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TOUR UPDATE



The Newsletter of mikesworldtour

Tour Highlight:

April 2023
Medellín, Colombia



A Color Explosion

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A QUICK HISTORICAL, POLITICAL, & SOCIAL OVERVIEW

The city of Medellín was founded in 1675 as a mining town, and quickly grew into being an important industrial center for Colombia. With the Panama Canal being created the city once again became important for industry. Being located in the mountain the city has been home to many guerilla fighters who have clashed with the government inside and outside the city. The city was also home to many Narco-traffickers in the late 20th century whose violence led the city to claim the title as the most dangerous city in the world in the 1990s. Since then the city has undergone a transformation using art, infrastructure, and nature. The city installed a metro system connecting areas of the city, and has found ways to reinvent itself to make it a safer and more sustainable place to live. This change is evident in the various parks and murals in the city.

Medellín, Colombia

Some quick tips for Medellín :

- El Poblado is where you are probably going to stay and is sometimes called "gringolandia"
- Take the metro, it is super cheap and connects the entire city together and to the cable car
- If you decide to go to Guatapé make sure to leave really early to beat traffic or it will take you an extra 2 hours to get there
 - It also allows you to beat crowds waiting in line to climb the stairs (the wait is painful)

FOOD

SWEET CORN

AREPA

Arepas are one of the main dishes that you will find in Colombia. Whether it be on the street or in a restaurant, Arepas come in all shapes and sizes with different topping and add ins. My absolute favorite kind of arepa is a sweet corn arepa which is so freaking delicious. Usually arepas are savory, so this one was a real treat and it even had some cheese on top (chefs kiss).



NARCOBOLLO

This restaurant did not originally have this name, but specific events led to it. Bollos are like buns which both were dishes we tried below at the restaurant. The police and military broke into their house where they made bollos because they heard about the restaurant having these white balls and thought.... The owner decided to poke fun at the situation leading to its current name today. This dish on top is called a caribanola and has beef inside where the bottom is a bollo which is sweet dough.



BANDEJA PAISA

Paisas means a person that is from Medellín, and bandeja paisa is like a mix of a bunch of different things together. The dish bandeja paisa originated in Medellín and usually includes some avocado, beans, an egg, and an assortment of meat. This meal will make you so full that you will not be able to move for hours after, but all of the flavors in it are so good together that you will be feeling so content.

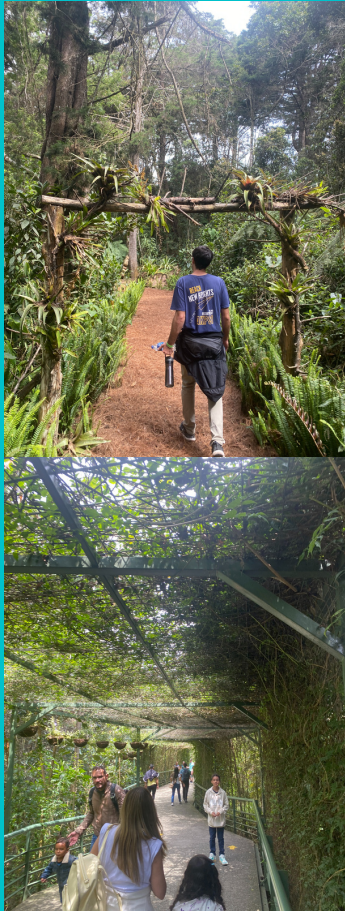


Medellín, Colombia

EXPERIENCES

There are so many great things to do in Medellín all over the city. You also have the chance to get out of the city in seeing Guatapé which is about 2 hours away depending on traffic. With a good metro as well you really have no excuse to see the entire city. We did 2 bike tours (one general & one food) to get a better idea of the city and did two out of city explorations I will cover in a little!

PARQUE ARVÍ



Take two cable cars and you will find yourself at a 16,000 hectare park with 54 kilometers of walking trails. The park was initially discovered in 1541, and has consistently been an important part of the city's economy. We did a 4 kilometer hike through a forrest where we could see a wide variety of plants and animals. They also have this great market right outside the park where I got some great snacks. There is a free path, but the employees at the park warn that it is not fully secure so we opted to enter on the paid path. The cable car connecting the park is one of a kind and is being exported to other places around the world. This park is so massive that for some of the trails you have to take a bus to get there, luckily the park has busses that run to the different trails in the park. Unfortunately, these busses are not very frequent so make sure to plan ahead to enjoy this natural wonder of the city.



PADDLE TENNIS & ESTRELLA TOWN

If you find yourself in Medellín for a long time or are just a big fan of paddle tennis, this is the place for you. In Padel is an outdoor paddle tennis court in Medellín where you can book courts per hour for a fraction of their cost in the US. We came here and played for two hours and it was a great time. It is located in the Estrella town which is just south of Medellín and is pretty accessible by the metro line which has a stop here. The town was founded in 1685, and is home to about 50,000 residents who are trying to escape the noise and hustle of the city while still reaping the benefits of living near a big city. We had dinner in the main square and it was absolute vibes.



Medellín, Colombia

PLAZA BOTERO

Home to 23 Botero statues that were donated to the city in 2002 this plaza is one of the most famous place sin the city. Botero's larger than life style can be seen throughout the plaza. There is some current controversy relating to the plaza in the city. The plaza is locate din the center of the city, and has a police barricade and checkpoint controlling who enters the plaza (mainly tourists). This has led people in the city to say the plaza is not for them. Botero's intention with the plaza was to bring more tourists to the center to make it safer.



