

COLOMBIA RISK ASSESSMENT



City & Country

Bogota, Colombia

Prepared by

Sussex Abroad Office

Before you go –

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office provides travel advice by country. It covers safety and security, local laws and customs, entry requirements, health and natural disasters along with a host of other useful information. We strongly recommend that students read the section related to their destination prior to departure and before undertaking any trip to another part of the county/region

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/>

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) advise against all travel to:

- the port of Buenaventura in the department of Valle de Cauca
- the port of Tumaco in the department of Nariño

The FCO advise against all but essential travel to:

- the departments of Putumayo, Arauca, Caquetá, Guaviare, Guainía, Vichada, and Norte de Santander (except their capital cities, as indicated on the map)
- the department of Cauca (except its capital Popayán and the road between the tourist site of the San Agustín ruins in Huila and Popayán city)
- the department of Chocó (except its capital Quibdó, the whale-watching towns of Nuquí and Bahía Solano, and the tourist site of Capurganá)



- the department of Nariño (except its capital Pasto and the Ipiales border crossing)
- the department of Meta (except its capital Villavicencio, and the tourist site of Caño Cristales); visitors travelling to Caño Cristales should only do so with a reputable tour company travelling by air to and from the town of La Macarena
- within 5km of the Venezuelan border in the departments of La Guajira, César and Boyaca
- rural areas in northern Antioquia, southern Cordoba, southern Valle de Cauca, and southern Bolivar (as indicated on the map)

VISA REGULATIONS

British nationals can enter Colombia for up to 90 days as a visitor without a visa at the discretion of the Colombian Immigration Officer on arrival. You may need to provide evidence of return or onward travel. If you're issued with a Colombian visa with more than 90 days' validity, you must register the visa at a Migración Colombia office or online within 15 days of arrival in Colombia or face fines. Check the latest entry requirements with the [Colombian Consulate General](#) in London before you travel.

You may be able to extend your stay once you are in Colombia by up to 120 days by applying at the immigration office Migración Colombia. As a visitor, you can't remain in Colombia for more than 180 days in any 12 month period. Don't overstay your visa, you will be fined or risk deportation at your own cost.

If you're a British-Colombian dual national, you must enter and leave Colombia using your Colombian passport and Colombian identification card (Cedula).

If you enter Colombia by land you should make sure your passport is stamped by the immigration authorities. Failure to do so may result in a fine on departure. If the immigration office on the border is closed, seek help at the nearest office of Migración Colombia.

Passport validity

Your passport should be valid for a minimum period of 6 months from the date of entry into Colombia.

Departure tax

An airport tax is charged for international departures. The cost is usually included in the price of the airline ticket, but you should check with your airline prior to your travel.

HEALTH

At least 8 weeks before your trip, check the latest country-specific health advice from the [National Travel Health Network and Centre \(NaTHNaC\)](#) on the TravelHealthPro website. Each country-specific page has information on vaccine recommendations, any current health risks or outbreaks, and factsheets with information on staying healthy abroad. Guidance is also available from NHS (Scotland) on the [FitForTravel website](#).

TERRORISM

Terrorists are very likely to try to carry out attacks in Colombia. The threat comes from the National Liberation Army (ELN), dissidents from the demobilising FARC guerrilla group (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), and other illegal armed groups. An improvised explosive device (IED) exploded in the Andino Shopping Centre in Bogota on 17 June 2017. You should always remain vigilant and follow the advice of the local security authorities should an incident occur.

The Colombian Government officially announced the FARC had handed over their weapons on 27 June, marking the end of their status as an armed group.

However, dissident members of the FARC and other illegal armed groups exist, and there are still instances of indiscriminate attacks against public transport, industrial infrastructure (eg oil and energy facilities), government buildings and other state installations.

The principal intended target of these attacks is not usually foreign tourists. However, the pattern of these attacks means that incidents in public spaces and other areas visited by foreigners can't be ruled out. Past methods of attack have included car bombs, grenade attacks and explosive devices left in buildings.

In many areas of Colombia, the security situation can change very quickly. You should pay close attention to warnings issued by the Colombian authorities and monitor this travel advice. You should be particularly cautious and vigilant during any major events.

