

## **Sun soaked and rich in culture: an insider's look to the Caribbean Region**

### **Colombian Caribbean coast 1.0: General facts**

Location: This region is located in the northeast of Colombia, and it extends from the end of the Andes Cordillera in the southern zone, to the Caribbean Sea in the northern zone, and from the Guajira peninsula to the Department of Antioquia. The limits of this region are: to the east with Venezuela, to the west with the Pacific region, to the north with the Caribbean Sea and to the south with the Andean mountain range.

Population: 9 million people

Area: 132.288 km<sup>2</sup> (11,6 % of the national territory)

Altitude: Maximum: 5.775 m (Sierra nevada de Santa Marta); Minimum: 0 m; Mid: 300 m.

Weather: No seasons. Mid temperature of 25 °C.

Rain seasons: march to May; September to November.

Main Cities: Barranquilla, Cartagena de Indias, Santa Marta, Valledupar, Montería, Sincelejo, Riohacha.

Main Airports: Riohacha-Almirante Padilla; Santa Marta-Simón Bolívar; Valledupar-Alfonso Lopez Pumarejo; Barranquilla-Ernesto Cortissoz; Cartagena-Rafael Núñez; Montería-Los Garzones.

Transportation: buses, taxis, Transcaribe, internet apps, private cars.

What to wear? Light fabric clothes, shorts, skirts, dresses, hats, sunglasses, comfortable shoes for warm weathers.

### **Fun facts**

People from the Caribbean region are generally known as "costeños".

Said to be the happiest and most stress-free community of Colombia

Bathed in the waters of the Caribbean Sea and rivers of Magdalena, Cauca, Sinú, San Jorge, Atrato and Ranchería.

Many well know Colombian artists were born here, such as: Shakira, Sofía Vergara, Carlos Vives, Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos "el pibe" Valderrama, Silvia Tcherassi, Edgar Rentería, Totó La Momposina, Joe Arroyo, Lucho Bermúdez, and more.

There is a town close to Cartagena called San Basilio de Palenque, founded by escaped slaves as a refuge in the seventeenth century, and survives until the present day. Its a unique cultural space, and it encompasses social, medical and religious practices as well as musical and oral traditions.



The highest point of the country is located in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. A magical landscape where you can see the beach, the ocean and the snow picked mountains.

Some of the most typical Latin rhythms and dances were born in this region as well, such as: cumbia, vallenato, mapalé, porro, and more.

The second most important carnival of the world is celebrated in Barranquilla

The natural offer is quite vast as well, the region has more than 1.700 Km of beaches, jungles, deserts, and over.

### **Birthplace of illustrious artists, mouthwatering gastronomy and music essentials**

The Caribbean region of Colombia is well-known for having very peculiar and deeply rooted customs. Many of these traditions have become a national reference, and are even representative of the entire Colombian territory. Historically, socially and culturally it is one of the most important regions of the country, due to the social network that has been articulated through traditions and ways of living that are notoriously distinguished from other regions of the country. What most identifies the Colombian Caribbean region is its collective identity. Despite being geographically divided into eight departments, its citizens maintain a common identity, connected by the Caribbean Sea: a notorious accent, great dancing and cooking skills among others can be identified.

The recognition of Colombia worldwide is due in large part to the continued work of **characters who have excelled in different social fields**. The list includes from a Colombian president, businessmen, writers, poets, journalists, models, designers, athletes, singers, composers, etc.

The eight departments that make up the Colombian Caribbean Coast stimulate and enrich their cultural diversity, not only through their cheerful people, we are the face of a country that disseminates rhythms such as cumbia and vallenato, expressions of art through "sombbrero vueltiao" and "mochilas arhuacas". Oral and intangible heritage through Carnival and many other parties that identify the region.

The **cuisine** of the Colombian Caribbean Coast is very extensive and varies according to each department of the region, combining traditional cuisine, coastal seasoning and an aphrodisiac touch. From the colony diverse traditions, elements and techniques of the indigenous, European, African and mestizo cultures are incorporated. One of the most popular gastronomic traditions, of African origin, is presented through the "Palenqueras", which are usually seen in the streets of Cartagena with large bowls on their heads carrying fresh fruit or sweets for sale.

The Caribbean cuisine is based mainly on **seafood** (fish, oysters, crabs, shrimp) due to its large coastal area. They also highlight a wide variety of regional agricultural products and **tropical fruits** (sapodilla, watermelon, loquat tamarind, corozo, etc.) common in the territory. On the other hand, **fried and sweet** are an essential part of the culinary catalog.

The Caribbean region in Colombia is the birthplace of some of the most **prominent rhythms** of the South American continent. To the north, Valledupar, capital of the

department of Cesar, is known for being the heart of **vallenato**, a musical genre declared by UNESCO as Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, which features the accordion, the box (small leather drum of goat) and the “guacharaca”, legends and popular myths. Valledupar is the city where the “**Festival de la Leyenda Vallenata**” is celebrated, a very popular festival of the country as well. The accordion is an indispensable element in the “**Parrandas**”, celebrations that exalt friends, love or life, where more than dancing, the romantic airs of this instrument are contemplated: the puya, the merengue, the son and the paseo.

A little further south it is possible to live the most important festival in Colombia: The **Carnival of Barranquilla**. A celebration parades, costumes, music and dance, a majestic spectacle that dresses the city and more than 90 thousand people (national and international) that arrive between January and March for these holidays.

