JOURNEY
LATIN AMERICA



PRIVATE JOURNEYS WITH JOURNEY LATIN

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK COLOMBIA: SAN AGUSTIN AND THE AMAZON

12 days from **£3,800pp**

COLOMBIA / BOGOTA / SAN AGUSTIN, POPAYAN AND CALI / THE COLOMBIAN AMAZON / THE AMAZON



WITH OVER 40 YEARS EXPERIENCE, NO-ONE KNOWS LATIN AMERICA LIKE WE DO

EXPERIENCE SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY

WHY US

We are the UK's No.1 specialist in travel to Latin America and have been creating award-winning holidays to every corner of the region for over four decades; we pride ourselves on being the most knowledgeable people there are when it comes to travel to Central and South America and passionate about it too.

OUR JOURNEY

As our name suggests, we are single-minded about Latin America. This is what sets us apart from other travel companies – and what allows us to offer you not just a holiday but the opportunity to experience something extraordinary on inspiring journeys throughout Mexico, Central and South America.

WE LOVE LATIN AMERICA

- A passion for the region runs through all we do
- All our Consultants have lived or travelled extensively in Latin America
- Up-to-the-minute knowledge underpinned by 40 years' experience

TRAVEL WITH CONFIDENCE

- Fully bonded and licensed
- ATOL-protected
- On your side when it matters
- Book with confidence, knowing every penny is secure

THE REAL LATIN AMERICA

- Our insider knowledge helps you go beyond the guidebooks
- We hand-pick hotels with character and the most rewarding excursions
- Let us show you the Latin America we know and love

OVERVIEW & OUTLINE ITINERARY

An innovative holiday to southern Colombia with the mysterious pre-Columbian statues of San Agustin, colonial city Popáyan and the remote communities of Amazonia.

DAY 1	**Arrive in Bogotá, connect to Neiva and continue by road to Villa Vieja.**
DAY 2	**Boat trip on the Magdalena River, continue by road to San Agustin.**
DAY 3	**Explore San Agustín Archaeological Park.**
DAY 4	**Optional excursions in San Agustín.**
DAY 5	**Drive to Popayán via Purace National Park**
DAY 6	**Visit Guambiano communities; walking tour of Popayán.**
DAY 7	**Fly to Bogotá.**
DAY 8	**Walking tour of Bogotá and Gold Museum.**
DAY 9	**Fly to Leticia and continue by boat to your jungle lodge.**
DAY 10	**Visit Mocagua indigenous community and canoe ride**
DAY 11	**Visit Puerto Narino and Lake Tarapoto**
DAY 12	**Fly to Bogotá and connect with international flight.**

ITINERARY

This inspiring tour of San Agustín plunges you into the unique cultures of historical and modern day Colombia, travelling by road through exquisite natural landscapes. From the quirky little town of Villa Vieja on the banks of Rio Magdalena admire the star-speckled skies of the Tatacoa Desert and travel on through spectacular mountain scenery to San Agustín where fascinating pre-Columbian statues dot the fertile countryside of coffee and cattle farms.

Continue by road to Popayán, a restored Spanish colonial city of graceful white colonnaded buildings, from where you can visit the villages of the Guambiano indians, a community with a proud heritage.

Then fly to Leticia in the Colombian Amazon. While sharing a common culture with the Amazon region in the neighbouring countries, life here has a personality of its own. As well as looking out for monkeys, parrots and pink dolphins, you will visit charming and welcoming indigenous communities, with a chance to admire of even buy some of the work of their talented artisans.

DAY 1

Arrive in Bogotá, connect to Neiva and continue by road to Villa Vieja.



The early morning flight to Neiva takes an hour. On arrival you'll be met by our representative and driven to Villa Vieja (37km).

It is a surprise to come across what appears to be a desert in the context of the Andean tropical rain and cloud forest. It's a scorchingly hot region, with towering red rocks spliced through by dry canyons, and sun-bleached lava flows, dotted with cacti. This 'desert' is a result of particular meteorological conditions; the area is not huge but big enough for you to feel overwhelmed by the extremity of the place.

It's a short drive from Villa Vieja to the Tatacoa Desert. You'll have a gentle sunset stroll through an area of bright rust red rock (Laberintos de Cusco), undulating with canyon-like rucks over which short walking trails have been devised. You may also be attracted by an optional visit to the Astronomy Observatory 6km from Villa Vieja as star-gazing in the unpolluted skies can be rewarding on a clear night. (July-October best).

DAY 2

Boat trip on the Magdalena River, continue by road to San Agustin.



