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TOUR UPDATE



The Newsletter of mikesworldtour

Tour Highlight:

February 2022
Barranquilla, Colombia



A 72 Hour Party

Contributed by Michael Davis



A QUICK HISTORICAL, POLITICAL, & SOCIAL OVERVIEW

I am dedicating this section of this blog to the history of Carnival rather than the history of Colombia which will appear in a blog later (Stay tuned!) Very little is actually known about the true beginning of Carnival in Barranquilla, but many suspect it is a celebration welcoming spring. It has origins in the Pagan ceremonies, Catholicism, and the ethnic diversity of the city. It originated as a holiday for the slaves, but has grown to celebrate European, African, and Indigenous traditions. In 1888 was when King Momo appeared as the main character in the Carnival celebration, and in 1899 was when the city first elected a board to oversee the Carnival celebrations. The first ever Queen of Carnival was elected in 1918, and was Alicia Lafaurie Roncallo. In 2003 the Carnival celebration in Barranquilla was proclaimed by UNESCO as a masterpiece of oral and intangible heritage of humanity.

Barranquilla, Colombia



Some quick tips for Barranquilla & Carnaval :

- Almost everything for Carnaval requires a ticket, so try to buy them ahead of time
- Some events you can buy tickets outside, but you have to negotiate otherwise you will be overcharged
- Uber is widely used in Barranquilla and a much cheaper option, just remember to sit in the front seat

CARNAVAL

Welcome to one of the wildest weekends ever: Carnaval. From parades to street dancing to concerts there is so so much to do during the weekend of Carnaval. The weekend officially begins Saturday with the first parade and ends on Tuesday with the final parade, but there are various events taking place before the weekend starts.

PARADES



There are 3 main parades during the weekend: La Batalla de Flores on Saturday, La Gran Parada on Sunday, and Gran Parada de Comparsas Monday. There is also a parade Tuesday where everyone dresses in black in honor of Joselito and the ending of Carnaval. We paid to sit in the stands called Palcos and it was a fantastic decision in terms of safety and viewing the parade. They also sell food and drinks on the stands since you cannot bring them inside. The parades last about 6 hours each day (yea i know a lot of time) but are so much fun. They play music during down time and I will include some fun songs later! The first day of the parade is where the famous ride in the floats, and the other two days are more cultural groups doing customary dances to styles such as Cumbia. The people we talked to in the palcos said that they enjoyed the last 2 days more because it was more cultural. Vibes were absolutely immaculate in the palcos and I thoroughly enjoyed each day of the parades. If you ever end up coming to Carnaval in Barranquilla make sure you stand up when the Queen passes by, the people in the stands were sure to make sure we understand that! :)

Barranquilla, Colombia

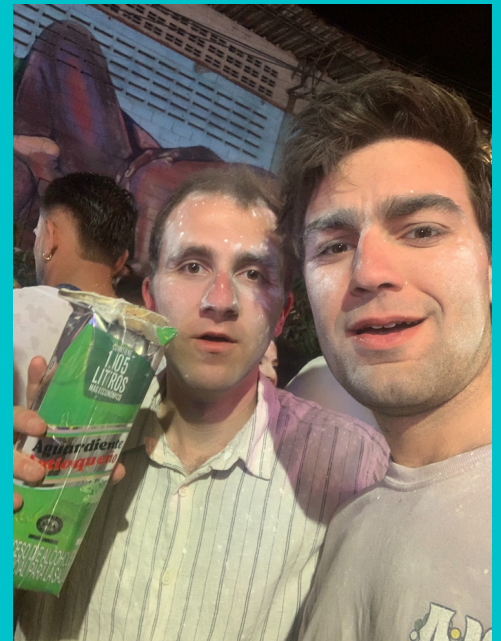
STREET DANCING



I wish I could include clickable videos in this blog because there are so many fun videos I have of myself dancing in the streets. We met this really nice family who brought us to a bar that was blasting music on a random street in the city. Hundreds of people were gathered in the street just dancing and having a good time. Alcohol was flowing, hips were moving, and everyone had wide smiles on their faces. This is common in the city during Carnaval, and you can expect to hear music blasting on random side streets throughout the weekend.

BAILA LA CALLE

Baila La Calle is a street dance "festival", it reminded me a lot of Lollapalooza in Chicago. They had 5+ stages of different music playing and like 10 blocks of the street were closed off. Each stage played different music, and people were throwing corn and spraying each other with foam. OH I forgot to mention this earlier, but a big part of Carnaval is throwing corn and spraying foam (I never really understood why) but everyone does it and it was very fun. The entrance to the festival was about \$12 USD and totally worth it because we stayed until 2:30am. We bought tickets right outside, and some new friends we made ensured that we did not get scammed for the price. Young people everywhere were sharing bottles of Aguardiente (Colombian hard liquor) and just having a good time.



VALLENATO CONCERT



Vallenato is a traditional Colombian musical style that is very popular for Carnaval. We happened to stumble on this concert and bought tickets for ~\$18 USD. The main act was Diego Daza and he is a really famous Vallenato singer in Colombia. People were dancing and at one point every help their chairs up was shaking them in the air (so fun!). This family invited us to sit with them and we enjoyed the music together late into the night/morning (if you go to Carnaval don't expect to sleep like ever).

