

Colombia

Medical Summary

The health risk information presented here is summarized from Shoreland Travax[®], a decision-support tool used by health care providers to perform a detailed health risk analysis based on specific locations, individual travel styles, and traveler risk behaviors. Travax provides practitioners current, independently researched malaria risk and prevention recommendations in a map-based format that goes beyond the annual WHO and US CDC statements included here. Not included here are current reports from Travax of disease outbreaks or environmental events that may pose elevated risks to travelers' health and safety. The Providers section of this site offers a directory of health care providers who utilize Shoreland Travax for travel health counseling. Learn more about the detailed reports and maps available from these practitioners (includes links to samples).

General Information

Colombia is a developing nation classified as upper middle income. Located in northwestern South America along the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea (north of Peru and south of Venezuela), the climate is extremely diverse with classifications that range from humid equatorial (no dry season) to dry (semi arid), with cooler temperatures in some high-altitude areas.

Vaccinations

Yellow Fever

An official yellow fever vaccination certificate may be required depending on your itinerary. Vaccination is usually recommended if you'll be traveling in areas where there is risk of yellow fever transmission.

- *Requirement:*

A certificate proving yellow fever vaccination is required for travelers aged ≥ 1 year coming from Angola, Brazil, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Uganda. This also applies to airport transit stops (no exit through immigration checkpoint) longer than 12 hours in these countries.

Supplementary requirement: Colombia requires vaccination (given at least 15 days prior) or a valid waiver (age ≥ 60 years is a recognized contraindication) for all persons, including travelers from all countries, entering: the national nature parks of Amacayacu, Cahuinari National Park, Corales del Rosario and San Bernardo, Cordillera de Los Picachos, El Tuparro, Farallones de Cali, Gorgona, La Paya, Las Orquídeas National Park, Macuira, Old Providence McBean Lagoon, Paramillo National Park, Puinawai, Río Puré National Park, Sanquianga, Serranía de Chiribiquete, Serranía de los Churumbelos, Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Tayrona, Tinigua, Uramba Bahía Málaga, and Yaigojé Apaporis; the flora and fauna sanctuaries of Ciénaga Grande de Santa Marta Sanctuary, El mono Hernández Cork Forest, Los Colorados, Los Flamencos, and Malpelo; Orito Ingi-Ande; and Salamanca Park.

Proof of vaccination must be carried at all times. Travelers may be required to show proof of vaccination when visiting national nature parks.

- *Official Status:* listed by WHO as a country where YF transmission risk is present.

Other Vaccines

Depending on your itinerary, your personal risk factors, and the length of your visit, your health care provider may offer you vaccination against COVID-19, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, influenza, measles, mumps, rubella, rabies, or typhoid fever. Routine immunizations, such as those that prevent tetanus/diphtheria or "childhood" diseases, should be reviewed and updated as needed.

Malaria

The following is current information as reported by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

[WHO—International Travel and Health \(current online update, Country List\)](#)

(2020) Malaria risk is high in some municipalities of the departments of Antioquia, Bolívar, Cauca, Chocó, Córdoba, La Guajira, Nariño, and Risaralda. Lower level risk is also present in some municipalities of Amazonas, Caqueta, Guaviare, Guainía, Meta, Norte de Santander, Putumayo, Vaupes, and Vichada.

- Recommended prevention in risk areas: **C** – Risk of *P. falciparum* malaria, in combination with reported chloroquine and sulfadoxine–pyrimethamine resistance. Mosquito bite prevention plus atovaquone–proguanil or doxycycline or mefloquine chemoprophylaxis (select according to reported side effects and contraindications) ^a

^aAlternatively, for travel to rural areas with low risk of malaria infection, mosquito bite prevention can be combined with stand–by emergency treatment (SBET).

WHO Country List footnote: When available, the date of the most recent update or confirmation is indicated in parentheses in the country list. If no date is indicated, the most recent update or confirmation was provided before 2013.

CDC—Health Information for International Travel (current online edition)

Areas with malaria: All areas < 1,700 m (5,577 ft). None in Bogotá, Cartagena, and Medellín. (See Map 2-10).

- Drug resistance³ : Chloroquine.
- Malaria species: *P. falciparum* 50%, *P. vivax* 50%.
- Recommended chemoprophylaxis: Atovaquone-proguanil, doxycycline, mefloquine, or tafenoquine.⁴

³ Refers to *P. falciparum* malaria unless otherwise noted.

⁴ Primaquine and tafenoquine can cause hemolytic anemia in people with G6PD deficiency. Patients must be screened for G6PD deficiency before starting primaquine or tafenoquine. See *Tafenoquine Approved for Malaria Prophylaxis and Treatment* for more information.

Other Concerns

Travelers' Diarrhea

High risk exists throughout the country, with moderate risk in deluxe accommodations. Community sanitation and food safety measures are generally inadequate. Some itineraries (e.g., remote destinations, austere accommodations) and activities (e.g., ecotourism, eating street or local-market food) further increase risk.

Travelers should observe food and beverage precautions, which reduce the likelihood of illness.