PARQUE SAN ANTONIO

Located in one of the oldest neighborhoods of the city, in the 1970s the Banco Central Hipotecario knocked down various buildings for a housing project. This project did not come to fruition, and the area began deteriorating. The city decided to put urban structures here including multiple Botero statues. In 1995 a bomb exploded inside one of the Botero statues in the park killing 23 people. Botero agreed to rebuild the sculpture, but wanted the exploded one to stay to serve as a reminder of the violence.



PARQUES DEL RIO

The metro was built along the river that goes through the city, so recently the city has take advantage of its geography and locations. The city created a walkable park area with 71,800 meters of public walking areas, over 38,000 meters of green areas, and planted over 280 trees. This was honestly one of my favorite places in the entire city, and you have fantastic views of the north and south of the city from here. The park represents the city's expansion to make it more of a sustainable living area, and the city plans to expand the park as well as build various other parks along the river within the next ten years. .



Medellín, Colombia

PARQUES DE LAS LUCES



Filled with 300 light columns that are each 24 meters tall this park has over 2,100 lights going at once that simulate the phases of the moon.

Earlier this was the location of the main marketplace in Medellín, but an issue with the railway in 1960's moved the market from here. The area went into a decline and became violent and dangerous, and in 2005 the city decided to use art to make this area safe again and "brighten" (nice pun there) the area.

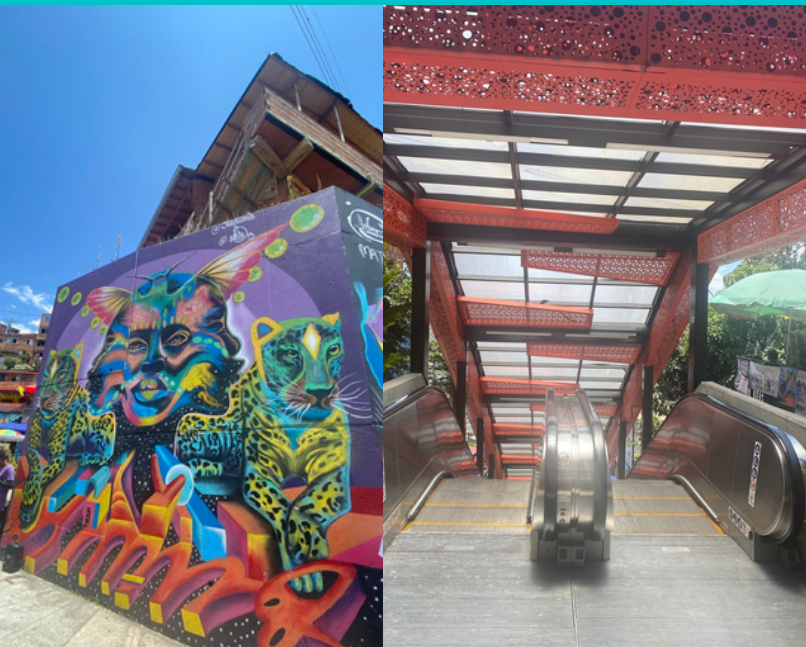


INDUSTRIALES NEIGHBORHOOD

Located right next to El Poblado you will probably pass this neighborhood on the metro. I recommend getting off at the metro stop and walking around the neighborhood to learn about the city's recent transformation. Big corporations used to be in this area polluting the river and the area causing residents to not want to live here. The city kicked the companies out of the neighborhood and put them outside the city over the mountains allowing start ups and green entrepreneurs to come in. Today it is a much more walkable area with restaurants, bars, and these sun signs (look at picture on right) representing that the business there uses clean energy.



COMUNA 13



In the early 2000s this neighborhood was one of the most violent in the city due to Guerilla fighters hiding in the neighborhood (due to its proximity to the mountains) and the government/paramilitary fighters coming here looking for guerillas. Multiple government campaigns unleashed violence onto the area where innocent bystanders were killed in crossfire. The area underwent a transformation with escalators being put inside to connect the northern areas of the neighborhood to the southern. They also use music, art, graffiti, and other forms of expression in the neighborhood to share their history, but also show how they are paving the way for their future.

Medellín, Colombia

GUATAPÉ

Probably one of the most colorful towns in the world, this city is on a lake that was created when a dam was put in place near the town. The city was founded in the early 1800s and is home to just under 10,000 residents. The buildings and baseboards outside each of the buildings have been preserved from the colonial era, and the colors in the city continue to draw in residents. We also did a boat tour here that takes you on the lake seeing mansions on the water.



PIEDRA DE PEÑOL

At 220 meters high, it takes 702 stairs to get to the top of this rock. On top there are restaurants, souvenir shops, and ice cream stands to enjoy the day. Beware of long lines trying to climb the rock as you will have to wait in line in order to get up to the top of here. The rock was first climbed in 1954, and then they put stairs so everyone can enjoy the view. It is the tallest free standing rock structure that we can climb today. The stone has actually grown (somehow) and the owners have had to add stairs.



PARQUE POBLADO

In the heart of the Poblado neighborhood lies the Poblado park. Here you can expect to find people hanging out, performing dances/songs, stalls to buy souvenirs, and so much more. There is an amphitheater inside the park which makes it a great space for the community. Here is where colonial art began to take its form in 1618, and the park was officially commemorated in 1966. This marked the 350 anniversary of the city of Medellín, and the El Poblado neighborhood is one of the oldest areas in the city.



See You On the Next Stop on the Tour!