

SPANISH IMMERSION + THREE-CITY HOLIDAY

Colombia Travel Itinerary

A 28-day journey through San Carlos, Medellín, Cartagena, and Bogotá - from language immersion and waterfalls to Caribbean Christmas and New Year's in the capital.

Canada → San Carlos → Medellín → Cartagena → Bogotá → Canada

December 5, 2026 - January 2, 2027

28 days / 27 nights · MDE → BOG

Four phases, one seamless route

The trip begins with two weeks of Spanish immersion in rural Antioquia, then shifts into three distinctive city stays: Christmas lights in Medellín, a Caribbean Christmas in Cartagena, and New Year's Eve in Bogotá.

28
days from departure through the return flight

4
main bases across Antioquia, the Caribbean, and the Andes

13
confirmed hotel nights in Medellín, Cartagena, and Bogotá

2
domestic flights booked: MDE → CTG and CTG → BOG

San Carlos 01

Dec 5-20. Spanish Adventure School, waterfalls, river activities, local culture, and the included Guatapé and El Peñol weekend.

Medellín 02

Dec 20-24. Four booked nights in El Poblado for the Alumbrados Navideños, historic downtown, Comuna 13, Metrocable, and Parque Arví.

Cartagena 03

Dec 24-28. Four booked nights in the Walled City for Nochebuena, colonial streets, museums, and sunset on the walls.

Bogotá 04

Dec 28-Jan 2. Five booked nights in Zona T for La Candelaria, Zipaquirá, New Year's Eve, and a better-acclimatized Monserrate hike.

International flights · booked

Outbound · Air Canada
YUL → MDE · Sat, Dec 5 at 23:05
Via Bogotá · arrive Sun, Dec 6 at 09:10

Return · Avianca AV200
BOG → YUL nonstop · Sat, Jan 2
14:00 → 20:45

Total international airfare: CA$2,273.
Booked domestic flights: JetSMART JA5420, MDE → CTG, Thu, Dec 24, 09:03 → 10:17, CA$126.76 paid via Expedia, checked bag included; JetSMART JA5153, CTG → BOG, Mon, Dec 28, 8:29 → 10:05, nonstop (1h 36m), CA$132 paid via Expedia, 23 kg checked bag included. Ticket managed by Expedia.
Confirmed subtotal: CA$5,327.08 (international flights, JA5420, JA5153, Spanish Adventure, and three hotels).
Canadian reciprocity entry fee: COP 256,000 (~CA$85), payable in advance online on migracioncolombia.gov.co or by card at immigration on arrival.
Estimated remaining, including the entry fee: ≈CA$257 with the solo private transfer (~CA$172 / COP 400,000), or ≈CA$98 with the bus (~CA$13 / ~COP 30,000). Ground transport (airport taxis, buses, metro, Zipaquirá day transport — roughly COP 300,000–400,000 / ~CA$130–175 total) is NOT included in those figures.

Priority: Both domestic flights are booked and paid. Confirm the New Year's Eve dinner or party next.

Spanish Adventure School

San Carlos is the immersion anchor: arrive directly from the airport, then let the school structure two weeks of language, nature, and Antioquian culture.



Sat, Dec 5

Depart Canada

Board the booked Air Canada flight from Montréal to Colombia at 23:05.

Sun, Dec 6
Arrival

MDE to San Carlos

- Land at José María Córdova International Airport (MDE) in Rionegro at 09:10.
- Keep a little COP cash on hand for the bus or incidentals, regardless of the transfer choice.
- No shared ride is currently confirmed around the ~09:00 arrival.
- According to the school's email, it will confirm the transfer arrangement on Friday, Dec 4, and update you directly; no decision is needed before then.
- If no shared option is available, choose between the private transfer (COP 400,000 solo) and the bus via Terminal del Norte (~COP 30,000, 3.5–4 hours). The school will send clear bus instructions if you choose it.
- Check into Spanish Adventure and attend evening orientation.

Cash plan — San Carlos Servibanca ATM

Withdraw the COP 4,090,000 school balance in San Carlos

Use the Servibanca ATM at **Cra. 20 #19-69** on Monday or Tuesday — the school collects payment in its office on Wednesday.

