



TOUR UPDATE



The Newsletter of mikesworldtour

Tour Highlight:

April 2023
Cartagena, Colombia



Where History and Modernity meet

Contributed by Michael Davis



A QUICK HISTORICAL, POLITICAL, & SOCIAL OVERVIEW

The city of Cartagena was founded in 1533 by Spanish Pedro de Heredia. The first Spanish to arrive here were seeking a new life and actually named the city Cartagena de la Indias because there was already a Cartagena in Spain. In the first 20 years there were only about 200 inhabitants in the city, but this began to change. All of the Spanish's riches from South America were transported through the city which allowed people to get rich transporting goods. This also attracted more settlers to come to the city in search of getting rich. The Spanish began protecting the city with the walls, and in 1741 it became a key city in the war against the English. The city was the first city to declare independence from Spain and continued to be an important port. Today the port focuses on exporting various petrochemicals.

Cartagena, Colombia



Some quick tips for Cartagena :

- A lot of the popular places to go out will make you pay a semi-pricy cover to go inside
- Everything is super walkable in the old city
- Since its on the ocean it is really hot and sunny most of the time so do not forget to dress appropriately and wear sun screen

FOOD

ALQUIMICO BAR

This bar was super cool. It has three floors and on each floor is a different menu where they serve different drinks. It does get pretty crowded, and if you do not get there early enough you will have to wait on the second floor until there is space on the third floor. Either way you still get to enjoy really creative drinks. This is an espresso martini from the second floor which overlooked the bar on the first floor providing great entertainment.



RESTAURANTE ROBERT

With all of the tourists in Cartagena it can sometimes be hard to find a cheap meal. Well... this entire fish, rice, salad, and plantains was less than \$5. If you are walking on the street highly recommend trying one of the menu del días since they are usually really cheap and great food. Serving the fish like this is very traditional to the coastal region of Colombia.



MONTESACRO RESTO BAR

I was told that the Risotto Meloso here would change my life (Shout out Annalise. It was really really good. It has peaches and blue cheese inside which does not sound that good, but was actually such a great flavor combination. If you are ever in Cartagena I would highly recommend checking this place out, vibes were just as on point as the food here is.



Cartagena, Colombia

EXPERIENCES

Cartagena has a wide variety of activities and sights to satisfy your needs. The old city and walls provide the historical sights that is interesting to learn about the history of the country. The mini harbor in the city offers open bar sunset cruises where you can see the sun set on the skyline and/or you can opt for the all day boat adventure.

OLD WALLS



Finally finished in 1796 these walls are over 400 years old. The construction began in 1614 under King Phillip III, but during its construction the city constantly was being invaded by pirates. The first stage took 15 years and built 15 bastions. The city itself was established in 1533, and was a key route on the transatlantic trade routes. These walls served as an important barrier once they were finished to protect the old city. Once finished it turned the city into a fortress that couldn't be invaded. It is listed as an Unesco heritage site, and the walls run approximately 11 kilometer long.

Bovedas means vaults in Spanish, and here housed dungeons as well as prisons during the 1700s. They were the last part of the fortified border in Cartagena built to protect the city. Under the Spanish they also served as barracks, and held nationalist prisoners during the fights for independence. The vaults are located between the Santa Clara and Santa Catalina forts. Today, the city has converted them into art galleries, souvenir shops, and bars. Each vault hosts a different store or bar and it has caused this location to be a big place for tourists to be their souvenirs (may be speaking from personal experience).

LAS BOVEDAS



PLAZA DE SANTA TERESA

Full of restaurants and shops this plaza is right by the walls. You actually can see the view of the plaza from the walls, and it is very common to see people hanging out there, and enjoying a meal. It is technically not a colonial square since it was established later in 1609 after the restructuring of the covenant of Santa Teresa (hence the name lol). It was technically founded by a group of nuns at the time who were a part of the order (I bet they would not be happy today with all the immodest clothing in the city jaja).



Cartagena, Colombia

PLAZA DE ADUANA

This is actually the oldest plaza in Cartagena (there are a lot so big achievement!). It was originally made to be the parade ground so the colonizers (Spanish) built the administrative offices around this square. Inside the plaza is a statue to Cristopher Columbus (surprised it still stands). The man who founded Cartagena, Pedro de Heredia, actually lived in a mansion that was in this plaza during the colonial era. Surrounding the plaza are colonial era building that are full of colors representing the picturesque image of Cartagena.



PLAZA DE LOS COCHES & TORRE DE RELOJ



Its real name is plaza de Ecuador named after a treaty signed between the two countries in 1519. The name has actually changed multiple times, and has been named by a specific person living in the square (talk about a big ego) or items that were being sold here at the time. For a while it was named merchants square because a lot of merchants came here to sell their goods. Slaves were also sold in this square during colonial times. A statue dedicated to the founder of the city is located in the square as well as a clock tower which connected Getsemani to the old city.

