



TOUR UPDATE



The Newsletter of mikesworldtour

Tour Highlight:

April 2023
Salento, Colombia



Palm Trees and Lots of Coffee

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A QUICK HISTORICAL, POLITICAL, & SOCIAL OVERVIEW

Founded in 1842, Salento was one of the first settlements of the Spanish in the modern state of Quindío. It used to be a stop on the route from Cali/Popayán to Bogotá. However the route was redirected isolated the town when it was removed off the route causing a lot of the colonial architecture to be intact today. It is located in the coffee region in Colombia, and in 2011 was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The town had not always been so popular with international tourists, until the early 2000s the only tourists in Salento were national ones there to spend the weekend. Thanks to an article by a famous travel magazine the town literally exploded in tourism with people coming from around the world to see the colorful buildings and coffee farms. Today about 7,000 people live here.

Salento, Colombia



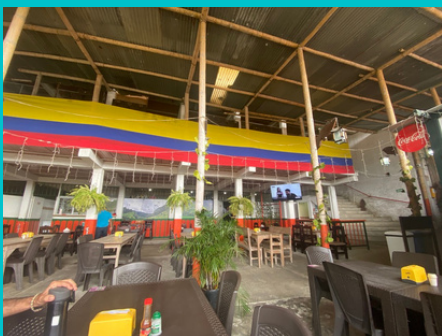
Some quick tips for Salento :

- The town is super small so you can walk everywhere just remember to bring a rain coat because it spontaneously rains
- There are jeep taxis to get from Salento to Cocora Valley which I highly recommend
- Be prepared for early nights and early mornings, the town kinda functions around sunlight so be prepared for that

FOOD

PATIO DE MI CASA

If you are looking for traditional Colombian food, this is the place for you. With super fair prices and complementary Arepas and Coffee this place is a great meal. The waiters here are also super friendly and are more than happy to explain specific menu items to you. The ambiance inside is also a vibe with massive windows allowing fresh air in. Overall great vibes!



COFFEE

Coffee is synonymous to Salento. With coffee tours and so many coffee shops in the streets throughout the town. With the early mornings we had it was nice to take advantage of the great coffee they have in the town. I recommend going to a bunch of different coffee shops to try the differences in the beans and the way they make it. Also checking out a coffee farm (more on that in a little) is a great way to learn how your cup of coffee is made. As someone who loves my cup of joe in the morning (sorry if that was cringe) it was really cool to be immersed in the coffee culture found in Colombia here.



Salento, Colombia

EXPERIENCES

We spent two full days in Salento and that felt like enough, but you can absolutely do more. Basically your time here is split in one main activity each day: Cocora Valley and Coffee farm tour. Obviously you can spend more time in each of these places, but centering our days around these two main activities felt sufficient for us.

CALLE REAL

Full of souvenir shops, cafes, restaurants, and people enjoying their days this is one of the main streets in Salento. Here is where you can find the iconic pictures of the streets with colorful houses (I mean the whole town is like that), but it does get very crowded during the day with tourists. The name comes from the history of the city, and in the past it was where the wealthy and prominent people from Salento lived. Located right by the main plaza this street is in the heart of the city, and is where most of the "economic activity" within the town related to tourism is.



MIRADOR DE SALENTO

Salento is located in the high mountains of Colombia, so this viewpoint provides spectacular views of the area surrounding it as well as all of its greenery. We spent a long time here just looking out into the distance appreciating the nature around us. Beware though that you cannot see the sun set from here (learned from prior experience unfortunately) since it is on the opposite side of the town.



PLAZA DE BOLIVAR

Like every small Latin American town, there is a main plaza with a church. At night they had kids rollerblading races which was fun to watch. In the plaza is a statue dedicated to Simon Bolivar and Mr. Pedro Vicente Henao who was one of the founders of Salento. Until 1865 the plaza was called Plaza de Mosquera and then they decided to change it to Bolivar (like many other main plazas in Colombia). In the plaza you can find restaurants and shops.



Salento, Colombia

PLAY TEJO

There is not much to do at night in Salento, but I would highly recommend playing tejo. There is a big tejo "court" in the middle of the town, and only costs \$5000 pesos (about \$1.15 USD) to play! Tejo is Colombia's national sport, and is kinda like bags/cornhole. You throw a metal disc at a clay board that has a target full of gunpowder and if you hit the target a big bang goes off meaning you did good! Tejo is a great social game to play with your friends, and for only \$1.15 USD it is a great thing to try!



COCORA VALLEY

This national park is over 580 km in area, and home to wax palm: the national tree of Colombia and the tallest palm tree in the world. The loop in this park takes about 3.5-4 hours to hike and is around 12ish kilometers. It is full of stunning views of the wax palm and other wildlife. To get here you have to taxi a taxi which is actually just the jeep that is pictured to the right. They squish a bunch of people in here but only costs \$2 for a trip there and back to totally worth it. The name of the park comes from a Quimbayan princess and means star of water.



Salento, Colombia

COFFEE TOUR



Salento is known as one of the most famous coffee towns in Colombia, and there are many farms located really close to the town to do a tour. There are some more popular tours for tourists, but I would advise against those since usually the person giving you the tour is hired to give tours and has no real knowledge about the farm. We did a tour of Finca Don Eduardo which lasted about 3 hours, and is giving by the owner a farm. The tour is in English, and you learn so much about the cultivation of coffee. For example did you know that Brazil is the largest coffee producer in the world then Vietnam, and then Colombia. Orrr did you know that Finland consumes the most coffee out of every country in the world (they average 10.5 cups of coffee per person per day!). Besides fun facts like that you also learn about the process of coffee as well as the different types. If you really want to learn about the process, then Finca Don Eduardo is the place to go on a tour!



I wanted to add a quick note that Salento has no airport which means you can take a bus from Bogota direct to Salento (10-12 hours) or fly to Pereira or Armenia and take a bus from there (both about 45 minute flight from Bogota and then hour on the bus. We flew into Pereira and then took a bus which was super easy!

See You On the Next Stop on the Tour!