BOKANA TRAVEL

COLOMBIA



TRAVEL GUIDE 2026

SAN ANDRÉS

Reefs, cays fifteen minutes away by boat and a Raizal culture with its own language: San Andrés is Colombia's most remote and most distinctive slice of the Caribbean.

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THE ESSENTIALS

THE SEA OF SEVEN COLORS, RAIZAL STYLE

San Andrés is an island of about 27 km² (10 sq mi) in the middle of the Caribbean, off the coast of Nicaragua and far from mainland Colombia. A ring road of roughly 30 km (19 mi) loops all the way around, so in a single day you can take in natural pools, caves and lookouts. The water shifts from turquoise to deep blue depending on the seabed and the depth, which is why it's called the sea of seven colors. Boats leave from the pier for Johnny Cay, El Acuario and Haynes Cay.

The island is home to the Raizal people, descendants of Africans and British settlers, who speak Creole, a native language recognized in Colombia that lives alongside English and Spanish. The whole archipelago is part of the Seaflower Biosphere Reserve, declared by UNESCO in 2000, which holds more than three-quarters of the country's coral reefs. If you have more days, Providencia is a short flight away and runs at a slower pace.

WHERE IT IS

Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina, in the western Caribbean Sea, off the coast of Nicaragua.

GETTING THERE

Direct from Bogotá: 2 hr to 2 hr 15 min. From Medellín: about 1 hr 50 min. There's also a direct route from Cali.

WEATHER

Warm year-round, averaging 27 to 28 °C (81 to 82 °F), with the sea at 26 to 27 °C (79 to 81 °F). Dry season from mid-January to April; rains from May to mid-January, with October the wettest month.

DOCUMENTS

Colombian ID (cédula) for residents (or a minor's ID); passport for foreign visitors. Plus the tourist card, COP 153,000 in 2026, paid before you board.

MONEY

Colombian peso (COP). Hotels and larger shops take cards; bring cash for boats, taxis, attraction fees and small businesses.

LANGUAGE

Spanish, English and San Andrés Creole, the native language of the Raizal people.

TIME ZONE

Colombia time (UTC-5), no difference.

PLUGS

Types A and B, 110 V, 60 Hz, same as the rest of Colombia.

DON'T MISS

HIGHLIGHTS

01
JOHNNY CAY

A regional natural park 1.5 km (1 mi) off the island, about 15 minutes by boat. Open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., weather permitting. Outside food and drinks aren't allowed, and there's an entrance fee paid to CORALINA, the islands' environmental authority.

02
EL ACUARIO AND HAYNES CAY

Two cays almost joined by a sandbar where the water comes up to your waist. It's the classic outing for snorkeling among colorful fish and grabbing a bite at the Haynes Cay kiosks.

03
WEST VIEW AND LA PISCINITA

Natural pools along the rocky west coast of the island. At West View you get into the water by slide or diving board and see fish and coral just a few yards from shore.

04
AROUND THE ISLAND

About 30 km (19 mi) of ring road you can cover by golf cart, scooter or bus. Stop at the Hoyo Soplador blowhole, where the sea shoots up through tunnels in the coral rock, at La Piscinita and at Morgan's Cave.

05
RAIZAL CULTURE

Wooden houses in island architecture, music, the Creole language and coconut-based cooking. Visiting the Casa Museo Isleña or eating rondón, a coconut-milk seafood stew, cooked by a Raizal family is the best way to understand the island.

06
ADD ON PROVIDENCIA

A mountainous, quieter island in the same archipelago, rebuilt after Hurricane Iota in November 2020. Get there on a Satena flight from San Andrés or by catamaran, about three hours, which only runs on some days.





PLAN YOUR TRIP

WHEN TO GO

The best time is mid-January to April: it's the dry season, and March is the driest month. December, Holy Week and midyear are high season, with bigger crowds and high prices. Atlantic hurricane season runs June 1 – November 30, peaking from mid-August to mid-October; October is also the wettest month. If you travel then, get insurance.

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

BEST

FEB – APR

The best time to go.

GOOD

MAY · DEC – JAN

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

RAINY

JUN – AUG · NOV

More rain: keep plans flexible.

AVOID

SEP – OCT

Peak of hurricane season.

WHAT YOU NEED TO TRAVEL

For Colombian travelers: you don't need a passport to visit, but every nonresident visitor must pay the archipelago's tourist card before boarding. Keep the receipt for your entire stay. Traveling on another passport? Requirements differ, so message us and we'll check yours.

- ID: Colombian ID (cédula) for adult residents, tarjeta de identidad or registro civil (birth certificate) for minors; passport for foreign visitors.
- 2026 tourist card: COP 153,000 per person (Decree 0010 of January 8, 2026, from the Archipelago Government), made up of COP 116,000 for the entry fee and COP 37,000 toward tourism infrastructure.
- Buy it before boarding, at the airline counter at your departure airport. JetSMART also sells it on its website when you buy your ticket.
- Exempt: children under 7, people born in the archipelago and residents with a valid OCCRE card.
- The same card covers San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina; travelers arriving by sea pay it too.
- When you buy it, you'll be asked for arrival and departure dates, personal details, flight, booking code and your accommodation's address, so have them handy.
- Entry to Johnny Cay and other regional parks: paid separately to CORALINA; children under 5 and Raizal residents don't pay.