The Magdalena River is one of Colombia's great waterways, and for centuries boating along it was the only means of transport between isolated communities. The river slices northwards through the Andes for over 1,500km to the Caribbean Sea. It's no surprise that it's much loved, visited and respected by Colombians.

The Magdalena is navigable by small craft here, and a motorised canoe ride from Villa Vieja is a pleasant way to familiarise yourself with the river as here the waters are tranquil and the young river is not too wide. Along the banks are fields of crops such as sugar cane and pasture fringed by tropical vegetation. It's a peaceful ride along one of the world's greatest rivers more than a wildlife spotting expedition but you may spot iguanas, birds such as fish eagles, cormorants, orioles, garzas, swallows, and fishermen.

Continue by road to San Agustin (5 hours): the verdant landscape becoming increasingly hilly and scenic. San Agustin is a typical Spanish colonial style town, centred on a small leafy main square with a brick church and a bustling market on Sunday and Monday. Architecture follows the usual attractive colonial pattern of whitewashed facades, tiled roofs and overhanging wooden balconies.

DAY 3

Explore San Agustín Archaeological Park.



With your expert guide, you'll visit the archaeological park of San Agustín, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It has the largest group of religious monuments and megalithic statues in South America. Gods and mythical animals, represented in styles from abstract to realist, were created by a mysterious Andean culture between the 1st and 8th centuries. The site, which includes an excellent museum, is spread out over a wide area of green, forested hillsides, with impressive views. You will also visit the statues at El Tablón, as well as La Chaquira, a towering rock face onto which deities have been deeply carved. The views from here stretch over the Magdalena River and are truly spectacular.

DAY 4

Optional excursions in San Agustín.

There are several optional activities you can do today, such as visiting the Magdalena Gorge, a coffee farm or a sugarcane plantation. For those with a particular interest in archaeology, we can arrange for you to visit Alto de los Idolos, a group of 23 statues, some as tall as 5m, and with arguably the most dramatic and scenic location of the lot. Nearby is another interesting site, Alto de las Piedras, which comprises a huddle of statues some of which still sport the colours they were originally painted in.



DAY 5

Drive to Popayán via Purace National Park

A beautiful and varied road climbs from San Agustin to Purace National Park (3,000m) which has as its focal point the domed volcano Purace, before descending to the city of Popayán, the cultural Mecca of the south.

Popayán is a stately colonial city where the centre, restored following earthquakes, manifests a pleasing uniformity of whitewash and Spanish baroque style. Grandiose two storeyed, Andalusian-style edifices line the cobbled streets connecting attractive squares. Historic institutions add to the town's gravitas and the cathedral has been beautifully restored.

But it is not an overly serious town: the people are friendly and there is a love of song and dance. You'll see many students hanging around (there are several universities, art and music colleges) which creates a youthful and vibrant feel. For many years during the troubles the city was off limits; now it is safe but still relatively undiscovered by tourists, a pleasant change from other very popular colonial cities in Latin America.

DAY 6

Visit Guambiano communities; walking tour of Popayán.



The Guambiano Indians still wear their colourful costume, a traditional, dark blue poncho and distinctive black hats. The kaleidoscopic colours of the traditional Tuesday market at Silvia will dazzle you but it's definitely worth visiting the area on other days to observe the Guambianos going about the business of their daily lives in gorgeous landscapes of bright green craggy hills, lakes and waterfalls.

Return to Popayán in the afternoon for a walking tour around the city's historic core. You will visit cloisters in former religious buildings now occupied by colleges, public offices and even prisons: you can't go in on your own to look, the guide gains you entry which is a good reason for taking an official tour rather than exploring independently. There is also an option to climb Morro Tulcán for views over the city, and visit a famous biscuit factory, whose elderly owner is a local celebrity.

DAY 7

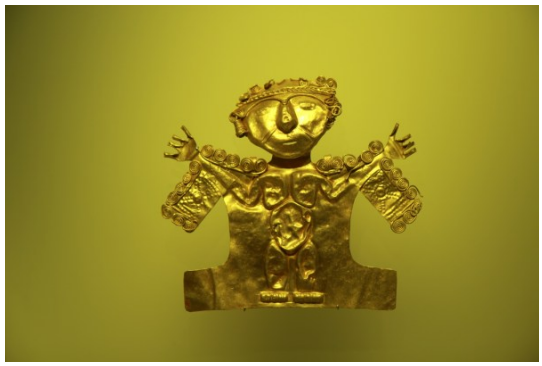
Fly to Bogotá.



