BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO BOGOTÁ
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**Transport** - Taxis are cheap and easy, and the bus system is even cheaper and is still pretty easy

**Tips:**
- Use Google Maps or MoovIt to understand the bus system. The two types of buses we recommend are the Transmilenio (the rapid bus system) and the SITP (which operate regular city bus routes). We do not recommend using the older buses, as they do not take the SITP fare cards and do not have fixed stops.
- Buy a bus card at any Transmilenio station, or at any Portal (the big stations where routes begin and end). The Transmilenio costs 2,400 pesos (less than $1) and is often faster than taking a taxi because the Transmilenio uses dedicated lines. SITP buses cost 2,000 pesos.
- For nighttime transport, we recommend taxis and ride sharing apps.
- Taxi apps, including Easy Taxi, Tappsi, Cabify, and Uber are all very common. Uber and Cabify use a credit card and the others allow cash payments.

**Security** - Although a safe place, petty theft is common in Bogota

**Tips:**
- Never leave your purse or bag hanging off the back of a chair or unattended
- Be cautious about letting others see large amounts of cash in a wallet
- Use an app like Easy Taxi, Tappsi or Uber rather than hailing a taxi off the street. This particularly applies in the Zona Rosa, Parque 93, and the historical Candelaria district. If you don't have access to those apps, almost all restaurants and cafes will be willing to call a taxi for you. The risks from hailing taxis include faulty taxi meters, fake bills, or getting scammed. The most likely scenario is either that you are quoted an incorrect amount for your ride or are accused of giving fake bills to your driver as payment.
- When in touristy areas, such as downtown or in La Calendaria, be more aware of your wallet and other belongings. Pickpockets have been known to go after the unaware traveler.

**Weather** - Bogota is eternal fall

**Tips:**
- Bogotanos wear fall clothes year-round, even when it seems too warm for them. Wearing shorts or sandals will immediately identify you as a tourist.
- Layers are key - the average temperature in Bogota is in the mid-60s year round (15°C). When it's sunny that feels very warm, and when it's cloudy it'll feel pretty cool.
- Umbrellas, sunscreen, and sunglasses - try not to leave the house without all three! Since we are at 8,500 feet your skin will be more sensitive to the sun, and because of the city's location the weather is unpredictable. It's regularly very sunny in one part of the city while pouring rain just a few kilometers away.

- The altitude is 8,500 feet. You may have headaches or trouble breathing (this seems to happen more at night) when you first arrive. Drink lots of water, take medication as necessary, and talk to Global Initiatives staff if you are worried about your reaction to the altitude change.

### Food Tips:

- Tap water is safe to drink and street food is generally safe. If you have had issues in the past, or haven't traveled outside your own country before, it's probably best to stick to bottled water and food from more upscale places. But in general both are perfectly safe - Jen and Camilo started their daughter on tap water at 6 months old with no issues, and have exclusively consumed tap water since arriving four years ago. Talk to us if you are nervous or want more information. If you travel outside of Bogota to more rural areas it's best to stick to bottled water.

- At Corpas, you will have the following food options
  - Hospital Cafeteria: breakfast and lunch options are good and cheap (around $3,50), and they are similar to a Colombian homemade meal.
  - University Cafeteria: the options are also pretty good and cheap ($3,75), and similar to a homemade meal. In this Cafeteria, you will also find snacks such as muffins, cookies, chips, Colombian snacks, fruit, and cheese, among others.
  - Crossing the street, you will find other restaurant options, most of which offer cheap breakfast and lunch menus.
  - Additionally, the Global Initiatives Department often brings Food Trucks to the campus, offering various options to students, professors, and administrators. These Food Trucks help us collect money for the students that will engage in an international rotation.

