

BOKANA TRAVEL

COLOMBIA

TRAVEL GUIDE 2026

BARRANQUILLA

Here the Magdalena River meets the sea and the city lives its Carnival, UNESCO-recognized heritage of humanity. In 2027, the party runs February 6–9.

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THE ESSENTIALS

BARRANQUILLA: CARNIVAL AND THE RIVER

Barranquilla is the capital of the Atlántico department and the city where the Magdalena River ends its journey in the Caribbean Sea, at Bocas de Ceniza. Its name is tied to Carnival, which UNESCO proclaimed a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2003. Expect four days before Ash Wednesday of congos, marimondas and garabatos (traditional costumed dances and characters), cumbia and floats, plus weeks of pre-Carnival that kick off with the Lectura del Bando, the festival's opening proclamation.

Outside February, the city still gives you plenty to do. The Gran Malecón runs about 5 km (3 mi) along the Magdalena, with a food area and a pier for river trips. In Barrio Abajo, the Casa del Carnaval and the Museo del Carnaval explain the festival 365 days a year. And the food comes from sidewalk stands and home kitchens: arroz de lisa (rice with salted mullet) with bollo de yuca (a steamed cassava roll), butifarra (a small local sausage), fried snacks, and sancocho de guandú con carne salada, a pigeon-pea stew with salted beef.

WHERE IT IS

Colombia's Caribbean coast; capital of Atlántico, on the banks of the Magdalena River near its mouth.

GETTING THERE

Nonstop from Bogotá in about 1 h 35 min; from Medellín, around 1 h 15 min to 1 h 20 min.

WEATHER

Hot year-round: highs of 31–33 °C (88–91 °F) and lows near 24 °C (75 °F). Dry and breezy December to March; rainy April to November, heaviest in September and October.

DOCUMENTS

Original Colombian ID (cédula) for residents; passport for foreign visitors. You need it for the flight and for Carnival events. Minors need their own ID.

MONEY

Colombian peso (COP). Hotels, malls and restaurants take cards; carry cash for informal grandstands, street vendors and transportation. Pay in pesos, not dollars.

LANGUAGE

Spanish, spoken with the costeño accent of Colombia's Caribbean coast.

TIME ZONE

Colombia time (UTC-5).

PLUGS

Types A and B, 120 V, 60 Hz. Colombian chargers work as usual.

DON'T MISS

HIGHLIGHTS

01
BATALLA DE FLORES

Carnival's oldest parade, the Battle of Flowers, was created in 1903 to celebrate peace after the Thousand Days' War. It covers about 4 km (2.5 mi) of Vía 40, starting at 11 a.m. In 2027 it falls on Saturday, February 6.

02
GRAN PARADA DE TRADICIÓN Y DE FANTASÍA

On Carnival Sunday and Monday, dance troupes and comparsas (costumed groups) take the street without big floats: congos, garabatos, marimondas and cumbiambas. For pure tradition, Sunday is your day.

03
CASA AND MUSEO DEL CARNAVAL

In Barrio Abajo, the Casa del Carnaval is the organizers' headquarters, and the Museo del Carnaval sits right next door. A good stop any time of year to understand the costumes, dances and music.

04
GRAN MALECÓN DEL RÍO

About 5 km (3 mi) along the Magdalena, with the Puerta de Oro section, food spots like Caimán del Río, parks and a pier for river trips. Opens at 5 a.m.; at sunset the breeze picks up.