- International cards can withdraw up to **COP 2,000,000 per transaction**, so three withdrawals cover the balance: 2M + 2M + 90k.
- From the Wealthsimple cash/prepaid account: no withdrawal or foreign-exchange fee, and the CA$3,000 daily limit is sufficient. The Servibanca ATM's foreign-card fee is estimated at COP 22,000-27,000 per withdrawal (about CA$28-35 total for the three withdrawals).
- MDE airport ATMs are only for small journey cash (bus ~COP 30,000 + incidentals), not the school balance.

Decline CAD conversion; withdraw in Colombian pesos.

Two weeks in San Carlos

Spanish Adventure — Confirmed Booking & Payment

Check-in: Sunday, Dec 6, 2026 · **Duration:** 2 weeks
Room: Private room with a queen-size bed and private bathroom with hot water.

COP 4,190,000	COP 100,000	COP 4,090,000
Total (~CA$1,805)	Deposit paid (~CA$43)	Balance due (~CA$1,762)

The total combines the two-week Adventure package (**COP 3,200,000**) and the private-room upgrade of COP 495,000 per week for two weeks (**COP 990,000**).

- Pay the remaining balance in the school office on Wednesday, by cash or card.
- The 4% card fee is confirmed by the school (via email, Oct 2026): card total **COP 4,253,600**. Cash is the primary plan (see withdrawal plan above). Fallback: pay by Wealthsimple Visa credit card — 2% cash back and no foreign transaction fee bring the net cost of the 4% fee to ~**COP 78,500** (~**CA$34**).
- Big Saturday adventures, laundry per load, and bar items are paid on Saturdays, cash only.

Mon, Dec 7 - Sat, Dec 19

Two weeks of immersion and adventure

Intensive morning Spanish classes pair with afternoon river trekking, tubing, and visits to La Resbalosa and La Vieja waterfalls. The school-organized weekend includes Guatapé and El Peñol - climb the 740-step rock and explore the town's colorful zócalos.

Sun, Dec 20

Direct bus to Medellín

Leave from San Carlos's main square for Terminal del Norte. Allow about 3.5-4 hours; estimated fare COP 30,000 / US$8. Check into the Golden Valley Hotel in El Poblado.

Cash, not credit: Do not use the Wealthsimple Visa Infinite credit card for an ATM withdrawal. It counts as a cash advance with approximately 21% interest from day one.

Do not backtrack on arrival - private transfer only: The private transfer goes directly from MDE in Rionegro to San Carlos without backtracking through Medellín. The bus fallback instead goes via Terminal del Norte in Medellín.

Medellín

Golden Valley Hotel

PAID

El Poblado · Calle 9 #43C-32, Medellín, Antioquia 050022
Dec 20-24, 2026 · 4 nights · Executive Suite
CA$269.32 total paid · breakfast included

Four nights balance the city's transformation story, world-famous Christmas lights, street art, and valley views before the coast.



Sun, Dec 20
Evening

Arrive and see the Christmas lights

Check in, have dinner in El Poblado or Laureles, then stroll Parques del Río for the Alumbrados Navideños holiday installations.

Mon, Dec 21

Historic downtown and Metrocable

Take the Metro to Parque Berrío. Visit Plaza Botero's 23 bronze statues and Museo de Antioquia, then ride Metrocable Line K from Acevedo to Santo Domingo for hillside views.

Tue, Dec 22

Comuna 13 and Provenza

9:30 AM - Graffiti Tour Comuna 13 Magical by Aic Tour (2.5 hrs; ends ~12:00 PM). Meet at the main exit of San Javier metro station.
4:00 PM - The Great Poblado Free Tour: from Provenza to Manila by Beyond Colombia (2.5-3 hrs; ends ~7:00 PM). Meet at El Social Tienda Mixta in Provenza; look for the red umbrella. Dinner and drinks follow in Provenza / El Poblado.
Both tours were booked Oct 6 via GuruWalk; booking is free, with a pay-what-you-want tip at the end. Tip guidance: COP 30,000-50,000 (CA$13-22) per tour, cash only; both guides accept cash tips at the end.