Travelers should carry loperamide for self-treatment of diarrhea and, if risk is moderate to high, an antibiotic to add if diarrhea is severe. Consult a knowledgeable health care provider regarding which antibiotic is appropriate for you and most effective for your destination.

Other Food-Borne Illnesses

Precautions to prevent seafood poisoning may be needed.

Insect- and Arthropod-Borne Diseases

Chagas' disease (American trypanosomiasis), chikungunya, dengue, leishmaniasis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, West Nile virus, Zika may pose a risk. Personal protective measures are important.

Other Disease and Health Risks

Additional concerns include air pollution, altitude illness, anthrax disease, helminths, hepatitis C, leptospirosis, marine hazards, melioidosis, schistosomiasis, sexually transmitted infections, snakebites, tuberculosis.

Consular Advice

The material below includes information from the US Department of State (DOS), the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCO), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), and Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), as well as from additional open-source material. Standard safety precautions that apply to all international travel can be found in the Library article Safety and Security.

Consular Travel Advice

Due to terrorism, crime, and risk of detention, US (DOS) advises avoiding travel to Arauca, Cauca (except the city of Popayán), and Norte de Santander departments and to areas bordering Venezuela, and advises reconsidering travel to the rest of the country. UK (FCO), Canada (GAC), and Australia (DFAT) have more limited warnings.

Terrorism Risk

High risk of attack by domestic terrorist groups exists throughout the country, including Bogotá. Targets may include domestic and international organizations and businesses; public places and events, including those frequented by tourists; and transportation systems.

Risk of kidnapping by terrorist groups exists in rural areas. Targets may include foreigners (especially Westerners).

Crime

High risk of violent crime (armed robbery, sexual assault, and murder) exists in urban areas throughout the country, including Bogotá (especially in La Candelaria and Monserrate and on hiking trails), Cali, Santa Marta, and the coastal region of La Guajira Department; on roads outside of Riohacha; on the road from Medellín to the José María Córdova International Airport.

High risk of petty crime exists throughout the country, especially in areas frequented by tourists and in Bogotá (particularly in Ciudad Bolívar, El Codito, and Monserrate and downtown La Candelaria), Medellín (particularly downtown and on the Metrocable), and Cali.

Kidnappings by criminal groups occur throughout the country, especially near the borders with Venezuela and Ecuador and in Buenaventura and Tumaco. Targets may include foreigners (especially Westerners), including foreigners working for oil and mining companies.

Express kidnappings to force cash withdrawals at ATMs occur throughout the country.

Scams involving counterfeit currency and false identity (such as criminals posing as police officers) have been reported.

Risk exists of robberies and/or assaults occurring after consuming intentionally drugged food or drink; tourists are frequently targeted. Scopolamine, via aerosol spray or paper handouts, is commonly used to incapacitate victims.

Civil Unrest

Protests and demonstrations frequently occur throughout the country, especially in Bogotá, and have the potential to turn violent without warning. Bystanders are at risk of harm from violence or from the response by authorities. Disruption to transportation, free movement, or the ability to carry out daily activities may occur.

Unsafe Areas

A dangerous security environment may exist and armed groups may be present in rural areas bordering Venezuela, Panama, and Ecuador; in the ports of Buenaventura, Tumaco, and Turbo; and in Parque Nacional Natural Sierra de La Macarena (Meta Department).

Water Safety

Passenger boats may be unsafe, including ferries, small crafts, and speedboats. Decline water transportation in vessels that appear overloaded or lack personal flotation devices or life jackets.

Rent water sports equipment from reputable operators. Scuba dive only with personnel certified by PADI or NAUI, and use equipment only from PADI- or NAUI-certified dive operators.

Transportation Safety

High risk of traffic-related injury or death exists. The road traffic death rate is 12 to 24 per 100,000 population. The rate is less than 10 in most high-income countries.

Speed laws are poorly enforced.

Seat belt laws are poorly enforced.

Drunk driving laws are poorly enforced.

Structural standards for vehicles may not meet international standards.

Airline Safety

The US Federal Aviation Administration has determined that the civil aviation authority of this country oversees its air carriers in accordance with minimum international safety standards.

Natural Disasters

The hurricane season is from June through November in coastal areas along the Caribbean Sea. The rainy seasons are from March through June and from September through November. Floods, mudslides, and landslides may occur.

Seismic and volcanic activity frequently occur.

Consular Information

Selected Embassies or Consulates in Colombia

- United States: [+57] 1-275-2000; co.usembassy.gov
- Canada: [+57] 1-657-9800; www.colombia.gc.ca
- United Kingdom: [+57] 1-326-8300; www.gov.uk/world/organisations/british-embassy-colombia
- Australia: [+57] 1-657-8030; colombia.embassy.gov.au

Colombia's Embassies or Consulates in Selected Countries

- In the U.S.: www.colombiaemb.org
- In Canada: canada.embajada.gov.co
- In the U.K.: reinounido.embajada.gov.co
- In Australia: australia.embajada.gov.co

Visa/HIV Testing

HIV testing is not required to obtain a tourist, work, or residence visa.

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