- Recommended gastronomic zones include:
  - Parque de la 93: Parque de la 93 is a large area surrounded by a wide variety of restaurants. You can find restaurants that offer lunch menus, as well as more expensive restaurants. The offer includes: peruvian, asian, colombian, international, mediterranean, and fast food, among others.
  - Zona G: This zone is located between Carrera 7ma and Carrera 4ta (7th and 4th avenues), and from Calle 76 to Calle 65 (76th to 65th streets). It has a broad gastronomic offer, and prices vary depending on the type of restaurant.
- **Zona Rosa and Zona T:** This zone is located between Carrera 15 and Carrera 11, and from Calle 85 to Calle 82. It is famous for the nightlife, since there is a wide variety of pubs, bars, and nightclubs. There are many restaurants as well. Some of the pubs we recommend are Bogota Beer Company, Irish Pub, and la Casa de la Cerveza.
- **La Macarena:** also called Zona M, it comprises Carrera 4A from Calle 30 to Calle 26.
- **Usaquén:** this is a popular area, usually full of people on Sundays. It is located north of the city, between Carrera 7ma and carrera 5ta, from Calle 120 to Calle 117. There is a park in the center of the area, as well as many restaurants and street activities such as storytellers and a Flea Market.

- **Recommended restaurants include:**

  **Cheap and nice**
  - **Crepes & Waffles:** this restaurant offers a broad variety of crepes, salads, and pannecooks. It is also well known for its desserts and, especially, for its ice cream. We highly recommend eating here, since it offers big meals for a cheap price (a complete meal, with a drink and a dessert, may cost around $10). You can find this restaurant in almost every big mall and each gastronomic zone mentioned above.
  - **Wok:** Wok is an asian cuisine restaurant. It offers sushi, fried rice, sashimi, meat, chicken, fish... It also has good desserts and many vegetarian options. A complete meal can cost around $13, and Wok has many restaurants around Bogota, including one in Parque de la 93, one in Zona T, and in some Malls.
  - **Conosur**
  - **Archie’s**
  - **Freshii**
  - **Al Agua Patos (also good for Brunch)**
  - **Vapiano**
  - **Masa (also good for Brunch)**

  **Colombian food**
  - **Andrés Carne de Res:** this is the restaurant that every foreigner visits when they come to Bogota. It offers mainly colombian meals, but it is also well known for being a highly rated nightclub. The original restaurant and nightclub is located outside Bogota, in a small town called Chia. An uber from Bogota costs around 15 dollars. The other big restaurant and nightclub is inside El Retiro mall, which is in Zona Rosa. They also have small food points in many Malls, called “La Plaza de Andrés”.

  Other Colombian restaurants are:  
  - **Restaurante Club Colombia (we recommend the Sunday brunch)**
  - **Local by Rausch**
  - **El Poblado**
Las Margaritas  
La Puerta Falsa  
Central Cevicheria

Upscale
- Upper Side
- Tamarine Asian Cuisine
- Astrid y Gastón
- Harry Sasson
- Criterion
- Balzac

Colombian Coffee
- Juan Valdez: Juan Valdez is the most famous Colombian coffee producer. It is known for its tradition and for the variety of coffees it offers. There is one Juan Valdez in almost every corner, and they sell excellent coffee.
- Oma: Oma is also a big coffee shop that you can also find in almost every corner. Prices are slightly cheaper than Juan Valdez, and coffee is excellent.
- Tostao: this young coffee producer has flooded the city with shops during the last year. It is recognized for its low prices: one big cup of coffee costs $0.85. They only accept cash.
- For the true coffee lover, boutique coffee shops and stalls can be found throughout the city. We recommend Devoción Cafe in the Hilton Hotel, Azahar Café behind Parque 93, Café Cultor at the Bogotá Impact Hub, Catación Pública in Usaquen, Cafe del Eje on 109 street, or Varietale in downtown Bogotá.

Fast food
- Burgers: during the past two years, a burger craze has taken over Bogotá. Some of these include: Home Burgers, Juan Burgers, Chef Burger, Frank Truck, among others. Most of them offer vegetarian burgers as well. The classic colombian burger is **El Corral**.
- There are two parking lots where you can find food trucks. One is located in Calle 100 with Carrera 15, and the other one is in Carrera 9na with Calle 109.

Things to Do:
Museums
We highly recommend visiting the Museo del Oro (Gold Museum), where you can find unique gold pieces from the precolumbian era. The National Museum, a former postcolonial era prison, houses works of art and historical artifacts spanning Colombian history. The Botero Museum, houses works by the renowned Colombian painter, Fernando Botero, as well as his private collection. The MamBo (Modern Art Museum) and Espacio Odeón, both house modern art collections. The Museo del 20 de Julio or Casa del Florero is dedicated to the history of Colombian independence. The National Police Museum displays the history of Colombia’s national police force and has a collection of items confiscated in various police ops. The Quinta de Bolivar, Simon Bolivar’s home in Bogotá, are beautifully restored grounds and gardens and provide a tranquil escape from the busy downtown.

