

BOKANA TRAVEL

COLOMBIA

TRAVEL GUIDE 2026

TAYRONA & SANTA MARTA

Dry forest, white-sand beaches and four Indigenous peoples who care for this land. Tayrona and Santa Marta are best explored on foot, slowly and with respect.

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THE ESSENTIALS

WHERE THE SIERRA NEVADA MEETS THE SEA

Tayrona National Natural Park protects about 19,300 hectares (47,700 acres) of land and sea northeast of Santa Marta, in the department of Magdalena. Here the Sierra Nevada drops almost straight into the Caribbean, so a single hike takes you from forest to pale-sand beaches, calm bays and open sea with heavy surf. You get around almost entirely on foot, along trails threaded between giant boulders, to coves like Cabo San Juan de Guía and La Piscina.

This is more than a park. It's the ancestral territory of the Kogui, Arhuaco, Wiwa and Kankuamo peoples, with 54 sacred sites inside its boundaries. That's why it closes three times a year, so the land can rest and ceremonies can take place. From Santa Marta you can also head up to Minca, among coffee farms and waterfalls, drop down to the fishing bay of Taganga or, with four or five days to spare, hike to Teyuna, Ciudad Perdida (the Lost City).

WHERE IT IS

Caribbean coast, department of Magdalena. The Zaino entrance is 32 km (20 mi), about 45 minutes, from Santa Marta.

GETTING THERE

Direct from Bogotá to Santa Marta: about 1 hr 30 min. Direct from Medellín: around 1 hr 20 min. From the airport to the park, add about 45 minutes by road.

WEATHER

Warm year-round, usually 24 to 31 °C (75 to 88 °F). Dry, windy season from December to April; rains from May to November, peaking in October.

DOCUMENTS

Colombian ID (cédula) for residents; passport for foreign visitors. You also need the park's mandatory accident insurance and a yellow fever vaccination card, with the shot given at least 10 days before.

MONEY

Colombian peso (COP). Bring cash into the park: signal is weak and many vendors and campsites don't take cards. Santa Marta has ATMs, and most hotels and restaurants there accept cards.

LANGUAGE

Spanish. The Kogui, Arhuaco, Wiwa and Kankuamo peoples keep their own languages and traditions.

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
CABO SAN JUAN DE GUÍA

Tayrona's postcard view: two calm coves split by a rocky headland with a thatched lookout on top. You reach it after a few hours' hike from Cañaveral, and it's one of the few spots where swimming is allowed.

02
THE TRAIL TO ARRECIFES AND LA PISCINA

The classic route from Cañaveral crosses forest, boulders and beaches. At Arrecifes the sea is very dangerous and swimming isn't allowed. Save your swim for La Piscina, a bay sheltered by a natural rock barrier.

03
BAHÍA CONCHA

The part of the park closest to Santa Marta, about 15 minutes by car. A wide, calm bay that works well with kids or for a beach day without long hikes.

04
MINCA AND THE SIERRA

About 14 km (9 mi) from Santa Marta, among coffee farms, waterfalls like Pozo Azul and Marinka, and one of the country's best-known birdwatching areas. Perfect for a couple of cool nights up in the hills.

05
TAGANGA AT SUNSET

An old fishing village right next to Santa Marta. A good place to eat fish facing the bay, go diving or catch a boat to nearby beaches.

06
TEYUNA, CIUDAD PERDIDA

An archaeological park run by ICANH, Colombia's institute of anthropology and history, deep in the Sierra Nevada on Indigenous reserve land. The only way in is a guided multi-day trek with an authorized operator. You'll need to be in good shape and confirm closure dates before you book.





PLAN YOUR TRIP

WHEN TO GO

The dry season, December to April, brings clear skies, clearer water and firm trails, but also strong wind and big crowds in December, January and Holy Week. From May to November it rains more, especially from September to November. Plan around the park closures: February 1–15, June 1–15 and October 19 – November 2. March and the second half of February are usually the best combination.

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

BEST

MAR · DEC – JAN

The best time to go.

GOOD

FEB · APR – JUL

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

RAINY

AUG – SEP · NOV

More rain: keep plans flexible.

AVOID

OCT

Rainiest month; closed from the 19th.