Wed, Dec 23

Parque Arví or botanical gardens

Continue by cable car to Parque Arví for forest trails and local food markets. The city alternative is Jardín Botánico followed by Mercado del Río.

Confirmed hotel: Golden Valley Hotel in El Poblado is paid for all four nights. The Executive Suite and breakfast are included.

Cartagena

Hotel Don Pedro de Heredia

CONFIRMED

Walled City / Centro Histórico · Calle Primera de Badillo #35-74
Dec 24-28, 2026 · 4 nights · **COP 1,200,000 (~CA$517)** · pay at hotel
Breakfast included · in-room safe



Thu, Dec 24
Christmas Eve

Fly to the coast and celebrate Nochebuena

A week before, on Dec 17, Golden Valley Hotel is messaged to confirm Dec 24 breakfast hours, an early takeaway before the ~06:00 departure, and booking the 06:00 airport taxi (reconfirm at the front desk on Dec 23). Leave the Golden Valley Hotel in Medellín in the morning, aiming to be at Medellín airport by about 07:00. Flight JA5420 departs 09:03 and lands in Cartagena at 10:17. Arrive mid-morning and drop bags at Hotel Don Pedro de Heredia (room likely ready around 15:00), then spend the day in the Walled City. Boarding pass must be re-issued with the new times before travel (schedule change notified Oct 27, 2026; booking ref U6CV6S). Christmas Eve dinner: **La Vitrola, 9:00 PM — RESERVED.** Live Cuban band during dinner seatings. Dress code: long pants, no shorts.

Fri, Dec 25
Christmas Day

Slow Christmas Day in the Walled City

Cathedral, Santo Domingo church, Plaza Bolívar, Clock Tower; coffee at Ábaco bookstore-café. Afternoon: walk the city walls + Las Bóvedas artisan shops. (Several museums are closed or on reduced hours today.) Sunset drinks on the Movich Hotel rooftop. Easy dinner around Plaza Santo Domingo.

Sat, Dec 26

A full day of the city's icons

San Felipe Castle at opening (~8:00 AM, before the heat). Naval Museum of the Caribbean + San Pedro Claver church and museum. Lunch + siesta break. Zenú Gold Museum + Inquisition Palace (Plaza Bolívar). Evening in Getsemaní: dinner (Celele is the candidate — not booked, decision pending; tasting menu COP 465,000 per person if chosen) → cocktails at Alquímico → Plaza de la Trinidad.

Sun, Dec 27

Getsemaní street art and sunset

Getsemaní street art in daylight: Calle de la Sierpe murals, Callejón Angosto, Plaza de la Trinidad. Lunch in Getsemaní (Demente). Emerald Museum; last pass at Las Bóvedas; pack. Sunset at Café del Mar on the wall. Early night — flight to Bogotá tomorrow at 8:29 AM.

Bogotá and New Year's

Hotel Saint Simon

PAID

Zona T / Chapinero · Carrera 14 #81-34, Bogotá
Dec 28, 2026-Jan 2, 2027 · 5 nights · Standard Double Room
CA$204 total paid on Hotels.com · CA$64.07/night minus CA$116.35 Hotels.comCash · breakfast included



Mon, Dec 28

Arrive, then a light Botero afternoon

Wake ~5:15–5:30 and leave the hotel ~6:00 for the booked JetSMART JA5153 flight from Cartagena (8:29 a.m. → 10:05 a.m., nonstop). Reach Hotel Saint Simon around 11:30, leave bags with the 24-hour reception and luggage storage, then take a light La Candelaria stroll and visit the Botero Museum (open Mondays, 9:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m.; free entry). Return around 3:00 p.m. to check in, rest, and have an early night.

Tue, Dec 29

Gold Museum and La Candelaria

Visit the Gold Museum (Museo del Oro), then continue through La Candelaria's remaining sights, including Plaza de Bolívar and the cathedral. The Gold Museum is closed Mondays and the Botero Museum is closed Tuesdays (hours verified Oct 4, 2026), so the museums are split across Dec 28 and 29.

