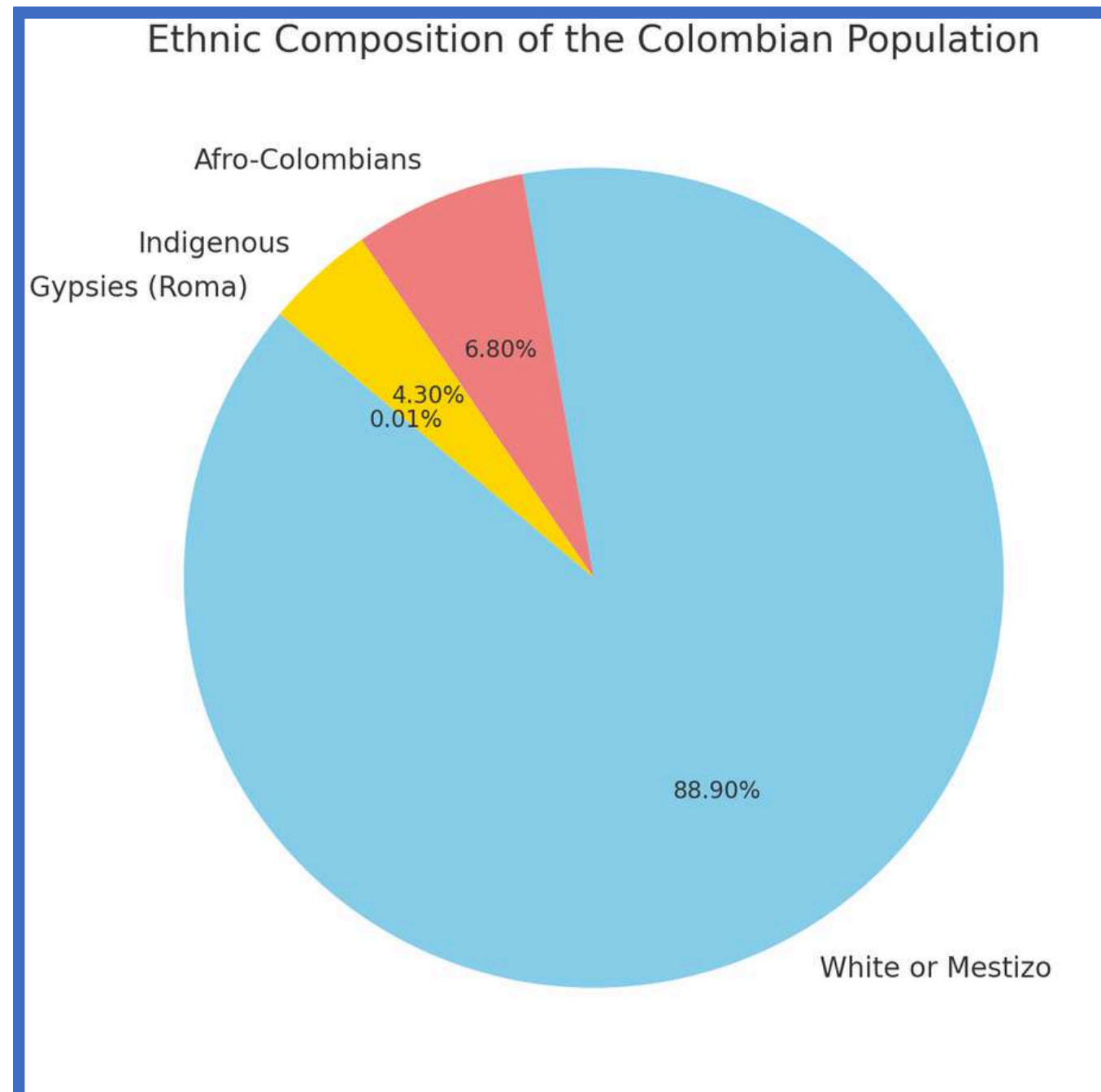


National Identity:

Total population of Colombia: 52,215,503 inhabitants.

