



MAY 2023 | VOL. 31

TOUR UPDATE



The Newsletter of mikesworldtour

Tour Highlight:

May 2023
Bogotá, Colombia



In Da Bog!

Contributed by Michael Davis



A QUICK HISTORICAL, POLITICAL, & SOCIAL OVERVIEW

The modern political history of Colombia begins in the 1840s with political fights between the conservative and liberal parties that divided the country until 1880. A new constitution in 1886 was followed by conservative rule until 1930. During this time Colombia lost its territory that is now Panama due to U.S. influence to build the canal. During the 1900s (and somewhat still today) the country relied on exports including petroleum, coffee, and bananas. Liberals ruled from 1930-1946 followed by a coup in 1953 by Gustavo Rojas Pinilla. The violence during this time led to the formation of Marxist guerilla groups and drug trafficking which took over the country in the last 1900s. The 21st century saw Colombia sign a peace agreement with these rebels restoring peace. Earlier in 2023 Colombia elected its first leftist President, Gustavo Petro.

Bogotá, Colombia



Some quick tips for Bogotá :

- All the main tourist attractions are in El Centro but stay in the North because the center can get a little dicey at night
- Ubers require you to sit in the front (but they are really cheap... highly recommend)
- Sunday is a very holy day so expect big crowds at religious sights like Monserrate

FOOD

Bogotá truly is an international city with great cuisine from around the world. One of the things I loved about the food here is that there truly is something for everyone and every price range. From the high class restaurants in the North to the street vendors in La Candelaria, you really cannot go wrong. Below are a few of my favorite restaurants/food, and then the rest (still very good) will be listed after with a quick description.

PRUDENCIA

This was my most expensive meal all semester but sooo worth it. It is more an experience than a meal, it is 7 courses with a drink to pair to each course. Below is the lamb that was course number 4 of 7 and had this amazing sauce. My favorite part was the blue cheese ice cream they serve, I know it sounds horrible and I hate blue cheese but I am still thinking about this ice cream. Courses 2 and 3 they take you outside to watch your food being cooked. Amazing vibes if you are willing to pay the high price.



AJIACO

This and bandeja paisa are probably the two most famous dishes from Colombia. They have this literally everywhere but be sure to try it at the right place. It is a soup with chicken, potato, and other vegetables and really good. Bogotá is always this weird cool temperature, so the soup is nice to warm up on particularly cool days. I really liked the ajiaco from Sanalejo Café restaurant, and there are many really great places in La Candelaria to try it. This is a staple dish of Colombia so definitely give it a try.



GATO GRIS

Another restaurant in La Candelaria, I went here one Friday (every Friday in Bogotá I took myself out to lunch) for lunch and came back the next week because the food was so good. It has more of an international menu, and below are chicken curry balls with a traditional rice. The food is not expensive (I'd say no more than \$8 per person for your meal), and it is so so good. If you are looking for a solid restaurant in the La Candelaria area while you are sight seeing, this is a must.



Bogotá, Colombia

LA BRUJA

Featured on Anthony Bourdain's parts unknown, this is one of the oldest restaurants in Bogotá. The food here is really good, but be prepared to wait, to get a table for one person I had to wait 20-30 minutes. Going early will help you avoid this line because this place is one you should not skip out on. I had these tamales with a coffee and they were superb. Another great place if you are looking to try traditional Colombian food, and it is really really cheap as well.



CREPES & WAFFLES

Do not let the name fool you they have a giant menu here of food that is not dessert. With locations all around Bogotá and Colombia this is a favorite of local Colombians (they have locations in other Latin American countries and Spain). It was actually started by people who attended the University I did my exchange at (shoutout Los Andes) and they have ice cream here that is very rich and the perfect reward after a day of sightseeing or studying (the duality am I right).



FRUIT

Colombia is known for its fruit, so you have to take advantage. One of the first things I did was go to the grocery store and start picking things that looked good. My favorites are pitaya which is dragonfruit (only eat one per day or you will be in the bathroom) and maracuya. All of the fruits had such rich flavors which makes sense why all the smoothies I had in Colombia were so good (they don't even have to put milk in smoothies).



ORIGEN BISTRO

Also located in La Candelaria they have Colombian dishes that are a little "nicer" (dressed up more) and some international cuisine. I really enjoyed my meals here and the open space concept that they have. It was another frequent spot of my Friday lunches and I tried multiple dishes here that I really enjoyed. If you go here try the pechuga a la plancha which will give you so much food you won't be able to move for hours. It is also very reasonably priced at about \$7 per person so you do not need to break the bank to have a nice meal at a classy place like here. While a reservation is not required it was always crowded and they always had to squeeze me in for a table.