2:00 PM — Bogotá Graffiti Tour (the original, artist-run tour) — BOOKED, booking reference BGT-2EE664-20261023. Meets at Parque de los Periodistas, La Candelaria — look for the blue umbrella. About 2.5 hours. Nothing paid yet: suggested donation US$17 / COP 60,000 in cash to the guide on the day.

Wed, Dec 30

Zipaquirá Salt Cathedral

Take a day trip about 1.5 hours north to the underground cathedral built inside an ancient salt mine.

Thu, Dec 31
New Year's Eve

Chapinero and Zona T celebration

Explore Chapinero cafés, then New Year's Eve at Andrés D.C. (Calle 82 #12-21, near the hotel) — "Año Nuevo Vida Nueva 2026-2027" (announced Oct 26, 2026): entry Thu, Dec 31, 7:00 PM until dawn, music by Los 50 de Joselito, adults only. Tickets: bar COP 340,000 / table COP 390,000 per person, including two starters, a main, a dessert, a glass of champagne and the traditional año viejo kit; drinks extra; non-refundable, limited spots. Book by sending personal details to the venue for a payment link (12 hours to pay). Nothing booked yet — decision pending.

Fri, Jan 1

Monserrate hike

Hike up Monserrate to 3,152 m, packing a warm layer and taking the altitude steadily. After four days in Bogotá, this is better acclimatized than hiking on arrival day after a 5:15 a.m. wake-up. Recheck New Year's Day operating hours.

Sat, Jan 2

Fly home

Leave Saint Simon by 11:00-11:30 for El Dorado Airport. Board Avianca AV200 at 14:00.

Booking and execution checklist

Lock in the time-sensitive pieces first, then reconfirm holiday operations and final logistics close to departure.

- [ ] **Holiday dining** — BY NOVEMBER

  Christmas Eve dinner is done — La Vitrola, Dec 24, 9:00 PM, reserved. Still to do: decide and book the Andrés D.C. New Year's Eve party (tickets on sale now; bar COP 340,000 / table COP 390,000 per person — see Dec 31 for full details).

- [ ] **Arrival cash** — ON ARRIVAL

  Small amount at MDE (bus ~COP 30,000 + incidentals). Withdraw the COP 4,090,000 school balance from the Servibanca ATM in San Carlos (Cra. 20 #19-69) on Mon/Tue — school collects Wednesday.

- [ ] **Check-Mig** — 72-1 HOURS BEFORE

  Complete the free Check-Mig form between 72 hours and 1 hour before the December 5 flight, and save or print the confirmation.

- [ ] **Canadian reciprocity entry fee** — BEFORE DEPARTURE

  Pay the 256,000 COP (~CA$85) fee online in advance at https://apps.migracioncolombia.gov.co/registro/public/formularioRegistro.jsf?tramite=7. It can also be paid by card at immigration on arrival.

Connectivity — eSIM (all free via credit card, nothing to buy)

- **Dec 5:** activate GigSky 1 GB → valid Dec 5–19 (San Carlos)
- **Dec 25:** activate GigSky 10 GB → valid Dec 25–Jan 8 (cities, Christmas & New Year)
- **Dec 20:** activate Flexiroam 1 GB → valid Dec 20–24 (must be used before end of 2026)
- **Spare:** second GigSky 1 GB

VAT at hotels. At check-in, use a foreign card and present your passport for the foreign-tourist exemption from Colombia's 19% value-added tax.

Altitude. Bogotá is around 2,640 m and Monserrate around 3,150 m. Move Monserrate to another day if symptoms appear.

Holiday hours. Recheck Dec 25 and Jan 1 operating hours for the castle, museums, restaurants, and other indoor venues.

Airport timing. José María Córdova Airport is outside central Medellín; allow extra road time for the Dec 24 flight.

Photography: Tourlane · Provincia ABT · Vivir en El Poblado · WallpaperAccess · Viajando.travel

All unbooked times, costs, holiday hours, and activity examples should be reconfirmed with providers before purchase or travel.