Checked in September 2026 with Government of the Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina: Tourism Office. 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 Allow time for the tourist card

Get to the airport with extra time: the tourist card is paid at the counter before check-in. Flying JetSMART? You can add it when you buy your ticket.

2 Take the early boat

Head to Johnny Cay and El Acuario on the first boat of the morning. The sea is usually calmer and the cays are less crowded. Johnny Cay closes at 4 p.m.

3 Bring your own mask

Pack a snorkel mask and water shoes. You can rent gear at El Acuario and West View, but your own saves money and is more hygienic. Water shoes protect you from sea urchins and coral rock.

4 Take the golf cart slowly

For the island loop, rent a golf cart or scooter from a licensed operator, check the brakes and fuel, and follow traffic rules. The ring road has narrow stretches and buses.

5 Learn a Creole greeting

Many Raizal people appreciate a greeting in their language or in English. Ask before photographing people or homes, and look for restaurants and guesthouses owned by islanders.

6 Insurance and alerts in hurricane season

If you travel between June and November, buy insurance that covers weather cancellations and follow alerts from Colombia's National Disaster Risk Management Unit and the National Hurricane Center.

7 Water and sun

The sun is strong even when it's cloudy. Wear a rash guard for snorkeling, a cap and sunscreen free of oxybenzone and octinoxate, which are less harmful to coral.

TRAVEL MINDFULLY

At Johnny Cay and on the reefs, don't touch or step on coral, don't feed fish or rays, and don't take shells or sand: CORALINA prohibits it. Choose native guesthouses and restaurants run by Raizal families so tourism benefits the island's people.

WHERE TO EAT

OUR RESTAURANT PICKS

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

LA REGATTA $$$

Caribbean seafood · Club Náutico, North End (downtown San Andrés)

★ **4.6** · 10,825 reviews on Google Maps

Built over the water next to the Club Náutico, it's the most-reviewed restaurant on the island and the safe bet for a special seafood dinner.

What diners love: Reviewers praise the setting, the sea view and dishes like lobster and conch in coconut sauce. Complaints focus on waits and disorganized service at peak hours.

Order: Conch in coconut sauce or lobster

Book several days ahead; closed Sundays.

RESTAURANTE MATZA $$

Colombian home cooking · Downtown / North End (San Andrés)

★ **4.8** · 368 reviews on Google Maps

A practical downtown pick for a good breakfast or lunch without tourist-zone prices, and one of the highest-rated spots in the area.

What diners love: People highlight the lunch soup, the fresh juices, the value for money and the service. Many say they came back several times on the same trip.

Order: Lunch of the day with soup and juice

Opens at 7:30 a.m.; a good breakfast stop.

RESTAURANTE LYDIA $$

Raizal home cooking · San Luis (San Andrés)

★ **4.3** · 489 reviews on Google Maps

A Raizal family home known for its rondón, the island stew of fish, conch, plantain and cassava in coconut milk. They serve you in Spanish, English and Creole.

What diners love: Reviewers agree its rondón is among the best on the island, with big portions and a family welcome. Service can be slow when it fills up.

Order: Rondón

Open weekends at midday; arrive early because it fills up.

BABUD ISLAND HOME TASTE $

Raizal home cooking · Island interior, La Loma area (San Andrés)

★ **4.9** · 153 reviews on Google Maps

Home-style island food at local prices: a full lunch with soup, main course and juice, away from the tourist circuit. A good way to eat what islanders eat.

What diners love: Diners highlight the stewed oxtail, the meatballs, the stewed chicken and the fried fish, the generous portions and a warm, homey welcome.

Order: Stewed oxtail or fried fish

Opens at 11 a.m.; it's inland, so take a taxi.

AQUA BEACH CLUB $$

Seafood and beach club · Cocoplum Bay, San Luis (San Andrés)

★ **4.4** · 1,888 reviews on Google Maps

Lunch and a beach day in one, facing Rocky Cay, with food a cut above the average beach club. Good if you want to eat without leaving the sand.

What diners love: People like the octopus, the ceviche and the Thai rice, plus the shaded loungers, lockers and security. Some report slow service on busy days.

Order: Grilled octopus

Open 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.; weekdays are less crowded.

DONDE FRANCESCA $$

Seafood on the beach · San Luis beach (San Andrés)

★ **4.0** · 2,630 reviews on Google Maps

A San Luis classic for a seafood lunch with your feet in the sand and the sea in front of you; it's been a must-stop on the island loop for years.

What diners love: Reviewers recommend the octopus, the fish in coconut sauce and the tuna tartare. The most common complaint is long waits in high season.

Order: Fish in coconut sauce

Lunch only, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; don't go in a hurry.

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

LOCAL FLAVORS

WHAT TO EAT

RONDÓN

The signature Raizal dish: a slow-cooked coconut-milk stew with fish or conch, cassava, yam, plantain, breadfruit and dumplings.

CRAB BACK

Crab meat stewed with onion, garlic and bell pepper, served back in its shell.

JOHNNY CAKE

Fried bread with British roots that comes alongside fish and seafood at island tables.

SOPA DE CARACOL

Conch soup with coconut milk, made with queen conch and typical of the archipelago. Ask whether conch is in its legal season.



BOKANA
TRAVEL

PICTURE YOURSELF IN SAN ANDRÉS? 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

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