Bogotá, Colombia

OTHER RESTAURANTS

- Made restaurant: in La Candelaria with nice dishes that are not super expensive
- Dona Ofelia: I went here once a week it was so good located in La Candelaria, great vibes
- Cafe de la Peña
- Andres Carnes de Res: perfect dinner spot with a bunch of locations in the north, turns into a club at night
- La Bruja: in La Candelaria and inside a church!
- Empis: right by my school, great snack
- Mercado la Concordia: best bandeja paisa I had outside of Medellín
- Cafe Galeria Nuestro Herencia: coffee shop with immaculate vibes
- The Livinnx18 food truck fed me rice, chicken and salad 4 days a week for \$3.50 (steal I know)

GOING OUT

Bogota is a city known for its nightlife with a bunch of great places to go. All of them are in the North which is another reason I advise you to stay there so you do not need to take a 20 minute Uber home like I did. Drinks can be a little more expensive at these places, but that is the price to rumbiar (Spanish word for going out). Expect to hear lots of reggaeton music and people absolutely going crazy on the dance floor. Here are some places to go:

- Gringo Tuesdays: they have a language exchange around dinner time every Tuesday and then it turns into a big party, went here a bunch of times
- Kaput: massive club with more EDM music, multiple rooms with different DJs
- Theatron: the biggest club in Colombia and Latin America (I think), I never actually went here but always heard good things
- Videoclub
- Andres in Chia

AGUARDIENTE

Stronger than wine but weaker than hard liquor, this is a favorite of Colombians. People literally drink this everywhere, and I had to bring a few bottles home with me. The nickname for it is guaro, and you usually just drink it straight up.

CHIVA

Popular for birthdays and special events I went on two Chivas which is basically a drinking bus. Kinda like a party bus it drives around for a few hours late at night and you can bring your own drinks, always a great time and music is always blasting.

AGUILA

I was handed a free Aguila beer in the Barranquilla airport and it instantly became my beer of choice in Colombia. Very solid beer and never expensive. Other popular beers in Colombia include Poker and Club Colombia.



Bogotá, Colombia

EXPERIENCES

There is so so much to do in Bogotá, from great museums to nature to fantastic neighborhoods to explore. It was really hard for me to fit everything on this list of stuff to do because the city has so much to offer. Many of the big tourist sites are in the center, La Calendaria, but I also have some places to get off the beaten path. Bogotá is a massive and bustling Latin America city with a wide variety of activities.

PLAZA DE BOLÍVAR

Named plaza mayor until 1821, you can expect to find hundreds of pigeons and the presidential palace in this plaza (hi Petro). The square originates to 1539 after Bogotá was founded, and was used as a market, bullfights, and other public events while the Spanish controlled Colombia. Besides the presidential palace, the justice palace and primary catholic church are also located within the plaza. Quick advice: as a tourist you really should not go south of this plaza while visiting, but here is perfectly safe.

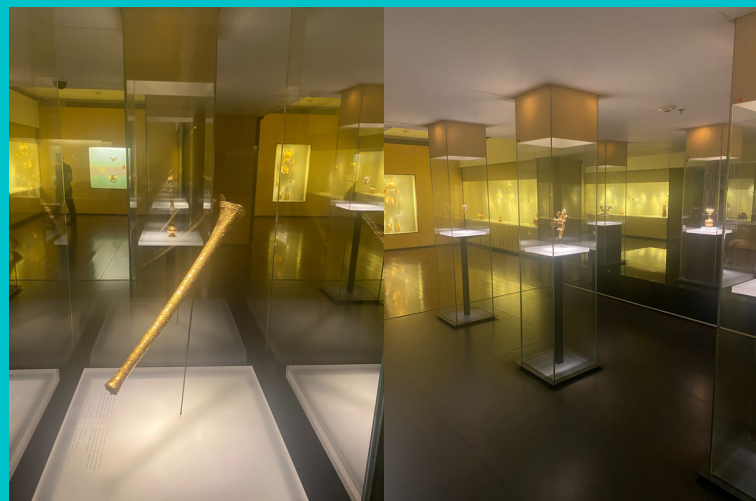


BOTERO MUSEUM

One of my favorite museums I have ever been to and best of all is it's totally free! Botero has been a famous artist since the late 1960s in Colombia famous for making ~large~ people in his work. Originally from Antioquia, he wanted to donate his work to Medellín, but they took too long so he gave it to the city of Bogotá (classic Latin America taking a while *jaja*). He donated 123 of his own work and 85 other works from international artists to make the museum. His only request with his donation was that the museum would be free to the public.

