

# Deforestation in Colombia - EFAM | Escape From America Magazine | EFAM

## How to Grow Money

Discover the advantages of investing in the Colombian forestry sector with [Investment Group Colombia](#) and Proexport, offering benefits and support that will enhance your investment and help make your investment a reality.

Some of the investing advantages that you will find in this report include:

1. 17 million hectares for reforestation distributed at various altitudes. Currently only 1.5% of the potential of forest plantations is being used on 253,066 hectares
2. Technological packages for cultivation of various species, including a variety of hearty Pines (*P. maximinoi*, *P. tecunumanii*) and Eucalyptus, for pulp production, mining and milling, construction, activated charcoal and boards. Teak, Walnut and Acacia Mangium woods can be used for saw wood, plywood and other construction materials.
3. Photosynthesis throughout the year thanks to Colombia's location in the tropics. A high biomass production creates high yields from various species in shorter biological cycles. Eucalyptus can achieve yields of up to 30 (m<sup>3</sup>/ha/year) every 8 years. The climatic advantages allow plantations of various species of Pines in the high Andes, with the *Pinus caribaea* in Orinoco, *Eucalyptus grandis* in the middle Andean zone and Teak in the Andean tropical lowlands.
4. Important biotechnological and genetic development that has allowed us to consolidate production based on forestry germplasm with the capacity to produce high quantities of plant material.
5. Tax benefits and incentives, among which are the tax deductibility of investments in reforestation, income tax exemption for the development of new forest plantations and the Certified Forestry Incentive (CIF).

## Colombian Forest Sector Trends

Colombia has the potential of more than 17 million hectares suitable for forestry.

The land available in Colombia does not invade or compete with native forestland or with land used for agriculture. The National Corporation for Forestry Research and Development (CONIF) conducted a zoning study of forestry potential, taking into account open areas, pastures and soil that currently has other uses (excluding land covered by forests). This study estimated that in Colombia there are 17 million hectares suitable for forestry (2008) discriminating between the land without restrictions and that with minor restrictions

Currently only 1.5% of the forestry potential of Colombia is being used. Of the 114 million hectares of area of the country, there exists a potential for the development of forestry projects of 17 million hectares from which only 1.5% (253,066 ha) is being used as commercial forest plantations. Of the 17 million hectares suitable for forestry, 5.1 million are land without restrictions, meaning that it does not require any adaptations of soil for the cultivation and development of forestry projects and 12.1 million fewer restrictions. 60.7 million hectares are protected. Of the 114 million hectares that the country, 53.3% (60.7 million ha.) are covered by natural forests. These areas are not available for the development of commercial plantations.

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The existence of the National Forest Development Plan (PNDF) provides a strategic vision of the sector by 2025. The forest sector development is a long-term state policy that seeks to incorporate in future years 1.3 million hectares of commercial crops. For 2025 the sector will have a high participation in agricultural production and employment generation based on the use and sustainable management of natural and planted forests.

## Three Potential Regions for the Development of Forestry

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) has identified three regions with high potential for development of forestry projects. The regions identified are the Coffee zone, Caribbean and Orinoco.

More than 10 species are suitable, with a high potential of increasing income with biotechnology development and genetic improvement. Forest species in Colombia take less time to grow and to be productive than it would take in other countries. In the case of Eucalyptus, it can achieve yields of up to 30 (m<sup>3</sup>/ha/year) with a cycle of 8 years.

## Yields per species in Colombia

### **In Colombia the consumption of roundwood has increased, largely supplied by imports.**

Between 2006 and 2007 the aggregate apparent consumption of sawn wood, wood panels and wood chips increased by 7%. For the same period, pulp consumption increased by 3%. These increases have been mostly fueled by imported material.

This situation becomes an opportunity to encourage the implementation of forestry projects in Colombia. Given the magnitude of the national market and international market dynamism, Colombia has the necessary land (17 million hectares suitable for forestry) to develop commercial plantations and replace, in the long term, the importation of timber products.

## Trade Balance and Apparent Consumption in Colombia

Timber exports and manufactures for the period 2004 – 2008 reached a cumulative of \$ 548.8 million dollars, with finished furniture being item that represents the greatest value. In contrast, when watching the export volume for the same period, raw lumber is the category that represents higher a concentration.