WHAT YOU NEED TO TRAVEL

For Colombian travelers: Tayrona doesn't require an advance reservation, but you do need ID, your entrance fee, the mandatory insurance and to follow park rules. Check closures and the local security situation on official channels before you go. Traveling on another passport? Requirements differ, so message us and we'll check yours.

- ID: Colombian ID (cédula) for residents; passport for foreign visitors. For Colombian minors, tarjeta de identidad or registro civil (birth certificate).
- 2026 entrance fees (Resolution 551 of 2025) for Colombians and residents: COP 36,500 in low season and COP 43,000 in high season for visitors over 25; COP 27,500 and COP 30,500 for ages 5 to 25. At Bahía Concha: COP 26,000 and COP 15,000.
- Mandatory accident insurance with visitor assistance (Resolution 273 of 2024), bought separately from the entrance fee.
- Yellow fever vaccine given at least 10 days before, with a valid vaccination card: Colombia's National Parks have required it since May 2025 due to the health emergency (Ministry of Health Resolution 691 of 2025). You can check your record at mivacuna.sispro.gov.co.
- 2026 closures: February 1–15, June 1–15 and October 19 – November 2. No ecotourism services operate on those days.
- Not allowed in: single-use plastics (bags, Styrofoam, bottles, cups, cutlery, straws), alcohol, speakers, pets, and drones without a permit.
- Groups of eight or more must enter with a tour guide.
- Hours at the Zaino entrance: entry from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in low season; 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. in high season. Calabazo opens at 6 a.m.

Checked in September 2026 with Colombian National Natural Parks: Tayrona National Natural Park. 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 Get in early

Arrive at Zaino or Calabazo when it opens. You'll hike in less heat, reach Cabo San Juan before noon and skip the high-season line, when entry closes earlier.

2 Swim only where it's allowed

Respect the flags. Arrecifes and other open-sea beaches have currents that have claimed many lives. Swim in approved areas like La Piscina, Cabo San Juan, Bahía Concha or Cristal.

3 Pack plastic-free

Bags are checked at the entrance. Bring a thermos or reusable bottle, reusable food containers and cloth bags. Single-use plastics stay outside.

4 Cash and a power bank

Signal inside the park is patchy and many spots take cash only. Withdraw money in Santa Marta and bring a fully charged power bank.

5 Pack for two climates

Closed shoes for the trail, sandals for the beach, bug spray and sunscreen. If you're heading to Minca, add a light jacket: it gets cool up there at night.

6 Check the security situation

In February 2026 the park closed over threats to park staff, and in September there was an armed strike in Santa Marta. Before you go, check National Parks' official channels and travel with licensed operators.

7 Give Ciudad Perdida time

The trek takes four to five days and calls for good fitness. Book only with authorized operators and confirm the annual closure, which usually falls in October and is set by Indigenous authorities and ICANH.

TRAVEL MINDFULLY

Bring in no single-use plastics, stay on the trails and don't photograph Indigenous people without asking first. Plan your trip outside the three annual closures: they're agreements with the peoples of the Sierra so the land can rest.

WHERE TO EAT

OUR RESTAURANT PICKS

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

ALFAIX | SU MEDIA NARANJA $

Traditional Santa Marta breakfast · Public Market, downtown Santa Marta

★ **4.5** · 2,327 reviews on Google Maps

The most direct way to try a Santa Marta breakfast: cayeye with queso costeño, chicharrón and fresh-squeezed orange juice, right inside the market at local prices.

What diners love: Reviewers single out the cayeye with chicharrón, the orange juice and generous portions for very little money. They call it simple, family-run and very local.

Order: Cayeye with chicharrón and orange juice

Opens at 6 a.m. and it's a breakfast spot, so go early.

RESTAURANTE MAÑE CAYÓN $$

Coastal fish and seafood · On the bay, south of the Historic Center (Santa Marta)

★ **4.4** · 3,562 reviews on Google Maps

Open since 1982, it's a Santa Marta classic for fish and seafood, with sand floors and bay views, popular with locals and visitors alike.

What diners love: Diners praise the seafood platter, the fried red snapper with coconut rice, the cayeye and the coconut lemonade. Some find it pricey and mention waits.

Order: Fried red snapper with coconut rice

Open 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., so plan it for lunch.