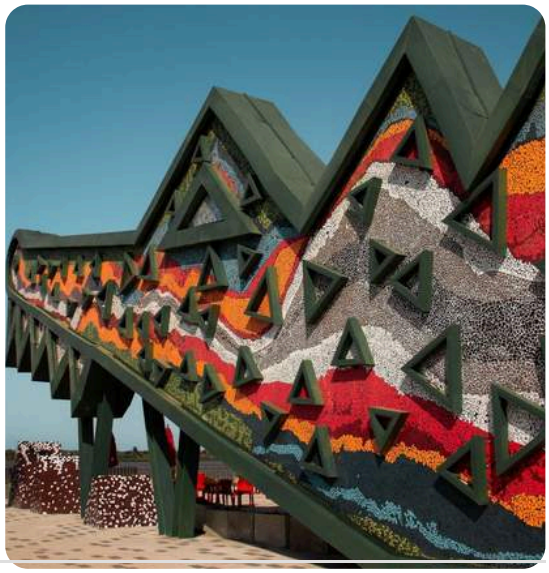
05
BOCAS DE CENIZA

Where the Magdalena River flows into the Caribbean Sea. Reach it from the Las Flores area, in the north of the city, next to the western breakwater. The city government built an electric tourist train there to Puerto Mocho beach.

06
ENTIERRO DE JOSELITO

On Carnival Tuesday, February 9 in 2027, the city holds a mock funeral for Joselito Carnaval, with processions that parody death. It closes the festival with humor.





PLAN YOUR TRIP

WHEN TO GO

Carnival takes place on the four days before Ash Wednesday, so it lands in February or early March, depending on the year. In 2027 it runs from Saturday, February 6, to Tuesday, February 9. January brings pre-Carnival, with the Lectura del Bando and nighttime parades. December to March is nearly dry; September and October get most of the downpours.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

BEST

DEC – MAR

The best time to go.

GOOD

APR – AUG

A good time, with a catch on weather or crowds.

RAINY

SEP – NOV

More rain: keep plans flexible.

WHAT YOU NEED TO TRAVEL

For Colombian travelers: there are no fees to enter the city. For Carnival, carry ID and follow the restrictions the mayor's office sets for grandstands and parades. Traveling on another passport? Requirements differ, so message us and we'll check yours.

- Original Colombian ID (cédula) for residents; passport for foreign visitors. You need it for the flight, and at Carnival events the organizers recommend carrying ID.
- Official Carnival 2027 dates: Saturday, February 6 (Batalla de Flores); Sunday, February 7 (Gran Parada de Tradición); Monday, February 8 (Gran Parada de Fantasía); and Tuesday, February 9 (Entierro de Joselito).
- In recent years' decrees, the mayor's office has barred children under 7 from grandstands (palcos), mini-grandstands and stages. At the 2026 Lectura del Bando, it restricted minors and pregnant women and banned bringing in food and drinks.
- Carnival decrees ban aerosol foam and throwing flour, dyes, water or any object at folk groups, dancers and musicians during the parades.
- Weapons and sharp objects are prohibited, and you're advised not to wear jewelry. Buy alcohol only from authorized vendors.
- Museo del Carnaval (rates published in 2025): adults COP 15,000; over-60s and under-12s, COP 10,000. Closed Mondays.

Checked in September 2026 with Carnaval de Barranquilla (official organizer). Rules change, so confirm with the official source before you travel, or message us and we'll help.

WHAT WE'D TELL A FRIEND

BOKANA TIPS

1 Shaded grandstand, early arrival

The Batalla de Flores starts at 11 a.m. under the Vía 40 sun. Buy a grandstand seat with a roof or shade, arrive before start time, and find the exits and emergency stations as soon as you get in.

2 Take hydration seriously

With highs of 32–33 °C (90–91 °F), drink water all day, alternate with oral rehydration solution if you're drinking alcohol, and wear a cap and sunscreen. The mayor's office also advises against eating food prepared on the street.

3 Cornstarch, with rules

On the street, maicena (cornstarch) is part of the Carnival game: wear glasses and clothes you don't mind staining, and protect your phone. Never throw it at dancers or musicians during parades, and skip the foam.

4 Sensible safety

Leave jewelry at the hotel, carry a little cash split between pockets and keep your phone in a front pocket. Save 123, the city's emergency line, and agree on a meeting point with your group.

5 Ride the Transmetro

On Carnival days, private cars face pico y placa (license-plate driving restrictions) and road closures. The mayor's office recommends Transmetro, the city's rapid bus system, which usually runs special return service after big events.