Venezuela is now the largest trading partner, with a 42% in terms of export value and 39% in volume, wooden furniture and office furniture products being those with the highest market.

U.S. imports 21% of exports of wood, representing the second most important export market, followed by countries like China and India. China and India import from Colombia inputs for production, because these highly competitive countries want to add value in both design and manufacturing.

### Existence of Potential Strategic Partners

Colombia has a group of companies engaged in production, processing and marketing of raw materials derived from the forest, according to the vocation of each business. These companies are located in different parts of the country and have great knowledge of consumption and domestic distribution networks, factors that make Colombian companies, potential strategic partners for foreign companies that decide to bring forward a business plan in our country.

### Major Manufacturing Industries in the Forestry Sector

Read phonetically

Dictionary – [View detailed dictionary](#)

### COLOMBIA: AN OPPORTUNITY TO INVEST IN FORESTRY:

In Colombia you can get excellent performance in conifers, similar to that calculated for major world producers. In the case of *Pinus tecunumanii* in Colombia, you can get an AAI (Average Annual Increment) of 30 to 40 m<sup>3</sup>/ha/year in a cycle of 16 years compared to other conifers of the region. In broad-leaved trees, after Brazil, Colombia has the highest yield, with 30 m<sup>3</sup>/ha/year in a 7 year cycle.

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### Superior Performance in Four Species Compared to Our Competitors

Thanks to the country's agro-ecological conditions, biotechnology and genetic improvement, there are several species recorded with higher returns than our competitors. For Acacia, yields are achieved of up to 30 m<sup>3</sup>/ha/year.

### Yield per Species in Colombia Vs Other Countries

### Rates of Return Average Between 10.6% and 12.6%.

In Colombia you can get rates of return in real terms (excluding inflation) before taxes on forestry investments between 10.6% and 12.6% – attractive rates compared to competitors such as Chile and Brazil.

### Legal Incentives to Investors in the Sector

New legislation allows companies in the forestry sector to become established anywhere in the country and receive several exemptions in addition to the 0% income tax for the use of new forest plantations. Below are the current incentives for the forestry sector in Colombia and the free zone regime, and the requirements for forestry projects to apply for declaration as *Zona Franca*. Additionally find information about the *Plan Vallejo*, special system of import and export, along with legal stability contracts.

#### Tax Exemption Permanent Income

The use of new forest plantations, including bamboo, according to the classification for the purpose by the regional autonomous corporation or agency, shall be exempt from income tax, as well as new sawmills, directly linked to achievement. The exemption of this tax does not apply.

#### Requirements for New Plantings:

Registration of new planting to the Autonomous Regional Corporation.

Certificate of Freedom and Tradition or lease agreement or a document proving the ownership or operation of the plantation.

Certificate issued by the Regional Autonomous Corporation as establishing a new plantation.

Certificate of the auditor or accountant showing all income from the exploitation of the forest plantation and other income.

#### New Requirements for Sawmills:

Invoices for purchase of new sawmills and additional machinery, acquired after January 1, 2003.

Supply agreement between forestry plantation and sawmill where timber product is purchased.  
Certificate of the auditor or accountant showing all income from the exploitation of the forest plantation and other income.

### **Forestry Incentive Certificate (CIF)**

The CIF is a cash allowance which recognizes the 50% investment in introduced species and 75% of investment in native species to support the establishment and maintenance (from the second through fifth year) of new forest plantations. The CIF does not support the tax breaks or other subsidies. Available since 2009 is 15,000 million pesos (6.8 billion dollars) to subsidize reforestation in Colombia.

The Ministry of Agriculture has established the national average total net costs of establishing and maintaining one hectare of planted forest and the maximum percentage to be recognized by the concept of CIF in 2009 as follows:

### **Real Uni-Empresarial Free Trade Zone**

These areas are designed for a single company to request the declaration of a free zone area where your company wants to be established.

Agro industrial projects can install its processing plants within a Uni-Empresarial Zone always on condition that they meet the requirements listed below.

#### **Requirements:**

Invest a sum of 33.89 million dollars.

Generate 150 direct and formal jobs.

The employment requirement may be decreased by 15 jobs for every additional \$ 5 million of the spending requirement in cases of less than 50 employees.

#### **Benefits**

Flat rate of tax on taxable income: 15%

Do not cause or pay customs taxes (IVA-Tariff)

VAT exemption for raw materials, inputs and finished goods that are sold from the national customs territory to industrial users of ZF.