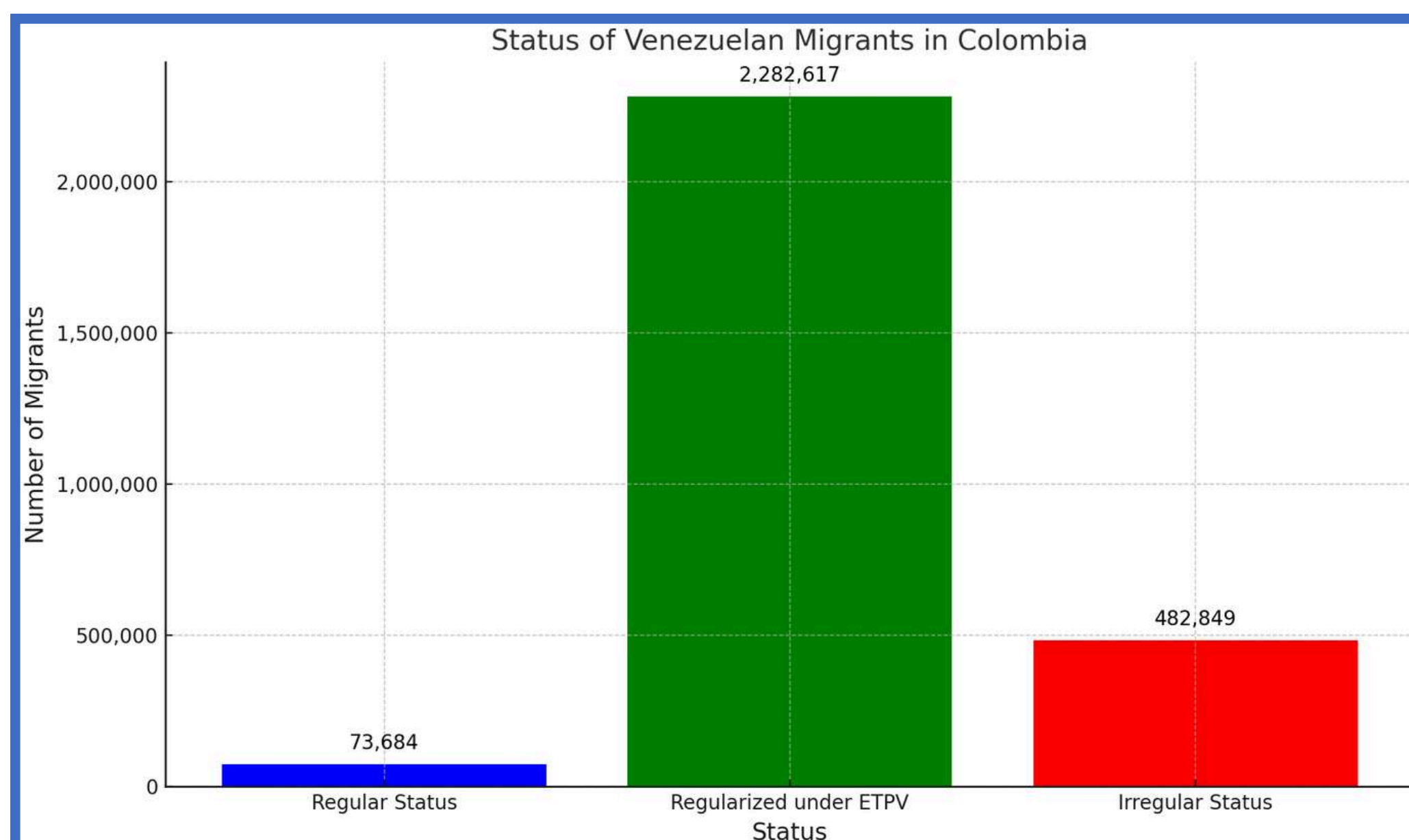
Ethnic composition of the Colombian population:

- 88.94% are white or mestizo.
- 6.8% are Afro-Colombians, blacks, raizales and palenqueros.
- 4.3% are indigenous.
- 0.006% are gypsies or Roma.