GOLD MUSEUM

In all honesty, I didn't love this museum, but it is really important as it is home to over 30,000 Pre-Colombian pieces of gold work. It is the largest Pre-Hispanic collection of gold and silver in the world, and has various textile and stones that once belonged to ancient tribes within Colombia. The idea for the museum began in 1939, and the first exhibit was in 1940. The real museum did not open until 1959, and it was renovated in 2008 to become the museum that it is today. There are multiple rooms sorted by time period and an interactive exhibit for visitors.



Bogotá, Colombia

MONSERRATE

Overlooking Bogotá in the mountains is a little church that people flock to every day. You have two options to see Monserrate: either hike and hour (it is lowkey a hard hike) or take a tram up. I hiked and it was very humbling especially when locals were climbing barefoot. Sunday is the most crowded day since it is a religious site. In 1620 this church was built in the famous hills surrounding Bogotá today by Pedro Fernández de Valenzuela. In 1650 a house was also built next to the church, and a path was built for pilgrims coming. The church was completed in 1925 and the tram up was built in 1939.



COFFEE TASTING

If you read my Salento blog, you know Colombia is famous for coffee. One cool thing you can do in Bogotá is a coffee tasting where you learn about different types of coffee and how roasting coffee changes the flavor of it. I learned so much about coffee about stuff I don't think about when I am sitting my morning cup of brew. One thing they really stress is that there is no best coffee, there is only the coffee that you think is the best depending on what you like. The official name for this is called Catación, and if you love coffee highly recommend but be prepared to stay up all night from the caffeine.



TEJO (AGAIN)

Also included in my Salento blog was Tejo, so if you want to learn more about the history of it check out that blog (number 27). Bogota was where I actually played Tejo first, and it is a big social aspect for some Colombians. Here people have a drink and play something similar to the US version of bags/cornhole but instead it is a rock and gunpowder (classic Colombia am I right). Anyways, if you can handle the loud booms constantly going off while you play this is a great activity to do with friends while you are in Bogotá. It is also fairly inexpensive to play and unlike places in the US they do not do time limits so you could stay here all night if you wanted to.



Bogotá, Colombia

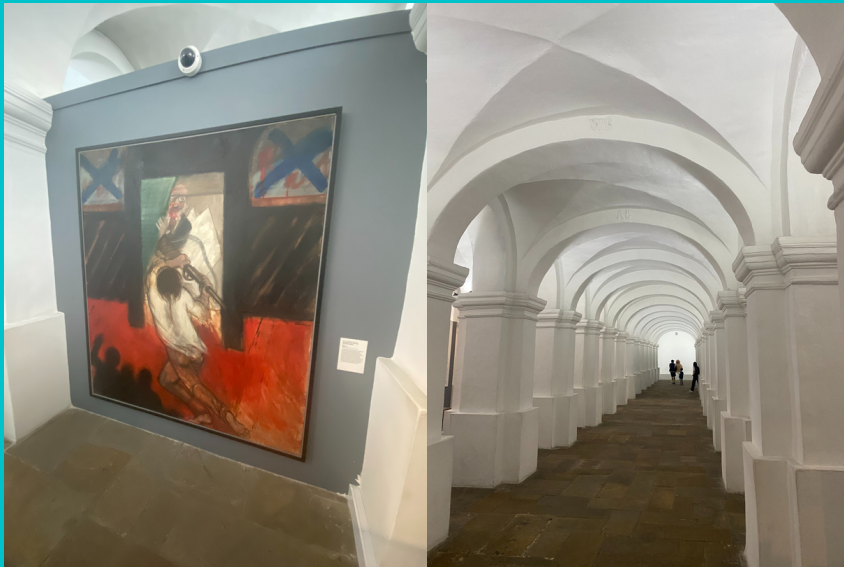
PARQUE SIMÓN BOLÍVAR

One of the largest urban parks in the world at over 1000 acres this park is named after the liberator Simón Bolívar like everything else in Latin America. It is lowkey in the middle of nowhere, and it can be hard to get an Uber back from here so plan ahead. Anyway, this park has so much green space, a lake, and other sitting areas that you could easily spend a day here. I walked around here for 4 hours and barely saw half of it, so plan to make time to see its entirety. It was designed in 1982 and in 1995 pedestrian walkways were built to make it more accessible. Today numerous events are held here.