**Parks and Nature**
Aside from Parque de la 93, you can also visit the Parque Nacional, the Parque del Chicó, the Parque El Virrey, and Bogotá’s largest park, Parque Simón Bolívar. For the hiking enthusiasts, you can visit Quebrada la Vieja, Quebrada Las Delicias, Las Moyas, and the Monserrate trail. Check hours before heading out on these hikes.

On Sundays and holidays, nearly 1.5 million Bogotanos take to the streets to enjoy Ciclovia. For over 40 years, many Bogotá’s streets have been shut down to traffic and are left open from 7 am to 2 pm for cyclists, joggers, skaters, and anyone looking to enjoy a stroll around the city. The Bogotá Botanical Garden is another great space to spend an afternoon surrounded by Colombian flora.

**Monserrate**
Monserrate is a famous hill in Bogota. The Church on top of the hill is a pilgrimage site for many Bogotanos. You can either hike the trail or buy a cable car ticket, which costs less than $6 per trip.

**Guided Tours**
Street Food Tour ([www.delamesa.com](http://www.delamesa.com) - $49) - This guided tour will take you through downtown Bogotá on a flavorful expedition where you will try *aromáticas*, *arepa e’huevo*, coffee and other Colombian treats.
Graffiti Tour ([www.bogotagraffiti.com](http://www.bogotagraffiti.com) - $10)- Bogotá’s urban art scene has grown tremendously in the last decade, and this tour, led by street artists, will show you Colombia’s graffiti scene up close.
Biking Tour ([www.bogotabiketours.com/](http://www.bogotabiketours.com/) - $15) - Colombians are avid cyclists, and what better way to discover Bogotá than on two wheels? Experience Bogotá and its culture on a half day tour. The tour company also offers bike rentals to take on Ciclovía.
Free Walking Tour ([http://www.beyondcolombia.com/](http://www.beyondcolombia.com/))
Every day, there is a Free Walking Tour departing from the Museo del Oro at 10am and at 2pm. It lasts for about 3 hours, and you’ll have an insight to La Candelaria historical center and some of the stories behind it. You can easily identify the guide, he holds a red umbrella.

Other tours: [https://www.bogotapass.com/](https://www.bogotapass.com/) and [www.5bogota.com](http://www.5bogota.com).

**Colombian Culture:**

Colombians spend a lot of time with their families, especially on Sundays and holidays. Colombians are warm and welcoming, and are very forgiving of Spanish mistakes. Therefore, feel free to ask people if you are lost or need assistance.

They are also curious about foreigners. Don’t be afraid if people come close to you and start asking questions, especially in touristy areas. They will talk to you in Spanish, and they might try to say some things in English.

**Colombian/Bogotá Slang**

Me regala - Literally, “will you gift me”, is often used not to ask for something for free, but simply to order food
Veci - You’ll likely be called this, short for vecino, or neighbor, in corner stores, street stalls, and other small shops.
Qué hubo - What’s up? How’s it going? - Don’t be surprised if a Bogotano gives you a rapid fire series of greetings. “Hola, qué hubo, qué mas, cómo vas?”
Listo - OK.
Chévere/Bacano - Cool.
Hágale - Let’s do it, let’s go for it.
Pola/Chela/Fria/Birra - All of them mean the same: Beer.
Guaro - Aguardiente, the most typical Colombian liquor. Your night isn’t complete until you’ve ordered at least a few “medias” (half bottles) of guaro
Rumba - (n) party, (v) to party “vámonos de rumba”, ”let’s go party!”
Transmi - Short for Transmilenio
Tipo - Dude

**Phones and data plans**

The major providers in Colombia are Tigo, Claro, Movistar y Virgin Mobile. All of the providers have prepaid SIM cards, which you can purchase for 10.000 to 20.000 pesos and will usually come with some credit included. Data plans are very affordable and can be purchased in hour, day, week, and month increments. Prepaid phone plans can be topped up at most grocery and corner stores, online, or at cell phone stores.
If you don’t have any credit left and need to make an emergency call, many street snack vendors also offer “minutos (cell phone usage by the minute on their phone).