Fly to Bogotá (1 hour). Founded in 1598, the effervescent capital sits on an upland Andean plateau. It's a city of striking contrasts; skyscrapers and colonial single-storey houses, fast highways and cobbled lanes with chaotic traffic and the occasional mule cart. There are humble homes clinging to the mountain-sides and affluent tree-lined residential boulevards; crowded alleys and large parks; a cultured middle class jostling with workers and their families from all over Colombia. The night scene is lively with music clubs, bars and cafés spilling out on to the pavements. There is a cable car to the peak of Monserrate which glowers over the city and offers panoramic views.

DAY 8

Walking tour of Bogotá and Gold Museum.



Your walking tour begins in the vast Plaza de Bolivar (the city's main square), which features contemporary government buildings dwarfed by the imposing cathedral. Lying off the square is a grid of streets constituting the Spanish colonial part of the city known as 'La Candelaria'. White and colour-washed buildings have tiled roofs and attractive overhanging balconies. Many now also host trendy coffee bars and restaurants, as well as many of the city's museums.

Your tour also includes time at the Museo del Oro (gold museum), recognised as being one of the best in Latin America and a must even for those who don't usually love museums. The collection is staggering in its opulence, there are more than 35,000 well displayed exhibits all fashioned with immense skill by pre-Columbian craftsmen.

DAY 9

Fly to Leticia and continue by boat to your jungle lodge.



Fly to Leticia (2 hours), a port on the Amazon River and on the border with Brazil and Peru, offering the opportunity to visit three countries in one day.

Your lodge is 60km upriver from Leticia and the journey by public boat takes about 1½ hours. Shared with members of the local community the boats will make several stops en route offering glimpses into life in these tiny villages. It's a scenic journey, and while there aren't opportunities to stop and spot wildlife, you may see parakeets and egrets and if you are really lucky pink or grey dolphins.

Settle into your cabin at the lodge and then go on a guided walk through the surrounding rainforest with a local indigenous guide.

DAY 10

Visit Mocagua indigenous community and canoe ride

Visit Mocagua, an indigenous community a short walk from the lodge. You'll see the homes of the indian inhabitants, the Baptist churches, the school and medical facilities, all modest one storey wooden buildings typical of the Amazon, connected by narrow paths – there are no motorised vehicles here. Fruit trees and blossoming plants enliven the tropical aspect.

Unique to Mocagua are the paintings of birds and animals on the houses. Visit basket and ceramic making workshops; there is no pressure to buy, the welcome is genuine. Some enterprising Mocaguan residents have opened restaurants in their homes and you'll have a simple home-cooked lunch in one of them.

Return to the lodge by canoe, in time for dinner and a guided hike to discover the nocturnal activity in the forest.



DAY 11

Visit Puerto Narino and Lake Tarapoto

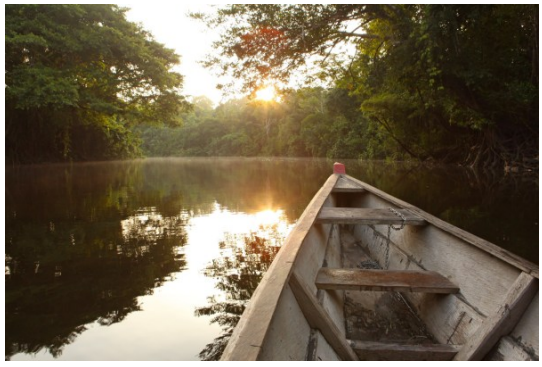
Puerto Nariño is an attractive little port a short distance up river from your lodge. Founded in 1961 and populated by local indigenous Ticuna, Yagua and Cocana people, the place is famed for its eco-friendliness. It's a very relaxing place with no vehicular traffic; just paths lined with flowering plants and thatched wooden houses. Take a short boat ride through the flooded forest to tranquil Lake Tarapoto in search of elusive pink dolphins before returning to your lodge.



DAY 12

Fly to Bogotá and connect with international flight.

Return to Leticia by boat. Discuss with your guide how best to spend any free time before travelling back to the airport for your flight to Bogotá, with connecting international flight.



INCLUDED EXCURSIONS

- Villa Vieja: Tatacoa Desert walk
- Villa Vieja: Magdalena River boat trip
- San Agustín: tour of archaeological park
- Popayán: Guambiano communities
- Popayán: Walking tour
- Bogotá: Walking tour with Gold Museum
- Amazon: Guided jungle hikes
- Amazon: Visit to Mocagua indiigenous community
- Amazon: Puerto Narino & Tarapoto Lake

ESSENTIALS

4 domestic flights; 2 scenic private road journeys (5 hours + 8 hours), 2 public boat transfer on the Amazon River (90 mins)

You will stay at small, mid-range, friendly hotels, colonial or modern in style with well-equipped rooms, private bathroom and heating or air-conditioning. In the Amazon you stay at a beautifully crafted rustic jungle lodge.