SANTO DOMINGO SQUARE



Today, this square is popping at night (excuse the slang). But literally so many bars, nightclubs, antique shops, jewelry stores, cafes, and restaurants are in this square or right by. There are a few restaurants that have tables inside the square so you can eat lunch and admire the beautiful Gertrudis. Oh yea forgot to mention that inside the square is a Botero statue (more on that in 2 blogs!). The statue was donated to the city in 200, and the citizens of Cartagena apparently fell in love with her. There is a legend in the city that if a lady touches her breasts then she will have long relationships (do with that what you please).

Cartagena, Colombia

BALUARTE DE SANTO DOMINGO



In 1614 this was where the first bastion of the wall was built. Drake had attacked the city in this location in 1586, and they decided to lay the first stone here. It got its name from a convent that was located close by (notice how important religion is in colonial times). Something noteworthy about this bastion is that it clearly represents the Italian style it was built under at the time. It has a space to shelter the guard in shade while they are on watch per the photo (good for that because it was super sunny here all day). This defended the most exposed part of the city, look how close to the water it is!

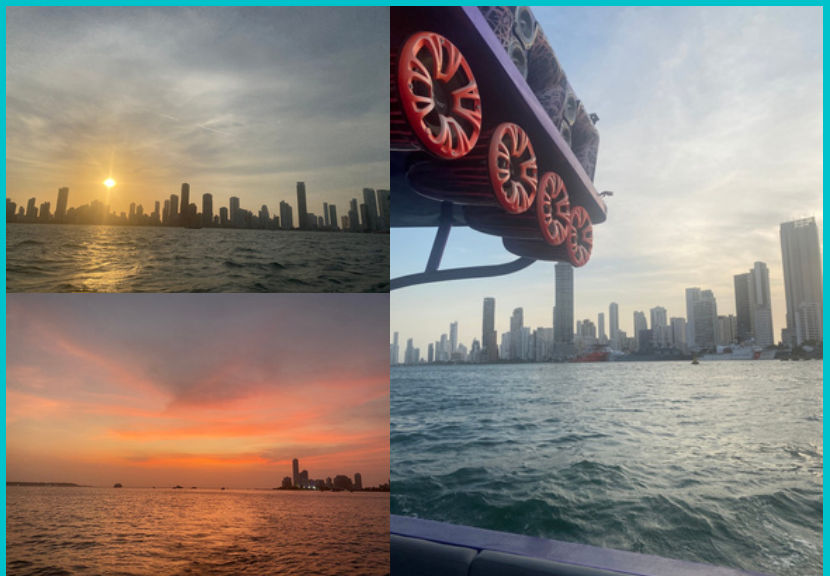
SANTUARIO DE SAN PEDRO CLAVER

Built in 1580 this church was built and dedicated to the catholic order and San Pedro Claver whose remains are at the main alter of the church. It was built between 1580 and 1654, and built to follow the colonial architecture rules at the time. In 1995 the city declared the church a national monument due to its historic significance. San Pedro Claver was a patron of human rights and the church has information inside about him. It is a favorite spot for Colombians to have weddings in as well.



SUNSET CRUISE

If you have some extra time I would recommend doing a sunset cruise. Ours was two hours and had an open bar (that worked if you know what I mean), and only costed about \$10. You get spectacular views of the skyline of the city, and they play music the whole time so you can jam with the new strangers that you have just met. Being a city on the ocean it was really cool to look at the buildings and old city from afar on the boat.



Cartagena, Colombia

CASTLE SAN FELIPE DE BARAJAS

the castle was built in 1657 by the Spanish, but constantly was being seized by the French and English with the French even taking over the castle in 1697. It was listed as a World Heritage site in 1984, and has undergone lots of renovations throughout its history. It was built with cement and rock and located on top of the San Lázaro hill which made it in a strategic location to defend for the Spanish. Because of the height of the castle, movement of the enemy could be seen really far away, and because of this helped the Spanish win decisive battles against the English and French that they normally would not have won.



BOAT TOUR TO ROSARIO ISLANDS, SNORKEL TO PABLO ESCOBAR'S SUNKEN PLANE, AND BARÚ BEACH



If you find yourself with extra time in Cartagena, look into to doing an all day boat trip! We did one that was relatively cheap and included snorkeling to see a sunken plan of Pablo Escobar, lunch, ceviche, fresh fruit, and access to multiple beaches. It was nice to just chill in the boat all day and enjoy the ocean. Ours also had an option to swim with plankton at night which we were going to do, but you do not get back until 10pm if you do that so just something to keep in mind.



CALLE DE LAS SOMBRILLAS

Created in 2018 as a tourist attraction in the city, this alleyway used to be a big spot for drug dealing and violence. The architect looking to relocate the violence and drugs decided to put umbrellas at the top of the street. This quickly became a huge spot for tourists and now is a very safe and drug free area.



See You On the Next Stop on the Tour!