Its most representative rhythms, typical in addition to coastal folklore, are cumbia, puya, jalao, garabato, chandé, porro, bullerengue, mapalé, merecumbé, and **Champeta**, this one being recognized in the entire Caribbean region for being a musical genre originating in Afro-descendant areas of the city of Cartagena, in the department of Bolivar, linked to the culture of the **San Basilio de Palenque district**.

One hour from Palenque is **Cartagena** which also stands out for being the home of important musical events such as the **Classical Music Festival** or the **Hay Festival**, and for its variety of bars and discos with rhythms for all preferences. Here, culture and gastronomy merge together, in experiences where visitors take salsa and champeta lessons after an allusive tour of the “patacón” (fried green plantain), which ends “**Donde Fidel**” one of the most famous salsa bars in the historic center of the city to practice the dance moves previously learnt.

### COLOMBIAN CARIBBEAN RHYTHMS CHART

POPULAR RHYTHMS		RHYTHM REHEARSALS	
	27. Abozao		76. Romanchá
1. Cumbia	28. Sexteto	49. Joesón	77. Rumbalé
2. Cumbión	29. Son Negro	50. Chiquichá	78. Sirindongo
3. Paeaíto	30. Son Palenque	51. Boloking	79. Son caribe
4. Gaita	31. Lumbalú	52. Brinquito	80. Son Cienaguero
5. Paseo sabanero	32. Chalupa	53. Cachumbé	81. Son Patuleco
6. Son Sabanero	33. Merecumbé	54. Calentado	82. Sonsonete
7. Bullerengue	34. Pompo	55. Caracolito	83. Sucreñito
8. Mapalé		56. Carnaval	84. El Sua Sua
9. Maestranza	<b>OTHER RHYTHMS</b>	57. Chucuchú	85. Tableteo
10. Puya	35. Champeta	58. Chunga	86. Taconeado
11. Porro tapao	36. Calypso	59. Cimbanchá	87. Teconté
12. Porro palitiao	37. Reggae	60. Corrigua	88. Teru Teru
13. Fandango	38. Guaracha	61. Cumbero	89. Tukimbé
14. Parrandí	39. Vals Criollo	62. Cumbiambé	90. Trabalenguas

15. Sambapalo	40. Currulao	63. Cumbiao	91. Tumbasón
16. Pajarito	41. Bambuco	64. Huelelé	92. Tumbelé
17. Chandé	42. Tamborito	65. Jalaíto	93. Tuqui Tuqui
18. Garabato	43. Tamborera	66. Lalao	94. Chunga
19. Tambora	44. Murga Panameña	67. Mece Mece	95. Danza Caribe
20. Pilón	45. Bolero Criollo	68. Meniaíto	96. Macumba
21. Paseo vallenato	46. Salsa Criolla	69. Merengullo	97. Malanga
22. Son vallenato	47. Décimas	70. Montocumbé	98. La Maya
23. Puya vallenata	48. Pasaje*	71. Pata-Cumbia	99. La Parranda
24. Merengue vallenato		72. Pupalé	100. La Raspa
25. Canción Vallenata		73. Ritmo Loco	101. Manbugay
26. Paseol		74. Ritmo No.1	102. Danzonete
		75. Ritmo Ri-Ra	103. Afro colombiano

### **Nature, islands and beaches**

Located in the north of Colombia (this is why we call it the country's crown), bathed by the warm waters of the Caribbean, bronzed by the burning sun that flows over the savanna, the forest, the desert and the snow-capped mountain peaks. Dressed in river flows that cross a territory full of multicolored fauna and flora. The richness in vegetation and biodiversity of the Caribbean region is indisputable.

This area of Colombia has five **natural national parks**, among which are the Coral Islands of Rosario and San Bernardo, Paramillo, Tayrona, Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta and Macuira. In addition, the **natural sanctuaries** of Ciénaga Grande de Santa Marta, Los Colorados, Los Flamencos and El Corchal el Mono Hernández. In addition, the road between Santa Marta and Barraquilla has been declared as a protected park.

Fronting both the Caribbean, Colombia is blessed with countless sun-toasted stretches of floury sands plus pristine, picture-perfect islands. The 1760km Caribbean coast is home to the country's best beaches, from backpacker hotspots like raucous Taganga to the rarely visited Punta Gallinas with its massive dunes. **Playa Blanca at Isla de Barú** is located southwest of Cartagena, found on a small island easily accessible from the mainland. **Tayrona National Park** is one of the most beautiful places in Colombia. The flora and fauna are the stars of this undisturbed landscape, with massive palm trees, vegetated beaches, and rocky cliffs abound. If you're hoping to get off the beaten path, **Palomino** is the perfect place. The town and its pristine beaches rest quietly on the Caribbean coast of Colombia. Located nearly at the end of the Guajira Peninsula in northern Colombia, the beach area known as **Pilón de Azúcar** (translated as "pile of sugar") is one of the most spectacular beach areas in Colombia. The actual beach area is nestled at the base of two hills of bright orange sand and is surrounded by green limestone bases.



The **archipelago of San Andrés and Providencia** is home to isolated beaches, unspoiled coral reefs and an alluring island flavor, however these islands will be talked about deeply in another newsletter focused on the insular region.