BOKANA TRAVEL

COLOMBIA



TRAVEL GUIDE 2026

GUATAPÉ

Less than two hours from Medellín, you climb a 220-meter (722 ft) rock, cruise a reservoir of green islands and walk a town that tells its story on its walls.

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THE ESSENTIALS

THE ROCK, THE RESERVOIR AND THE ZÓCALOS

Guatapé and El Peñol share one of Antioquia's most recognizable landscapes. The Piedra del Peñol, a granite monolith 220 meters (722 ft) tall, rises over the Peñol-Guatapé reservoir, more than 6,300 hectares (15,500 acres) of water full of inlets and islands. From the top, reached by a staircase built into a crack in the rock, you see why this corner of eastern Antioquia draws visitors all year.

Down below, Guatapé is known as the town of zócalos: colorful relief panels along the base of the houses that show trades, families and scenes of local life, a tradition that began around 1919. Nearby, El Peñol keeps the memory of its old town center, flooded in the 1970s to create the reservoir, in a replica that rebuilds the plaza, the church and the town hall. It's an easy day trip from Medellín, though it's worth staying the night.

WHERE IT IS Eastern Antioquia, about 75 to 81 km (47 to 50 mi) from Medellín via the Medellín-Bogotá highway and the Marinilla-El Peñol-Guatapé road.	**GETTING THERE** No airport. Fly into Medellín (José María Córdova, in Rionegro), about 64 minutes direct from Bogotá, then continue by road into eastern Antioquia.
WEATHER Mild: Guatapé averages about 20 °C (68 °F), ranging from 13 to 22 °C (55 to 72 °F). Strong sun at midday, and two rainy seasons a year.	**DOCUMENTS** Colombian ID (cédula) or other valid ID for residents; passport for foreign visitors. No tourist card or entry fee for the town.
MONEY Colombian peso (COP). Many hotels and restaurants take cards; bring cash for boats, small shops and ticket booths.	**LANGUAGE** Spanish.
TIME ZONE Same time as the rest of Colombia (UTC-5).	**PLUGS** Types A and B, 110 V, 60 Hz.

DON'T MISS

HIGHLIGHTS

01
CLIMB THE PIEDRA DEL PEÑOL

More than 650 steps zigzag up a crack in the monolith, open daily 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Look for the letters painted on the rock: they're the mark of an old rivalry between Guatapé and El Peñol.

02
THE VIEW FROM THE TOP

Up top, the Peñol-Guatapé reservoir spreads out in almost every direction: more than 6,300 hectares (15,500 acres) of water, peninsulas and green islands. Morning light is best for photos.

03
GUATAPÉ'S ZÓCALOS

Walk the Plazoleta de los Zócalos and the streets of the town center. Each relief panel tells a story: a trade, a family, a belief. Neighbors paint and restore them together in community work days, and the town protects them as heritage.

04
BOAT RIDE ON THE RESERVOIR

Boats leave the Guatapé waterfront all day. A basic ride takes about 45 minutes and passes islands and country estates; longer trips with stops are also available.

05
REPLICA OF OLD EL PEÑOL

The original town of El Peñol went underwater in the 1970s. The replica rebuilds its plaza, church and town hall. Out on the reservoir, the Cross of Old El Peñol marks where the church once stood.

06
WATERFRONT AND WATER SPORTS

Guatapé's malecón runs about 900 meters (2,950 ft) along the water. This is where you book kayaks, boats and other activities. At sunset it's a good place for an unhurried walk.





PLAN YOUR TRIP

WHEN TO GO

Guatapé works all year. December to February and June to August tend to be drier, with better views from the rock. April, May, October and November bring more rain, usually in the afternoon. Crowds matter more than weather: weekends, holiday weekends, Holy Week and the year-end holidays pack the town and the staircase. If you can, go on a weekday and arrive early.

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

BEST

DEC – FEB

The best time to go.

GOOD

MAR · JUN – SEP

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

RAINY

APR – MAY · OCT – NOV

More rain: keep plans flexible.

WHAT YOU NEED TO TRAVEL

For Colombian travelers: there are no special entry requirements, just your ID. The climb up the Piedra del Peñol is paid at the ticket booth on site, which is privately owned. Traveling on another passport? Requirements differ, so message us and we'll check yours.

- Colombian ID (cédula) or other valid ID for residents (tarjeta de identidad or birth certificate for minors); passport for foreign visitors.
- Piedra del Peñol climb: COP 35,000 per person in 2026, a single year-round rate announced by the site's management on January 1, 2026.
- Rock hours: daily, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- No booking needed to climb the rock, and no entry fee for the town.

Checked in September 2026 with El Peñol Municipal Government: Places of Interest. 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 Climb first thing

The rock opens at 8 a.m. Get there before 9: you skip the lines, the sun isn't scorching yet and the light is at its best. Tour groups from Medellín usually arrive around midday.

2 Skip weekends and holidays

On weekdays you can climb the stairs at your own pace. Weekends, holiday weekends and school vacations bring long lines and a packed town. If a weekend is your only option, stay overnight.

3 Getting there by bus

Direct buses to Guatapé and El Peñol leave Medellín's Terminal del Norte all day, starting at 6 a.m. The ride takes about two hours and passes the rock before reaching town.

4 Get ready for the stairs

There are more than 650 steps. Bring water, a hat, sunscreen and comfortable shoes, and take all the breaks you need at the landings. There's no rush.

5 Life jacket on, always

On a boat or kayak, wear a life jacket the whole time and choose licensed operators on the waterfront. If you see an afternoon storm coming, save the ride for the next morning.