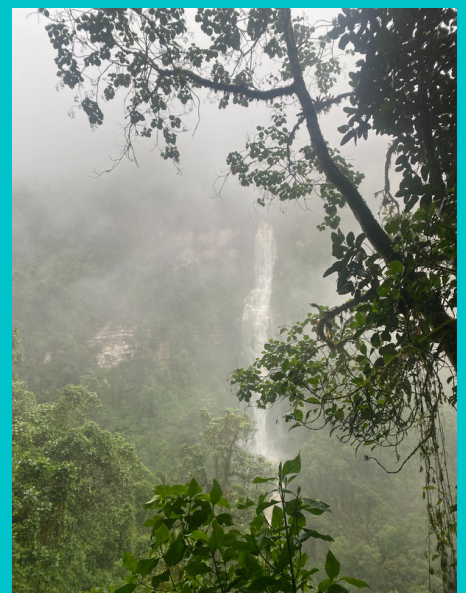
NATIONAL MUSEUM

Built in 1823 makes this museum the oldest in Colombia and one of the oldest in South America. It is under the ministry of culture (which is why its expensive to get in) and has a large variety of exhibits and rooms relating to Colombian culture and history. Initially it was in a plant connected to a prison that was open until 1946. In 1948 it was transformed to hold more exhibits for the museum, and in 1975 it was fully restored. There are over 20,000 pieces in this museum ranging from the Pre-Colombian phase to more modern works of today.



MORE ACITIVITES!

- Day trip to La Chorrera falls to see the tallest waterfall in Colombia
- Parque de los Periodistas
- Chapinero neighborhood for restaurants and nightlife
- Zona T district for nightlife
- Zona Rosa area for shopping
- Check out graffiti and art in La Calendaria



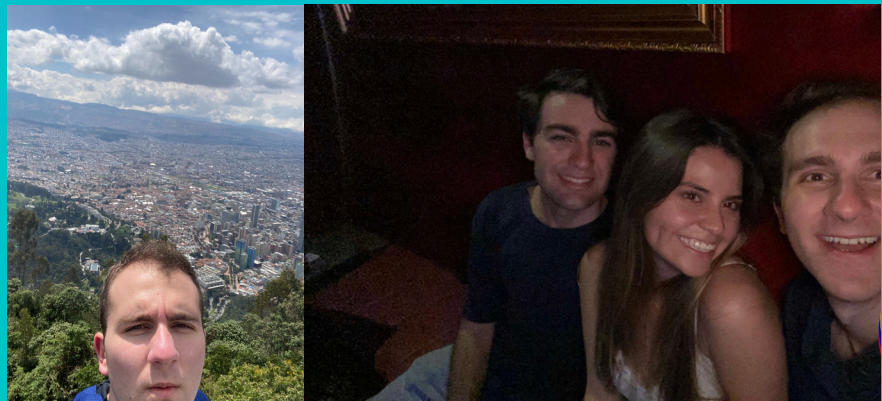
La Chorrera Waterfall

Bogotá, Colombia

OTHER TIPS/INFO

- Head to Zipaquirá to check out the Salt Church
- You can get your yellow fever vaccine for free the Bogotá El Dorado airport
- Colombians are very friendly people unless you spell Colombia as Columbia
- It rains like a lot here and kinda randomly (usually in early afternoon) so bring a raincoat everywhere
- A lot of Colombians, especially younger ones, speak English fluently but hey practice your Spanish
- The altitude here is no joke so give yourself a day or two to adjust
- Although its cold the UV is always like 11 so wear sunscreen even if you think you do not need it

The first picture is from my first week in Bogotá in January and the second picture is from May in my last week. Not to get too nostalgic (gross) but it is crazy to think how much I have learned about Bogotá and Colombia during this semester, and I hope this blog can help you learn a bit as well. Colombia is a country with so much to offer, and I hope you can visit it sometime soon (only 4.5 hours from Houston! :)



This blog also marks the end of my year abroad. Thank you to all the readers that have followed me on this journey to 17 new countries (& 3 old ones) and numerous cities. From Europe to South America this year has been an incredible experience of immense learning. Looking back it is insane how many cool places I was able to see, new people I got to meet, and memories I made. Although this is the end of my junior year abroad, it is not the end of Mike's World Tour. I hope to bring more blogs to you all very soon of new places and wonders, and although I do not know the next chance I will have to travel for a year straight the mentality and life lifestyle of Mike's World Tour will continue to live on. Thanks for following along this year and I cannot wait to...

See You On the Next Stop on the Tour!