6 Watch out for arroyos

In heavy downpours, especially in September and October, some streets turn into dangerous torrents known as arroyos. Don't try to cross them on foot or by car: wait for the water to go down.

7 Malecón at sunset

The Gran Malecón is open from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. (11 p.m. Friday and Saturday). The best time is as the sun goes down and the river breeze rolls in.

TRAVEL MINDFULLY

Enjoy Carnival without throwing cornstarch, water or foam at the folk groups: their costumes take months of handcrafted work. Buy crafts and masks directly from the makers, and spend at local businesses in Barrio Abajo.

WHERE TO EAT

OUR RESTAURANT PICKS

Chosen for their food, their track record and what past diners say. Price: $ budget · $$ mid-range · $$$ splurge.

PESCAYÉ $$

Caribbean fish and seafood · El Prado; second location at Caimán del Río, Gran Malecón (Barranquilla)

★ **4.9** · 1,917 reviews on TripAdvisor

Well-made coastal seafood at fair prices, with a Caimán del Río branch where you can have lunch facing the Magdalena.

What diners love: Reviewers highlight the fresh fish, the coconut shrimp and the friendly service. It's among the city's top-rated tables.

Order: Oven-baked red tilapia (mojarra roja) or coconut shrimp

Open only until mid-afternoon (roughly 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.).

ÁRABE GOURMET $$

Lebanese and Arab · North, Cra. 49C at Calle 76 (Barranquilla)

★ **4.2** · 365 reviews on TripAdvisor

Syrian-Lebanese heritage is part of Barranquilla's identity, and this is one of the go-to places to taste it.

What diners love: Diners praise the kibbeh, the stuffed grape leaves, the almond rice and the grilled meats. Some notice smaller portions since prices went up.

Order: Raw kibbeh (quibbe crudo) and almond rice

PALO DE MANGO $$$

Chef-driven Colombian Caribbean · El Prado (Barranquilla)

★ **4.9** · 1,631 reviews on TripAdvisor

In a Republican-era house in El Prado, chef Álex Quessep has been reinterpreting Caribbean ingredients like plantain, pigeon peas (guandú) and yuca since 2019.

What diners love: Reviewers praise the presentation, the reinvented coastal flavors and very attentive service. It ranks among the city's best rated.

Order: Pigeon-pea croquettes and Isla Morena rice

Book ahead, especially for weekend dinners.

MANUEL $$$

Caribbean fine dining · El Prado (Barranquilla)

★ **4.6** · 409 reviews on Google Maps

Barranquilla's first restaurant on Latin America's 50 Best (No. 46 in 2025): coastal cooking with Indigenous, Arab and African influences.

What diners love: Diners single out the fish and the pork belly, the chef's extra touches between courses and a cozy room. It's one of the priciest in the city.

Order: Tasting menu

Book via WhatsApp; closed Sundays.

Ratings and review counts checked in October 2026; they change over time. Review summaries are our own. Hours and prices vary, so check before you go.

LOCAL FLAVORS

WHAT TO EAT

ARROZ DE LISA

The city's signature dish: rice with dried, salted mullet, served with bollo de yuca, suero (a tangy fermented cream) and queso costeño (a salty coastal white cheese).

BUTIFARRA

A sausage that Barranquilla cooking counts among its classics, alongside queso costeño and bollos made from yuca or fresh corn.

SANCOCHO DE GUANDÚ CON CARNE SALADA

Considered the dish of Barranquilla's Carnival: a thick, hearty pigeon-pea stew with salted beef, just right after a parade.

FRITOS AND COASTAL JUICES

Arepa de huevo (egg-stuffed fried arepa), carimañola (a filled cassava fritter) and empanada, with juices of corozo, tamarind, sapote or níspero.



BOKANA
TRAVEL

PICTURE YOURSELF IN BARRANQUILLA? LET'S PLAN IT TOGETHER.

Join one of our groups on your own, or bring your people on a private trip.
Scan the code or message us.

Chat with us on WhatsApp

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bokanatravel.co/en/destinations/barranquilla/

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