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In the Caribbean, this is expressed through a mixture of ... 6 mins read - Published 6 Sep 2017If there is one thing you can rely on when traveling through Colombia, it is that you will never starve. A medley of Colombia's environment, a huge variety of... Watch Kimkim travelers enjoy their travels in Cartagena and the Caribbean coast: Cartagena, home to more than a million people, has several different faces that visitors are likely to encounter. There is a historic Old Town, modern skyscrapers in Boca Grande, working class barrios, universities and a large port where cruise ship docks. In short, the historic center occupies only a small slice of this large South American city. Colorfully painted buildings in the Old City, Cartagena. If you travel to Cartagena by bus, you will pass through its blue-collar neighborhoods as you enter the Old Town, the main area of interest to visitors. Located within an impressive eight miles of stone fortifications, the Old Town is a World Heritage Site, home to well-preserved colonial buildings built as far back as the 16th century. Today, many of them have been converted into shops, restaurants and boutique hotels. The area contains two districts, El Centro to the west and San Diego to the northeast. To the south of the Old Town is Getsmane. A few years ago, the area was a crime-ridden area, but today it's a revamped area of cool cafes strewn with graffiti alleys, street musicians and sultry dance halls. It's definitely worth wandering through this colorful enclave to get a sense of everyday life, especially around the Plaza de Santisma Trinidad, where fruit vendors gather and local kids play football. A view of the modern Boca Grande district in Cartegen from the old city with a wall. To the southwest of Getsaman is Manga, an upper-middle-class residential area with good restaurants. Further south is Boca Grande, a modern and trendy area of shopping malls, cinemas and Caf . It is loaded with high-rise hotels, many of them right on the beach. If you've been to Waikiki or Copacabana, you can imagine a local scene of beach umbrellas, sunbathers and street vendors. This part of the city is also some health facilities. When visiting the weather it is always hot and humid in Cartagena, with humidity usually around 80%. During the year, the average temperature range is between 77 and 87 degrees Fahrenheit. Nights can be uncomfortable if your hotel doesn't have air conditioning. The weather is slightly better from January to March, when the afternoon sea breezes provide daily relief. Cartagena has averaged 40 inches of rain each year since October's rainiest month. Because of the almost constant heat, you really don't need to plan according to the weather. If possible, you can avoid October because of the rain. If you can choose any period, then aim for the January to March window when a steady breeze provides some relief. You can also avoid rest periods due to the crush of tourists and increased hotel costs. Peak season for tourism from December to mid-January, Holy Week (which can be in March or April), and the summer holidays period from mid-June to August. Festivals and special events In December, locals celebrate the street art of Hessemans. January: Hay Festival, which includes classical music, is held in January. February 2: Fiesta de Nuestra Senora de la Candelaria: this is the day of the patron saint of Cartagena and marked by a procession in the monastery de la Popa. Pilgrims flock to the monastery in the days leading up to the holiday. March: A week before Easter, the international film festival takes place in Cartagena. November 11: The National de Belleza competition: This date marks Cartagena Independence Day and a national beauty contest. In the days leading up to November 11, large parties are held, including street parades and dances. December: The Getemane Street Art Festival takes place in the first week of December. How many days do you need? With a full day of sightseeing, you can see most of Cartagena's historic landmarks and museums. But it's best done for two days as you want to enjoy the history and energy of the Old Town as you go between places. Heat can also slow you down and you will need to stop often for drinks and relaxation. Set aside another day to explore other parts of the city such as the Getsman area and the Basurto Food Market. By the third day in the city, you want to travel further and can make day or night trips to the islands of Rosario, Baru or Playa Blanca. Another day allows you to visit the unusual Vulcan de Totumo. If you are in vacation mode, it would be easy to spend two more days just relaxing, eating delicious seafood and soaking in the historic atmosphere of the place. So if you're time-limited, budget at least two days for highlights. If you have more free time, try staying five days or more. What to do around Cartagena Tourists enjoy the view from the top of the wall in the Old Town. Cartagena has enough sights and to keep you busy for a few days. The main places of interest are located near the Old Town. There are museums and old mansions to visit and streets to roam. In the evening you can clamber up the city walls that surround the Old Town and watch the sunset. A great place to do this from Cafe Del Mar, on the wall at El Centro. Another great option at the Movich rooftop bar. Outside the Old Town, it is worth wandering around Trinidad Square in Getzean, where you can watch the locals live among the graffiti-strewn walls. Or head to Boca Grande to see the more modern side of Cartagena. There are food tours, walking tours and bike tours available through local tour operators. Cartagena is also a great place for a family holiday (this is one example), with many child-friendly activities. You can even sign up for a night trip by chiv bus that weaves its way around the city, serving alcohol and stopping at nightclubs. The nightlife in Cartagena sizzles, and if you plan to go out be prepared for a head night of great music, mojitos and dancing. Finally, don't leave Cartagena without a day or two on the islands. Beaches within the city are located in Boca Grande, however, these beaches can be frustrating if you come in search of a tropical paradise, so we recommend heading a little further from the city to the nearby islands. Playa Blanca