Venezuelan migrants in Colombia: 2,839,150 migrants.

- 73,684 are in the country on a regular basis.
- 2,282,617 have been or are being regularized under the ETPV (Temporary Statute of Protection for Venezuelan Migrants).
- 482,849 are in the country irregularly.



Language:

According to the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC), 70 languages are spoken in our country: Spanish and 69 mother tongues. Among them 65 are indigenous languages, 2 Creole languages (Palenquero of San Basilio and the one of the islands of San Andrés and Providencia - Creole), the Romaní or Romaníes of the Rom-Gypsy people and the Colombian sign language.

Food

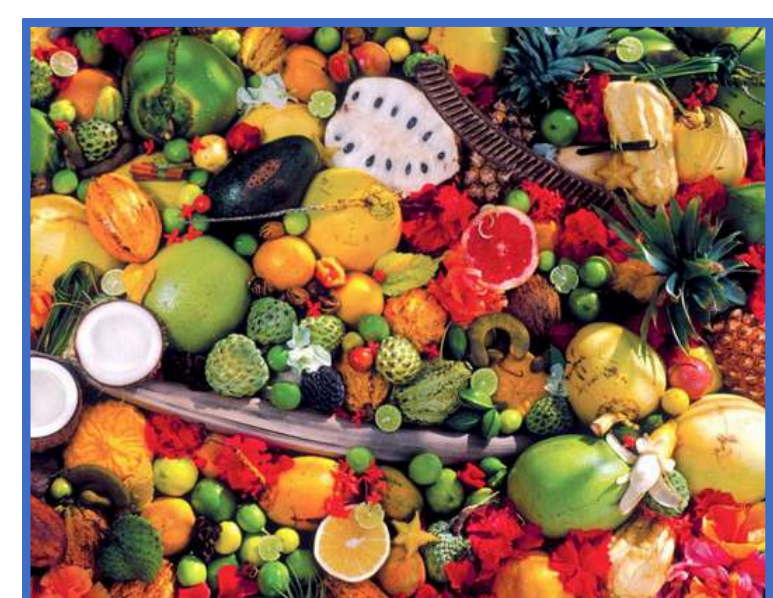
Colombian cuisine reflects its geographic and cultural diversity, with unique dishes that combine indigenous, African and Spanish influences. Each region of the country offers characteristic flavors and preparations, using local and fresh ingredients.

Typical Dishes by Region:

- Caribbean Region: Arroz con coco (rice with coconut), arepa de huevo (egg arepa), cazuela de mariscos (seafood casserole).
- Andean Region: Bandeja paisa, ajiaco.
- Pacific Region: Sancocho de pescado, encocado.
- Amazon Region: Pirarucú, tucupí.
- Other Traditional Dishes: Empanadas, lechona, tamales, sancocho, arepas in different varieties.



Colombian Fruits: Colombia stands out for its great variety of tropical, citrus, sweet and semi-acid fruits. These fruits are essential in daily life, used in juices, desserts and snacks, and are easily found in markets and streets, displaying vibrant colors and aromas.





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Information on the National Committee (NC). About the NC.

ICYE COLOMBIA is a non-profit organization that, since 1981, promotes the international exchange of volunteers. Each year, we receive in Colombia between 15 and 25 volunteers from different countries, who collaborate with various host organizations. We also send approximately 10 Colombian volunteers abroad.

Our mission is to generate meaningful intercultural experiences that foster personal growth, social development and global understanding. We promote equality, intercultural learning and global responsibility. Visit our website at www.icyecolombia.com/es and follow us on TikTok, Instagram and Facebook.

Who is Who.



Andrea Catalina Marín Moreno
CEO and Legal Representative.



Juan David Vargas Alonso
COO and Outgoing Coordinator.



María Fernanda López Cañón
Migratory and Contractual Coordinator



Luisa Fernanda Bermúdez Garavito
Social Media manager.