Type	Nature of the Hazard	Procedures to Minimise Risk
HEALTH	At least 8 weeks before your trip, check the latest country-specific health advice from the National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) on the TravelHealthPro website. Each country-specific page has information on vaccine recommendations, any current health risks or outbreaks, and factsheets with information on staying healthy abroad. Guidance is also available from NHS (Scotland) on the FitForTravel website .	Make sure that you have had all necessary vaccinations in time for your visit.
	Tap water is safe to drink only in Bogota.	You should drink only bottled water and avoid ice in drinks.
	Medical facilities in Colombia vary widely in quality. In large cities and state capitals, private clinics provide good quality care for routine treatments and complex treatment. Make sure you have adequate travel health insurance and accessible funds to cover the cost of any medical treatment abroad and repatriation. Not all travel health insurance policies provide cover for	Make sure you have adequate travel insurance and accessible funds to cover the cost of any medical treatment abroad and repatriation.

	<p>private or emergency medical care so check your policy before travelling. Public health facilities and those in smaller cities are generally ill equipped and poorly funded. Ambulance services in remote areas are unreliable and public hospitals often lack adequate medical supplies.</p>	
	<p>Dengue fever, malaria and yellow fever are present throughout the country, although the coastal and southern states with lower altitudes are the most affected, especially during or shortly after the rainy season between April and November.</p> <p>Cases of Chikungunya virus have been confirmed in Colombia.</p>	<p>You should take steps to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes.</p>
MONEY	<p>US dollars and Euros are widely exchangeable.</p> <p>Credit and Debit cards are widely accepted in Colombia but use with care and keep receipts.</p>	<p>When using an ATM, try to do so during business hours inside a bank, supermarket or large commercial building. Be particularly vigilant before and after using an ATM on the street - robberies are common, especially at night.</p>
DRUGS	<p>Colombian drug trafficking detection methods are sophisticated and anyone attempting to traffic drugs should expect to be arrested. Conviction leads to</p>	<p>Don't get involved with illegal drugs of any kind. Pack your own luggage and keep it with you at all times. Don't carry items for other people.</p>

	severe penalties. British nationals have been arrested and detained for trying to smuggle cocaine out of the country.	
CRIME	Drugs, organised crime and terrorism are inextricably linked. Control of the drugs trade is a major driver of much of the armed conflict. In July 2017 the UN reported that coca cultivation in Colombia had increased by 50% between 2015-16. There's evidence of high levels of coca cultivation in the following Departments in Colombia: Nariño, Cauca, Putumayo, Caquetá, Meta, Guaviare, the Catatumbo region in the Norte de Santander department, northern Antioquia, and southern Bolivar. There's a risk to your safety in any area where coca, marijuana or opium poppies are cultivated and near to cocaine processing labs.	Don't get involved with illegal drugs of any kind.
	Illegal armed groups and criminal gangs are active in all of the Departments where coca is cultivated, processed or transported, as well as in many cities. The risk is particularly significant in rural areas near to the borders with Panama, Venezuela and Ecuador; in the Parque Nacional Natural de La Macarena in the Department of Meta; and the port towns	You should not go to these areas of the country

	<p>of Buenaventura in the Department of Valle de Cauca, Turbo in the Department of Antioquia and Tumaco in the Department of Nariño.</p>	
	<p>Street crime is a problem in major cities, including Bogota, Medellin, Cali and the Caribbean coast. Mugging and pickpocketing can be accompanied by violence. British nationals have been robbed at gun point in the Candelaria area of Bogotá.</p>	<p>Be vigilant, particularly if you are in public places used by foreigners, or near official buildings. Avoid deprived areas of cities. Take care on city streets, especially after dark or if you are on your own. Don't carry large amounts of money or wear valuable watches or jewellery. Avoid using your mobile phone in the street.</p> <p>Where possible, plan how you will travel to and from your destination. Only use pre-booked taxis. Be wary if you are approached by a stranger.</p>
	<p>The British Embassy has received reports of criminals in Colombia using drugs to subdue their victims. This includes the use of scopolamine, which temporarily incapacitates unsuspecting victims. Drugs can be administered through food, drinks, cigarettes, aerosols and even paper flyers. Victims become disoriented quickly and are vulnerable to robbery, sexual assault, rape and other crimes.</p>	<p>Avoid leaving food or drinks unattended and don't take anything from strangers.</p>

