

ELANBiz Info Card

Business Travel in Colombia

Prepared by ELANBiz *Expert* in Colombia. Last update: August, 2017

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This info card provides some information regarding business travel in Colombia.

General Information

Geographic location:

Colombia has a privileged location with two oceanic facades (to the north: the Atlantic Ocean and to the west: the Pacific Ocean) and with direct access to the Amazon River. It shares its borders with Panama, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador and Brazil.

Time

UTC-5

Language:

Colombia's official language is Spanish. However, English is used very frequently in business.

Religions:

Catholicism is the most represented religion in Colombia but several other religions coexist in the country (Judaism, Islam, etc...)

Climatic conditions:

The country is divided into three regions offering a wide variety of climatic conditions: the mountainous Andean region has a relatively cold weather, the plain region ("la región de Los Llanos") and the Amazon region, and then, the Pacific and Atlantic coasts, have a tropical climate all the year.

National holidays:

During 2017

October 16, Columbus Day

November 6, All Saints' Day

November 13, Independence of Cartagena

December 8, Eve of the Feast of Immaculate Conception

December 25, Christmas Day

During 2018

January 1st, New Year's Day

January 8, Epiphany

March 19, Saint Joseph's Day

March 29, Holy Thursday

March 30, Holy Friday

May 1st, Labor Day

May 14, Ascension Day

June 4, Corpus Christi

June, 11, Sacred Heart

July 2, Feast of Saint Peter and Saint Paul

July 20, Independence Day

August 7, Battle of Boyacá Day

August 20, Assumption of Mary

October 15, Columbus Day

November 5, All Saints' Day

November 12, Independence of Cartagena

December 8, Eve of the Feast of Immaculate Conception

December 25, Christmas Day

Business Hours:

8h30-17h30

Mainstream media:

Newspaper El Tiempo: www.eltiempo.com

Newspaper: La República, <http://www.larepublica.co/>

Newspaper: Portafolio, <http://www.portafolio.co/>

Magazine Semana, www.semana.com

Magazine Dinero, www.dinero.co

Before travelling

Vacation period:

Colombians generally take their longest vacation period between December 15 and January 15. Additionally, Easter should be avoided for doing business in Colombia.

Visa requirement:

Citizens of the European Union are exempted from the visa requirement for short business trips or sightseeing trips to 90 days. To enter Colombia, foreign visitors need a valid Passport (with more than 6 months validity). Upon arrival, foreign visitors may be required by Colombian immigration authorities (Migration Colombia) to submit information of their return trip, their stay in Colombia and the amount of money

available to cover their expenses while they are in the country. Additionally, they must give an address in Colombia (e.g., prior reservation hotel).

Importation of Commercial Samples

Samples goods declared as such and that are supported in a proforma or commercial invoice are considered as “Samples goods with no commercial value”. No registration or import license is required unless their condition or nature require compliance with clearances or requirements to obtain an import license or registration (e.g.: food products): In this case, the importer must refer to Resolution No. 2013034419 of November 20, 2013¹ that regulates the authorization procedure for health, cosmetics, alcoholic beverage and food samples in order to find the applicable requirements for his product. In any case, these goods are subject to the payment of customs duties according to their corresponding customs classification.

Communications:

Colombia has excellent coverage of Internet and mobile phone network in major cities and surrounding areas. The main mobile operators are: Claro, Movistar and Tigo. All offer international roaming services.

Currency and payment:

The official currency of Colombia is the Colombian peso. The vast majority of payments must be made in that currency. However, in large cities it is easy to change dollars or euro and visas and MasterCard cards are generally accepted in restaurants, hotels and stores. There is also the possibility of using the ATMs network for cash withdrawals from bank accounts located abroad.

Hotels and accommodation:

Prices of hotels located in the neighborhoods of Bogota that offer greater security vary between 120 and 220 euro. The fee charged per night usually covers a single person, including breakfast in most cases. Given the wide range of hotels in Colombia, it is not necessary to reserve your room well in advance.

Vaccines:

Vaccines depend on the characteristics of the destination chosen. Business trips to Bogota do not present any risk. However, to travel to certain regions of the country it is required to have been vaccinated against yellow fever at least 15 days before the start of the trip. This vaccine is recommended for persons who travel to the departments of La Guajira, Norte de Santander, Putumayo and the regions, such as: the Eastern Plains, the Amazon, the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta and the entire Atlantic Coast.

¹ http://www.icbf.gov.co/carques/avance/docs/resolucion_invima_34419_2013.htm

In the country

Safety and security:

Although security conditions have improved substantially in Colombia, it is important to be well informed before organizing any trip outside the main cities.

Sanitary Conditions:

The big cities have excellent private clinics. For the city of Bogota, it is possible to recommend among others, the Santa Fe and the Country clinics to attend any emergency situation. The person doing business with Colombia should have an international insurance. This will allow the visitor the right to receive medical care in case it should be needed it, in good level clinics. There is no particular food precaution that should be taken in consideration at the hotel and business restaurants.

Transport:

Big cities have a public taxi service, which must be called previously and never taken into the street in order to avoid any danger. There are also some car rental companies.

Business lunches:

Lunch break is mostly between 12h30 and 14h30. There is a large variety of restaurants, these restaurants are specially designed for business meetings. Most of the time, a reservation might be required.

Tipping:

Tipping is voluntary in Colombia. It corresponds to 10% of the value of bill that the restaurant itself charges usually directly, with the prior approval of the customer.

Business protocol

- Rules of courtesy and good manners are essential.
- Avoid casual clothes during business meetings.
- It is important to avoid being too direct.
- Be sure to maintain eye contact while talking.
- Avoid criticizing the country without having established a prior trustful relation with your correspondent.
- Colombian businessmen are quite timely in their meetings. Delays up to 15 minutes are allowed.
- You should schedule appointments with two weeks in advance. Arrange two hours for each meeting.
- Do not underestimate the importance that Colombian people give to hierarchy.
- Have in mind that Colombians rarely say NO as a response.

Practical advice

- Never refuse doing business in Colombia for reasons connected with insecurity. Business and commercial life are normal in all major cities of the country.
- It is recommended before visiting the country, to learn a little bit about the history and culture of Colombia.
- It is recommended to arrive to Colombia a day before the first meeting, so you can accustom to the altitude and to the country, especially if you will stay in Bogota.
- Although Colombia is located in the equatorial zone, there are several large cities that are cold and it is advisable to wear a jacket to visit them.
- It is important to be cautious while you are visiting Colombia and ask to your local contacts how dangerous the different areas of the city are.

Useful phone numbers and links

- **Delegation of the European Union to Colombia and Ecuador.**
Tel. (+57-1) 658 11 50, https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/colombia_es
- **Colombia National Police,** Tel. (+57-1) 315 91 11-91 12,
<https://www.policia.gov.co/>
Emergency care line: 123.
GAULA- prevention against kidnapping and extortion: 165
- **Taxis (in Bogotá)**
Taxis libres, Tel. (+57-1) 211 11 11, 311 11 11,
<https://www.taxislibres.com.co/>
Teletaxi: Tel (+57-1) 6111111 o 2333333
<http://www.coopteletaxi.com/>
- **Clinics (in Bogota)**
Clínica del Country, Tel. (+57-1) 530 04 70/12 70,
www.clinicadelcountry.com
Fundación Santafé de Bogotá, Tel. (+57-1) 603 03 03,
<http://clnicasantafe.co.cr/>
- **Tourism**
Colombia – Official travel guide, www.colombia.travel/

If you need a personalized information
Send a question through our service
“Ask the Expert”
it is free and you will receive the
answer within three to five working
days!

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