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Our support for your well-being and safety.

Pocket money and travel reimbursement.

- **Pocket money:** Monthly value \$145.000 COP
- **Transportation money:** Monthly value \$130.000 COP. (with some exceptions for volunteers living in your project).



Language course.



This course is taught virtually by qualified language teachers. During the first three months, they offer a total of 60 hours of classes, and volunteers have the option to take an additional 60 hours if they wish.

Trainings and additional activities.

Virtual trainings on topics of interest, colonization, culture shock, use and management of insurance, implementation of ICYE policies.



Work placements

See Work Profile!

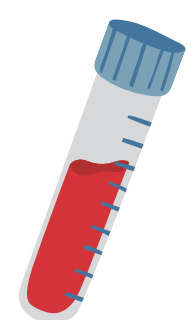


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What you need to know before arriving.

Medical system.

Before traveling to Colombia, it is important to have a blood test to determine the blood type, as this is a necessary requirement for some procedures before Migration Colombia.



If you become ill while in Colombia, you should contact the person in charge of incoming, who will indicate the nearest medical center to which you can go for medical attention.



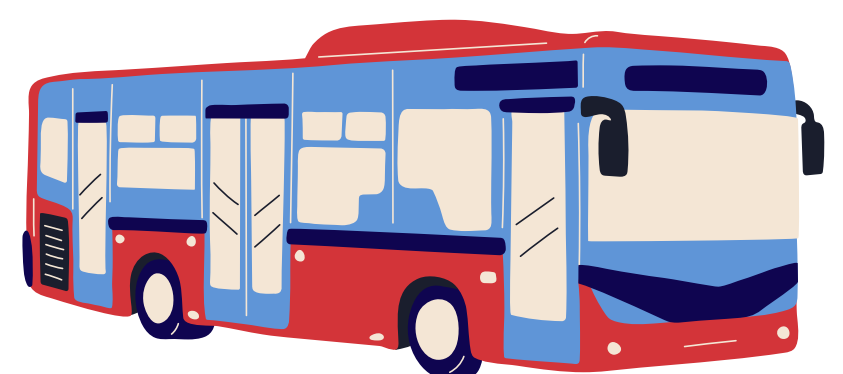
Accommodation.

Volunteers will either be staying with a host family, will live in the project, or live in community housing.



Transportation and travel.

Transportation costs to and from the project will be covered by us for mid-term and long-term volunteers (with some exceptions for volunteers living in your project). Most areas are safe to travel using public transportation. However, avoid travelling to some parts of the country and avoid using public transport through dangerous areas (use a plane if necessary).





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If you are unsure, speak with us or a trusted local! Most of the major cities (Bogota, Medellin, Cali) have a good network of public transportation systems. However, avoid using public transport in those cities at night (take an uber). Travelling between cities using a bus is also an affordable and safe option to travel.

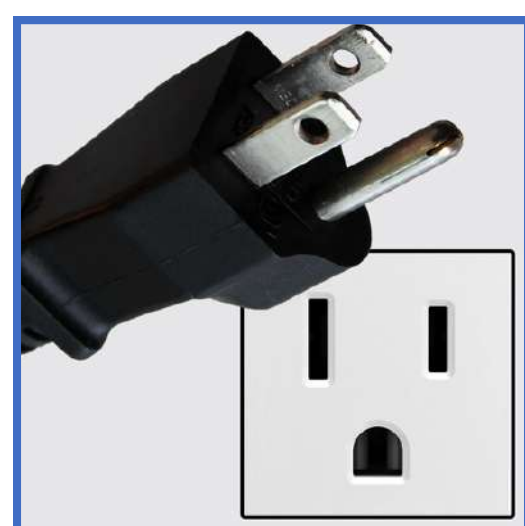
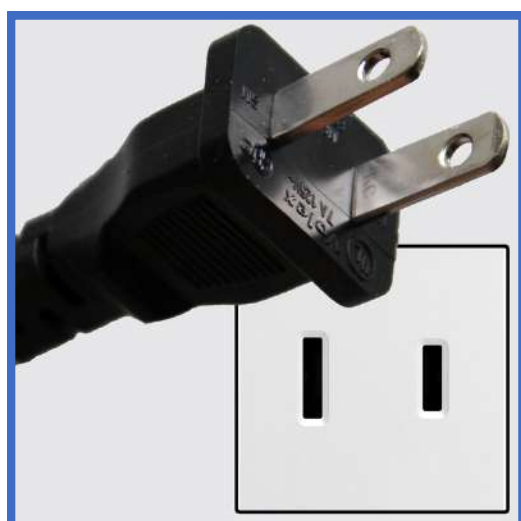