Breakfast daily; full board days 10 & 11.

We carefully select our local partners, most of whom we have worked with for many years. Their English-speaking guides understand the expectations of our clients very well, and are consistently singled out for praise by clients on their return. Owing to the underdeveloped tourist infrastructure in these emerging destinations, you may have a translator as well as a local guide. In the Amazon you have the attention of an English speaking guide to accompany you on your adventures who will also translate for local indigenous guides.

12 days, 11 nights: Villa Vieja 1; San Agustin 3; Popayan 2; Bogotá 2; Amazon 3.

The unit of currency in Colombia is the Colombian peso.

Cash machines are available in all major cities and towns of Colombia, and so taking a debit or credit card with a PIN number is the most convenient way of withdrawing money while on your trip, and in most shops and restaurants you can also pay by card. However, since cards can get lost, damaged, withheld or blocked, you should not rely exclusively on a card to access funds.

We recommend that additionally you take a reasonable quantity of US dollars cash which you can exchange into local currency. Dollar bills should be in good condition, soiled or torn bills may be refused. You can take sterling, but the exchange rate is not always competitive or even available, restricting the number of places where you can change money. Never change money on the street.

It is very difficult to give a guideline for essential expenses but a budget of around US$45 per day should cover the cost of meals not included in the holiday itinerary, drinks and the odd souvenir. Eat at the best restaurants and you will pay considerably more.

Tips are welcomed and local guides often rely on their tip as a significant proportion of their income. For a guide who is with you the whole day, a tip of about $US 25 pp each (if there are two of you) is appropriate. Your driver would normally expect half that amount. If you have the same driver for several days, maybe $US50pp for the period would be appropriate.

Most service industry workers will expect a tip of some kind and so it is useful to have spare change for hotel porters, taxi drivers and the like. It is common to leave 10 – 12% in restaurants.

Travel insurance is essential.

Details of our recommended policy can be found on our Travel Insurance page.

If you have purchased your flights through Journey Latin America, the international departure tax is usually included in the ticket.

TRIP SUITABILITY

Generally this holiday is suitable for most visitors, including families with children. Walking around the archaeological site at San Agustin does involve some steep hills on rural paths which can become slippery after rain. so you should be fit enough for a 4 hour exploration. Should you have a disability, please contact us. Wheelchair ramps are gradually being inserted at San Agustin.

The dry season in highland Colombia is from December until March and then June to September. Bogotá has a spring-like climate and can be chilly at night.and the San Agustin area can be hot during the day, up to 28°C; it can rain at any time of year. In the Amazon, the wettest period is October – June, also the period of highest cloud cover, but it can rain at any time. The sunniest but also the hottest weather is in June-September. Temperatures throughout the year seldom fall below 30°C, with occasional lows of 20°C

The only day when you are at an altitude of over 2.500m is when you are in Bogota. You may notice the effect of high altitude; symptoms vary: most common are mild headaches and breathlessness. If you drink plenty of water and allow your body to acclimatise – don't over exert yourself – you will minimise your chances of being adversely affected.

Temperatures will be relatively high throughout this holiday. Bring plenty of light clothing and good, comfortable walking shoes. A couple of warm items and a good waterproof jacket or umbrella are also useful. We suggest that you plan to 'layer' your clothing; it is easier and more efficient to put on a couple of light layers than one thick jumper. Sandals are a good informal option for evenings. Protection against the sun (sunblock, sun hat) and mosquito repellant are essential and you should bring swimwear.

Please get in touch with the office before departure if you have any doubts.

Preventative vaccinations are recommended against the following: typhoid; polio; tetanus; hepatitis A. You should consult your GP for specific requirements, including advice on yellow fever and malaria tablets.

You can also find helpful information on the Masta Travel Health website.

Holders of a full British passport do not require a visa, although passports must be valid for at least 6 months after the trip begins. Anyone with a different nationality should enquire with us or check with the relevant consulate.

If flying to the US, or via the US you will need to fill in your online ESTA application.

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GET IN TOUCH WITH US...

Our friendly, knowledgeable team of travel experts are always happy to chat about holiday ideas and share helpful advice. Give us a call today and begin planning your perfect trip to Latin America.

0208 747 8315

OPENING HOURS

Monday – Friday: 9am – 6pm
Saturday & Sunday: Closed

SEND US AN EMAIL

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