has a great beach and is one of the most convenient places to visit, although it can be crowded on weekends and like the beaches of Boca Grande has many beach vendors. For a little more peace and tranquility, consider a trip to the Rosario Islands, an archipelago of 27 islands achieved by boat tours from Cartagena. If you don't have a long day trip to the islands possible, but it's a much better option to spend the night on the islands more time on the beach and less in the boat. You can find more information about island jumping in this article. And for more day trip ideas from the city, take a look here. The safety and security of Cartagena takes many tourists and local police, government and travel agencies eager to keep them safe. While security is usually good, you still have to be careful with your belongings. Be especially careful when attending a street fair or festival when large crowds make it more difficult for the police to look for pickpockets. Be especially vigilant when crossing the streets, as traffic can be quite chaotic. Local drivers usually do not slow down for pedestrians, so always give vehicles a wide berth. You also have to confirm the prices before you sign up for the tour and get services. Self-proclaimed tour guides may try to hook you up in museums or historical landmarks, start their spiel, and then demand payment at the end. You will need to avoid them or plan to pay a small fee for their services. Cartagena has a lot of street vendors and other people who are trying to sell something, and that's be a real annoyance. Most will leave you alone if you wave them with No, Gracias (no thanks). Getting in and out of the side Rafael Nunez International Airport (CTG) is served by Cartagena. It is well served by airlines operating from eastern United States, as well as several direct flights from Europe. The airport is just 6 km northwest of the Old Town. In addition to taxis and local buses that connect the airport to the city centre, you can also take an air-conditioned shuttle known as Metrocar. Cartagena's main bus station is on the outskirts of the city, and the journey is about 45 minutes from the Old Town. Standard sleeping buses are available in most major cities and smaller destinations. If you are heading to Barranquilla or Santa Marta, we recommend an air-conditioned bus departing from the Berlinastur terminal, north of the city centre. Transport options on City Tour buses are painted as chivas are one way to see the sights of Cartagena. The city centre is easily walk-through. However, if you want a romantic and fun way to see the Old Town, consider taking a tour at the back of horse-drawn carriages. For short trips to places such as Boca Grande, you can take a taxi, which is a safe and affordable mode of local transport. When booking a taxi, make it through your hotel as taxi drivers may try to increase the fare if you get a taxi from the street. Another option is TransCaribe, a BRT system based on TransMilenio in Bogota. Attractions served by TransCaribe include Convento de la Popa, Mercado Bazurto and San Felipe de Barajas. Cheap busetas travel around the city, but they are hard to navigate for beginners. Consider taking one only if you can get a good local council on your itinerary before you set off. Tour buses designed as chiba buses are also available for people on a driving tour of the city. In terms of taxis, it is best to have your hotel call one whenever possible. Taxis in Cartagena do not have meters, so the fare must be agreed in advance. Even so, many drivers will still quote 3000-4000 pesos more tourists than they would local, so ask your guide or concierge what fare to expect before calling a taxi. Where to stay Most visitors will want to stay in the Old Town, a great base to explore the best this city has to offer. The old town has accommodation to fit all budgets, with hostels, boutique hotels and luxury options. Most of the upper places are located in the El Centro and San Diego area of the Old Town. Several lower cost boutique hotels and hostels can be found in Geceman. Cartagena has no shortage of hotels with fantastic pools - here are nine to choose from. International chain hotels are mainly located in Boca Grande, including the huge Hilton Hotel and Resort. This article lists a few more that will work for travelers with children in tow. Where to eat Diners are spoilt for choice in Cartagena. You can even find delicious in street stalls and markets. Regular street food includes arepas de huevo (fried corn disc stuffed with egg), empanadas and bunuelos (roasted corn and cheese balls). Also try papas rellenas (potatoes stuffed with meat and spices). Fruit stalls are also mainly common Areas. At La Boquilla, you can order purse-friendly seafood in local beach shacks. (Here are some more great street products to try while you're at it.) If you are travelling with children, take a look at this list of family restaurants. Moving up the stairs, you will find great restaurants to serve all tastes and budgets in the Old Town, Getsaman and Boca Grande. In addition to restaurants, some of the upscale boutique hotels serve wonderful gourmet dishes. The city is not surprisingly strong seafood. One stand out is seafood restaurant La Cevicheria, serving what most locals agree with the best cevich in town. Looking for a caffeine fix? These cafes are the best in town. More Expert Tips As a tourist town, local shopkeepers and taxi drivers may suggest that you have just got off a cruise ship and are not familiar with local prices. So, it is a good idea to get a feel for the prices of goods, services and taxis before you pull out your wallet. Delicate bargaining is usually required. Most shops and restaurants accept credit cards, but it's also a good idea to have some small cash on hand for taxi rides and street snacks. Banks give the best prices while prices at the airport tend to be poor. Getting a reservation at a fine dining restaurant in Cartagena can be difficult, especially in high season. It is a good idea to book a week or two before your arrival. You can do this by emailing the restaurant through your website. Many stores in Cartagena sell emeralds, but you have to know your stuff, how many jewelry for sale are fake. Buyer beware. Beware. cartagena spain tourist guide

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