Colombia

Food : Colombian Cuisine is very diverse and varies depending on the different regions of Colombia. In some areas you will find specialties like roasted ants or guinea pigs while in other areas Colombians wouldn't even touch those dishes.

Colombia is not a paradise for vegetarians as the Colombian diet includes a lot of meat. In the coastal areas you will find a good variety of fish, lobster and seafood often prepared with a sauce made out of coconut milk. The offer of fresh fruit is overwhelming and many of the varieties you have probably never heard of before.

In general breakfast is quite important in Colombia and consists of fruit juice, coffee or hot chocolate, fruit, eggs and bread. Lunch which is served between 12 and 14pm is the main meal of the day – at least in the countryside. A traditional main meal consists of a soup, a main dish, a drink and sometimes a dessert which is generally very sweet. The dinner is more like a snack. In the big cities the main meal often will be served around 7pm or 8pm.

Cultures : Many aspects of **Colombian culture** can be traced back to the early [culture of Spain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Spain) of the 16th century and its collision with Colombia's native civilizations. The Spanish brought [Catholicism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholicism), [Africans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantic_slave_trade), the feudal [encomienda](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encomienda) system, and a [caste](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casta) system that favored European-born whites. After independence from Spain, the *[criollos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Criollo_%28people%29%22%20%5Co%20%22Criollo%20%28people%29)* struggled to establish a pluralistic political system, between conservative and liberal ideals. The conservatives supported the involvement of the [Catholic Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church) in the state, while liberals favored the separation of these. The conservatives managed to outsource public education to the Catholic Church, and for many years, the church controlled the country's education system. Both parties engaged in multiple civil wars resulting in a slow development of the country and the isolation of regions until the end of the 19th century. Ethno-racial groups maintained their ancestral heritage culture: whites tried to keep themselves, despite the growing number of illegitimate children of mixed African or indigenous ancestry. These people were labeled with any number of descriptive names, derived from the *[casta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casta%22%20%5Co%20%22Casta)* system, such as [mestizo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mestizo), [mulatto](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mulatto) and [moreno](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pardo%22%20%5Co%20%22Pardo). Blacks and indigenous people of Colombia also mixed to form [zambos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zambo%22%20%5Co%20%22Zambo), creating a new ethno-racial group in society. This mix also created a fusion of cultures. [Carnivals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carnival_in_Colombia) for example became an opportunity for all classes and colors to congregate without prejudice. The introduction of the bill of rights of men and the abolishment of slavery (1850) eased the segregationist tensions between the races, but the dominance of the whites prevailed and prevails to some extent to this day.

Animals : Reptiles unique to Colombia includethe Magdalena River Turtle

 : Endemic mammals include the Cotton-top Tamarin

 : Freshwater fish genera found only in Colombia include the Emperor Tetra*Nematobrycon*

*:* Butterflies restricted to Colombia include*Anthirraea isabelae*

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