GUÁSIMO $$$

Creative Caribbean · Historic Center, near Parque de los Novios (Santa Marta)

★ **4.7** · 2,010 reviews on Google Maps

Inventive Caribbean cooking with local ingredients like cayeye, coconut and the day's catch, in a house decorated with the chef's own artwork. A good pick for a special dinner.

What diners love: Reviewers highlight the plating, the unusual flavors and attentive service. The common caveat: small portions for the price.

Order: Black prawns or the catch of the day

Book for dinner; open 12 to 3 p.m. and 6 to 10:30 p.m.

PACHAMAMA RESTAURANTE BAR $$

Fish, meat and pizza · Beachfront, Taganga

★ **4.5** · 1,671 reviews on Google Maps

Right on Taganga beach, it's one of the village's longest-running and most-reviewed spots, and a good place to eat fish while watching the sunset.

What diners love: People like the catch of the day in coconut sauce, the fish carpaccio, the cocktails and the view. Several mention slow service when it's full.

Order: Catch of the day in coconut sauce

Arrive before sunset to get a table with a view.

THE LAZY CAT $$

International, café and bar · Main street, Minca

★ **4.5** · 2,197 reviews on Google Maps

Minca's most-reviewed restaurant, with a terrace over the river and a long menu that works for lunch after a hike or for dinner.

What diners love: Reviewers mention the river view, the wok dishes, burgers, ceviche and happy hour, plus friendly staff who know the menu well.

Order: A wok dish or the house burger

Open daily, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

CASA COCOTTE PALOMINO $$

French and Caribbean · Palomino (La Guajira)

★ **4.8** · 1,253 reviews on Google Maps

A restaurant and hospitality-trades school for young people from the village, with a menu built on local produce. One of Palomino's top-rated places to eat.

What diners love: Diners rave about the cocktails, the avocado and pineapple ceviche, the octopus and the grouper, and very personal service in a quiet garden.

Order: Avocado and pineapple ceviche

Opens at 4 p.m.; closed Wednesdays.

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

CAYEYE

Santa Marta's breakfast: mashed green banana with hogao (a tomato and onion sauce), butter and queso costeño, a salty fresh cheese. It comes with eggs, meat or chicharrón (fried pork belly).

ARROZ DE BONITO

A traditional Santa Marta rice dish made with bonito, a Caribbean fish closely tied to the city's cooking.

FRIED FISH WITH PATACÓN AND COCONUT RICE

The ultimate beach lunch, best eaten facing the sea in Taganga or El Rodadero, with the catch of the day and patacón (twice-fried green plantain).

SIERRA COFFEE

In Minca, many farms open their doors to show you how the beans are processed and pour you a freshly brewed cup.



BOKANA TRAVEL

PICTURE YOURSELF IN TAYRONA & SANTA MARTA?
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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Parques Nacionales Naturales: Tayrona renueva su energía, primer cierre temporal del 2026 (30 ene 2026)
Parques Nacionales Naturales: Tayrona inicia periodo de sanación cultural Respira Tayrona (29 may 2026)
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Parques Nacionales Naturales: misión técnica para posible reapertura sectorizada (25 feb 2026)
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Infobae: tarifas 2026 del Tayrona, Resolución 551 (7 ene 2026)
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El Espectador: Parque Tayrona sigue abierto tras el fin del paro armado en Santa Marta (25 sep 2026)
ICANH: Parque Arqueológico Teyuna
Infobae: playas de Colombia con restricciones para bañistas (dic 2023)
Weather Spark: clima promedio en Santa Marta
Skyscanner: vuelos Bogotá a Santa Marta
Kayak: vuelos Medellín a Santa Marta
Semana: Minca, cascadas, cafetales y aves cerca de Santa Marta
Señal Colombia: platos típicos de Santa Marta
El Informador: el bonito y el cayeye en la gastronomía samaria
Power Plugs & Sockets: Colombia
Google Maps (fichas consultadas el 1 oct 2026)
Publimetro: 5 restaurantes de comida de mar para visitar en Santa Marta (23 jul 2026)
Tripadvisor: Guásimo
Tripadvisor: Lazy Cat Minca
Tripadvisor: Casa Cocotte Palomino
Tripadvisor: Mañe Cayón

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