Barranquilla, Colombia

CARNAVAL PLAYLIST

If you ever decide to go to Barranquilla for Carnaval, here are some songs that will help you be ready for the crazy weekend:

- Mujeriego by Ryan Castro
- Decimas by Carlos Vives (my personal fav)
- Arrebatado by El Pepe Show
- La Espelucá by Twister el Rey
- Quien Lo Vive Es Quien Lo Goza by Checo Acosta
- Trago Doble by Diego Daza

EXPERIENCES

You might be asking yourself why would I even visit Barranquilla if it was not for Carnaval. Luckily, there are many things to do in the city beyond just this weekend. It is really close to the beach and the food here was so so good.

METROPOLITAN CATHEDRAL OF BARRANQUILLA & PLAZA DE PAZ

The Cathedral was created in 1955, and took over 27 years to build. It is in the modernist style which is obvious once you see the church. It was designed by an Italian architect Angelo Mazzoni de Grande. The inside has these beautiful stained glass windows that go up and down the entire church. The church is located directly across the street from the plaza de paz. The plaza was initially built to house people when Pope John Paul II visited in 1986. There are many protests that happen in the square as well as Presidential candidate Carlos Gaviria spoke here in 2006 during his campaign.



VENTANA AL MUNDO MONUMENT

Unfortunately, I only passed the giant monument in taxi on the way back into the city, and could not get a great pic. The monument was built in 2018 to commemorate the Central American and Caribbean Games which took place in the city that year. Diana Escrocia Borelly is the architect, and was aided by the company Tecnoglass. The meaning behind it is that when the door are closed, the window still remains. Very poetic if you ask me.

Barranquilla, Colombia

EL PRADO NEIGHBORHOOD



Designed in the 1920s by Karl and Robert Parrish the neighborhood features mansions in the style of places around the world. German, Italian, Syrian, Jewish, and Lebanese merchant built these home and lived in the neighborhood which features wide avenues and oak and willow trees spanning the street.

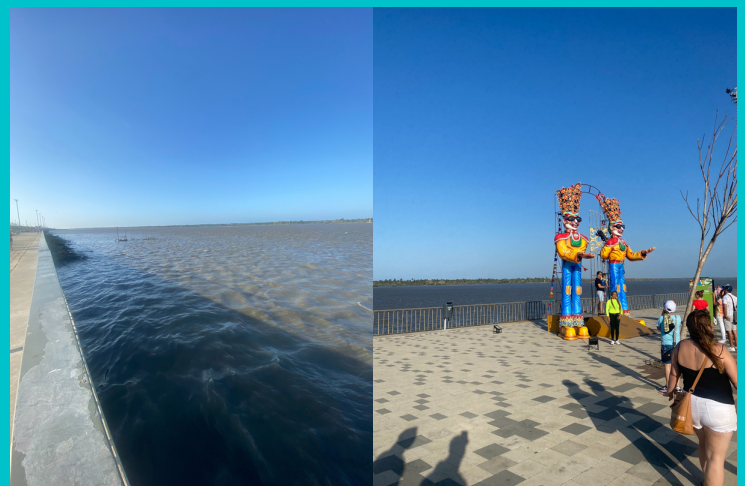
BEACH!



One of the best things about Barranquilla is that it is only 30 minutes away from the beach. After the craziness of Carnaval, it is very common for locals to go to the beach and relax after the hectic weekend. We got recommended a beach club that was \$2.50 to enter and provided a very relaxing afternoon before we went back to Bogotá.

GRAN MALECÓN

The Magdalena river flows right alongside Barranquilla and separates the state its in (Atlántico from the other state of Magdalena). The river is very important throughout Colombia as in the Magdalena valley there are rich oil settlements that have been exploited and are now a giant part of the Colombian economy. If you go a few miles up the river towards the ocean you can actually see where the river combines into the Gulf. We did not have time to see this, but if you do I would highly recommend as I heard great things about it!



Barranquilla, Colombia

FOOD & DRINK

COCO LOCO



A beach drink that is served inside a coconut. It tasted similar to a piña colada with alcohol in it. We opted to split one since we had a flight later that day, and that was a great choice. This drink is notorious for getting people drunk, and I can see why. It did not have a strong alcohol taste, but after two of these you are absolutely set for your beach day :)

Since the city is so close to the water fish is practically a part of every single meal. They almost always serve the fish to you whole and it is your job to get the meat off (really making us work for our food). The traditional cuisine is called Costeño which is a stew like dish with meat and yuca as well as plantains inside the stew. We had it for dinner one night and unfortunately I forgot to get a picture (I will try harder next time). I also wanna give a shoutout to the friends restaurant in Barranquilla because they had great food, prices, and hospitality.

FISH & OTHER FOOD



Finally I want to take a second to appreciate that once I arrived at the airport they handed me a free beer, such warm hospitality. This really set the vibe on how fun this weekend was going to be.

See You On the Next Stop on the Tour!