	<p>Express kidnappings - short-term opportunistic abductions, aimed at extracting cash from the victim - also occur. Victims can be targeted or selected at random and held while criminals empty their bank accounts with stolen cash cards. Most cases in major cities involve victims that have been picked up by taxis hailed from the street. There have been incidents where those who have resisted the kidnappers' demands have been killed.</p>	<p>Be cautious when withdrawing money from you bank account – try to do this during the da and inside the actual bank. Avoid wearing expensive jewellery and keep an eye on other valuables e.g. computers, mobile phones and cameras.</p>
	<p>Fake police are known to operate in Bogota and elsewhere to conduct scams, eg, asking to inspect money to see if it is counterfeit.</p>	<p>If approached, you should ask to be escorted to the nearest CAI ('Centro de Atencion Inmediata' – local police station).</p>
<p>NATURAL DISASTERS</p>	<p>Earthquakes occur regularly in Colombia. In the event of an earthquake, monitor local media reports and follow the advice of the local authorities.</p>	<p>You can find a real-time earthquake map and further information about earthquakes in Colombia on the website of the US Geological Survey. To learn more about what to do before, during and after an earthquake, visit the website of the US Federal Emergency Management Agency.</p>

	<p>There is a risk of floods and landslides after heavy rains throughout the Colombian Andes.</p>	<p>Seek local advice before travelling on mountain roads after heavy rain in the rainy seasons of April to May and October to November.</p>
	<p>Volcano activity in Colombia is monitored by Ingeominas. If you're planning to visit areas of known volcanic activity, pay careful attention to all warnings and follow the advice of the local authorities. The Nevado Del Ruiz volcano erupted in June 2012. The volcano activity level has since been lowered to Level III (changes in volcanic activity). Since the earthquake on 21 October 2014 in the area of the Chiles Volcano in Cumbal (Nariño department) on the border between Colombia and Ecuador, the Colombian geological authorities have maintained an orange alert in the surrounding area. 12,000 people in southern Nariño were ordered to evacuate their homes because of a possible eruption.</p>	<p>Monitor local media and seek information and advice from the local authorities before travelling on the Pan-American highway, which passes near the volcano. Call #767 for information (in Spanish) from the Colombian Highway Police about road closures.</p>

Please also note and be sensitive to the following:

- The Venezuelan government has closed several major border crossing points between the Venezuelan states of Tachira and Zulia and the Colombian departments of La Guajira and Norte de Santander until further notice due to concerns about

security and smuggling. You should avoid crossing from Colombia into Venezuela by land. Seek up-to-date advice from the local authorities if you're travelling near the border areas affected.

- The security situation can change very quickly in many areas of the country. You should pay close attention to warnings issued by the Colombian authorities. In general, the more remote the area, the greater the potential threat to your safety. You should be particularly cautious and vigilant during any major events and in crowded places.
- Political demonstrations can occur in the capital city of Bogota and throughout the country. These can be confrontational and occasionally turn violent. You should monitor local media and avoid all demonstrations.
- In many rural areas the authority of the Colombian State is limited, and the British Embassy's ability to help British nationals in trouble in these areas will also be limited. If you travel to remote or dangerous areas, seek professional security advice and make arrangements for your security throughout your visit. You should also seek up-to-date advice from the local authorities before each stage of your journey.
- The Pacific coast of Chocó is a popular eco-tourist destination. However, much of Chocó is remote and unsafe. Illegal armed groups are active and involved in the drugs trade throughout the Department and particularly near the border with Panama. On the coast, the towns of Bahia Solano and Nuquí are considered less dangerous though there have been reports of kidnappings. If you intend to travel to these towns, only do so by air and don't travel inland or along the coast out of town.
- If you travel to the 'Lost City' in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, you should only do so as part of an organised tour.
- The archaeological park at San Agustin is located in the department of Huila. The FCO doesn't advise against travel to this department, but the department is known for activity by illegal armed groups, including the FARC. You should enter and leave the park on the main road through Neiva and not by any other routes.
- The tourist site of Caño Cristales is located in the department of Meta, in the Parque Nacional Natural de la Macarena. If you're travelling to Caño Cristales, only do so with a reputable tour company, and travel by air to and from the town of La Macarena.
- Carry a photocopy of the data page and Colombian visa from your passport at all times for identification.
- Homosexuality is legal but not widely accepted, especially in rural areas.