Monetary system.

1 USD= \$4.110 COP
1 EURO= \$4.331 COP
(FEB 2025)



Plug type and electricity.



Colombia uses type A and type B power sockets (the same as in the United States)

What to bring.

Comfortable and light clothing

Hot cities (such as Cartagena, Santa Marta, Barranquilla, Cali): Wear light, breathable clothing, preferably cotton or materials that allow air circulation, due to the heat and humidity.

Cool or high altitude cities (such as Bogota, Medellin, Bucaramanga): Wear warmer clothing for cool nights. Bogota, for example, has a temperate-cold climate, so you will need warm clothing, especially in the mornings and evenings.



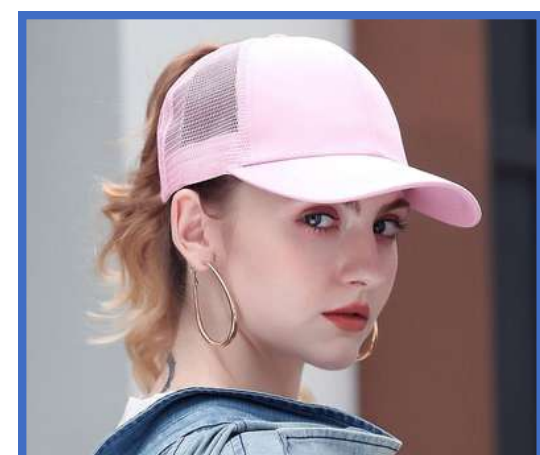
Protection against the sun and insects:

Sunscreen: Colombia, especially in coastal areas and regions such as the Amazon or Orinoco, has a lot of sun exposure. Bring high factor sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher) to protect your skin.

Insect repellent: If you are going to warmer and more humid areas, such as the Amazon region, Chocó or the Caribbean, it is essential to carry mosquito repellent, as these places have a high presence of insects and there is a risk of diseases such as dengue or Zika. In rural and jungle areas, it is even more important.

Hat or cap:

Due to the hot and sunny weather in many parts of the country, a hat or cap is essential to protect your head from the sun. This is especially important if you plan to spend a lot of time outdoors in the Caribbean region.





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Important regulations and our policies.

Visa requirements.

Information about Type V Visa - Volunteers and Cooperants for Colombia:

For volunteers who wish to travel to Colombia, it is necessary to apply for the Type V Visa - Volunteers and Cooperants at the Colombian Consulate in your country of origin, at least one month in advance of your travel date. ICYE Colombia will provide you with most of the necessary documents to complete the visa process completely online.



Visa Renewal:

If you obtain the visa for an initial period of 6 months and need to renew it to continue volunteering, you will need to submit the same documents required in the initial application, but with the most recent issue date. Required documents include: Recent photo of the volunteer and immigration stamp in the passport indicating entry to Colombia.

Entry without Visa:

In case you arrive in Colombia without a visa, you may stay in the country for a maximum of 90 days. The immigration authority will affix a stamp in your passport indicating the date of entry, the number of days allowed to stay (90 days) and the type of entry. This period may be extended only once, for an additional 90 days, allowing a maximum stay of 180 days per calendar year.



It is important to take into account these deadlines and requirements to avoid inconveniences and ensure a legal stay in Colombia.



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Specific government regulations and local rules.