6 Keep cash handy

Many small businesses and boat operators prefer cash. Carry small bills, since change isn't always available.

7 One night changes everything

A day trip leaves little time. Stay over in Guatapé and you see the town at night without the crowds, climb the rock as soon as it opens and take the boat ride without hurrying.

TRAVEL MINDFULLY

The zócalos are heritage that residents paint and care for in community work days: photograph them without touching or leaning on them, and leave no trash in the reservoir. Buy crafts and book boat rides with local operators on the waterfront.

WHERE TO EAT

OUR RESTAURANT PICKS

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

LA FOGATA $$

Antioquia home cooking and trout · Downtown, Cra. 30 #31-32 (Guatapé)

★ **4.3** · 1,000 reviews on Google Maps

One of the town's longest-running and most-reviewed restaurants, recommended by locals themselves for fish and bandeja paisa.

What diners love: Reviewers single out the trout, the fish and an authentic bandeja paisa with a view of the reservoir. Some found the soups weak and the prices high for the quality.

Order: Fried trout or bandeja paisa

FOLKLORE RESTAURANTE BAR $$

Modern paisa food with a terrace · Downtown, Calle 31 #29-08 (Guatapé)

★ **4.7** · 501 reviews on Google Maps

A modern take on paisa food on a decorated terrace overlooking town. Garlic trout is the signature dish.

What diners love: Diners praise the trout al ajillo, the coconut limeade, the terrace and the warm, personal service. One missed the ground beef in the bandeja paisa.

Order: Trout al ajillo (garlic trout) and coconut limeade

You reach it up a staircase next to the bar of the same name.

DON OSCAR $$

Colombian with reservoir views · Downtown, Calle 31 #30-10 (Guatapé)

★ **4.7** · 902 reviews on Google Maps

Well-presented Colombian cooking paired with one of the best reservoir views in town. Lots of reviews and years in business.

What diners love: Reviewers highlight the view, the chicharrón ceviche, the bandeja paisa and the cheesecake. One recent review complained of a limited menu and no menú del día (set lunch).

Order: Chicharrón ceviche

Ask for a window table to see the reservoir.

CASA CUBA BAR RESTAURANT $$

Cuban, 1950s atmosphere · Downtown, Calle 30 #30-232 (Guatapé)

★ **4.9** · 880 reviews on Google Maps

A break from local food: Cuban cooking in a house filled with music and mementos from the island, run by its owners.

What diners love: What comes up most is the owners' hospitality, the ceviche, the Cuban sandwich and the jazz-and-son atmosphere. Gluten-free options available.

Order: Cuban sandwich or Habana roll

According to Google Maps, it's closed on Wednesdays.

KAFFA CAFÉ BAR $

Coffee and coffee drinks · Plazoleta de los Zócalos, 2nd floor (Guatapé)

★ **4.8** · 532 reviews on Google Maps

Good coffee at a good price on the town's most photographed square, with desserts and a setting made for lingering over conversation.

What diners love: Reviewers mention the warm service, staff who explain how to taste each drink, the cakes and the iced coffee. At night it feels more like a bar than a café.

Order: Latte macchiato or iced coffee

Opens at 10 a.m.; a good evening option too.

MIRADOR DEL PEÑOL $

Antioquia home cooking · El Peñol-Guatapé road, km 4 (El Peñol)

★ **4.7** · 410 reviews on Google Maps

Home-style Antioquia food at good prices on the road between El Peñol and Guatapé, with reservoir views and plenty of room for groups.

What diners love: Diners appreciate the affordable prices, the sancocho de gallina (hen soup), the fiambre (a leaf-wrapped rice and meat bundle) and quick service even when it's busy. Also the view and the parking lot.

Order: Sancocho de gallina or fiambre

A good stop before or after climbing the rock; there's parking.

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

BANDEJA PAISA

Antioquia's signature platter: beans, rice, ground beef, chicharrón (crispy pork belly), egg, ripe plantain, avocado and arepa. Save it for after the climb down.

AREPA WITH QUESITO

Every Antioquia morning starts with one, topped with fresh cheese and served with hot chocolate or a tinto (black coffee) before you head to the rock.

TROUT

On almost every menu in town and along the waterfront, fried or al ajillo (in garlic), with patacón (fried green plantain) and salad.



BOKANA
TRAVEL

PICTURE YOURSELF IN GUATAPÉ? 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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SOURCES

Alcaldía de El Peñol: sitios de interés (piedra, réplica del Viejo Peñol, embalse)
Alcaldía de Guatapé: geografía (altitud, temperatura, distancia a Medellín)
Medellín Travel (Bureau de Medellín): Guatapé
Infobae: en 2026 será más caro subir a la Piedra del Peñol (7 de enero de 2026)
La FM: nuevos precios para subir a la Piedra del Peñol en 2026
Semana: horarios y precio de la Piedra del Peñol (2025)
El Colombiano: hace 70 años se escaló El Peñol
Wikipedia: El Peñón de Guatapé
DiariOriente: zócalos de Guatapé
Ecoturismo Colombia: guía de Guatapé 2026 (bus, horarios, lanchas)
Rome2rio: Terminal del Norte a Guatapé
KAYAK: ruta Bogotá-Medellín (duración de vuelo directo)
Eje21: régimen de lluvias en la región Andina, citando al IDEAM
World Standards: enchufes y voltaje por país
Google Maps (fichas consultadas el 1-oct-2026)

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