- Some areas of Colombia have the presence of irregular armed groups, which is why volunteers must ALWAYS inform ICYE Colombia in advance of their travel plans and may only travel with the prior authorisation of the Committee.
- If you plan to visit rural areas, seek security advice in advance. Never explore the area on your own and always go with authorized, recognized tour guides.
- Colombia has a good network of overland busses and cheap flights. We recommend you not travel alone or at night by bus, but of course it depends on the distance and the area you are visiting. In any case, only take busses from official terminals and not from the street. "Hitchhiking" is completely forbidden.
- In case of any emergency, accident or difficulty you must inform any member of the ICYE Colombia Staff.
- No one can go on vacation without sending the format request at least one week before your trip. No one can leave the country without the authorization of ICYE Colombia.





ICYE

ICYE policies.

ICYE Colombia wishes to advance in their activities the ICYE policies (pdf, icye.org):

- [ICYE's Code of Ethical Practice](#)
- [Greener together – ICYE's commitment for a sustainable and regenerative future](#)
- [Care to Engage – ICYE's Policy on Safeguarding Children](#)
- [Safer Together – ICYE's policy addressing sexual violence in international volunteering](#)

At ICYE Colombia we wish to create in all our activities together with all the participants safer spaces in which everyone can feel welcome and respected. To advance this, we follow in our activities ICYE Colombia guidelines for safer spaces.

NC's long-term rules for the volunteer to sign

GENERAL RULES AND REGULATIONS

We want to introduce our minimum rules and regulations, which are the base for a successful relationship between volunteers, host projects, projects, host families and the National Committee.

- You must attend all camps (Introductory, Mid-year and final) plus complementary activities programmed by ICYE Colombia. All included in the general schedule of the program
- The visa given to you was asked by ICYE Colombia in cooperation with your sending committee. You cannot change your legal status while you are in the program
- In case you change your hosting situation (address or city), you must inform ICYE Colombia about this change.



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- You must have an ID card
- In case you lose your cédula, you must report it online at <https://adenunciar.policia.gov.co/Adenunciar/Login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fadenunciar%2fdefault.aspx>. Make sure you have a printer to obtain the certification of your report. Then, you must take this certification to “Migración Colombia” to request a new copy of your cédula. You must inform ICYE Colombia about the loss.
- You must adapt yourself to your host family/project in such a way that you should be considered, another family member or mate.
- You must respect your family/host project customs, ideas and internal regulations.
- Under no circumstances you are allowed to abandon, change or leave your host family/project without authorization
- Social Voluntary Work is the most important activity during the exchange year. You must respect and follow the rules according to the Agreement with the project, explained and signed by you, the project and ICYE Colombia at the beginning of the voluntary service.
- ICYE volunteers are committed to working between 30 and 35 hours a week.
- You must respect your social project customs, ideas and internal regulations.
- Under no circumstances you are allowed to abandon, change or leave your social voluntary work without authorization
- It is not allowed to have any participation in political activities (political street meetings, political demonstrations, etc.)
- You are not allowed to buy/use/sell any drugs (including Marihuana).
- You are not allowed to leave the country during the program unless they have received permission from ICYE Colombia
- You always have to ask for permission to ICYE Colombia to take vacation.
- You always have to send the vacation request form to ICYE Colombia by e-mail or personally. At least one week before you go on vacation. If you do not send the vacation request form you cannot take vacation.



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- If the project has a specific time for leaving on vacation you must take it at the same time. It means you cannot program vacation time out of the dates given by the project. So you cannot plan vacations on your own without consulting your project.
- If you are in a project, which does not have a specific period of vacation, you must agree with the project and the General Programs Coordinator of ICYE Colombia.
- You must follow the 'safety rules' given to you by ICYE Colombia
- Hitchhiking is forbidden.
- You all have to read, understand and follow the code of conduct.

It is clear for you that not fulfilling or following the rules and regulations of the ICYE Colombia Program is a reason for cancellation of your visa and participation in the program.

Name: _____ Country: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____