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### **Imports of Capital Goods Free of Duty: Import / Export System "Plan Vallejo"**

The Plan Vallejo for capital goods is a special system of imports and exports under which the person requesting the plan to import some capital goods is exempt from customs duty and differs from the VAT payment.

#### **Requirements:**

The capital asset is within the list in Resolution 1148 of 2002.

That the person requesting the plan to export 1.5 times the FOB value of imported capital goods submit an application to the Direction of National Taxes and Customs (DIAN).

### **Imported Supplies and Raw Materials Without Payment of VAT and Tariff: Vallejo Plan Supplies and Raw Materials**

This is a form under which the person requesting the plan can import supplies and raw materials without paying the VAT and tariff, always exporting 60% of goods produced with these raw materials.

### **Colombia Offers Legal Stability Contracts to Ensure Investments**

Legal stability contracts are one of the tools available for foreign and domestic investors to build safe and stable investment in Colombia. The main features of these contracts can be described as follows:

**Objective:** Guarantee the administrative legislation and interpretation determined for investment projects.

**Terms:** Amounts over U.S. \$ 1,700,000 \*

**Duration:** 3 to 20 years

\* The representative exchange rate used is USD 1 = COP 2,200. The requirements are estimated at current minimum wage (minimum wage of) that for 2009 is \$ 496.900 COP. Both the legal minimum wage as the representative market rate are subject to change.

In return, the investor must pay a premium to the State of 1% of the investment made or planned for the project.

Legal stability contracts are excluded from the rules concerning the social security system. The obligation to report and pay taxes to the government under state of emergency declares. Indirect taxes (for example VAT or tax on financial transactions). Prudential regulation of financial system and the tariff of public services.

### **Our Investor Services:**

The Colombian government emphasizes creating favorable conditions and providing maximum support to investors. Proexport, the Government's Investment Development Agency offers services to foreign investors, including the following:

Requests for information (economic, legal, procedural or sector specific, etc.).

Contacts with the public and private sector.

Organization of agendas when investors decide to visit Colombia.

Care services for investors already established in the country.

Evaluation and improvement of business perspective.

Proexport services are free. The main objective is to develop new businesses through an efficient and friendly process. All information provided in the process is handled confidentially.

Proexport care has teams in 18 cities worldwide. We would be delighted to assist you.

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## Medellin Real Estate: HOT Real Estate Deal of the Month! - EFAM | Escape From America Magazine | EFAM

Hot Colombian Getaway of the Month!

One of the main locations near the city of Medellin that attracts tourists, local visitors, and real estate investors is Guatape, a quaint town that sits next to a huge freshwater lake. Located about twenty five miles from the center of Medellin, Guatape was founded by the Spaniards in the early 18th century. A large reservoir was built in the late 1960's to provide hydroelectric power. In recent years the area has become a huge tourist attraction and prime location for real estate investing.

Guatape, a typical small Colombian town with all the charms that go with it, offers other tourist attractions as well such as such as a zip-line and various water sport activities. Also, a major landmark for the area is a huge natural rock formation called Penon de Guatape that overlooks the lake. The rock is over 200 meters high with a viewing platform and restaurant at the top. For a small fee, visitors can climb a stairway that has over 644 steps to the top. The town, lake, and rock formation make for a huge tourist draw with both locals and foreigners.

Guatape full of Colombian charm

In addition, this area has become popular with foreign investors who seek waterfront property while being in close proximity to the clean modern city of Medellin. This is the only real estate market near Medellin that offers this amenity. There is currently a number of residential, commercial, and hotel projects in under construction in addition to existing waterfront estates already for sale. This trend is really just getting started as foreign investors only comprise a very small percentage of the total real estate market and present huge growth potential. Along these lines, a water front estate has recently become available for sale with the details to follow:

Location: VILLA SUIZA, located between El Penol (the giant rock) and Guatape.

- 3,300 square meters of land: LOT NO. 5.
- 300 square meters of construction
- 75 meters of lake front
- 4 bedrooms, 3.5 baths

The luxury home is completely furnished and even comes with a game room and billiard table and a security system. For added peace of mind the property is located inside of a gated community on the main road between El Penol and Guatape with 24-hour security. The property is a one-hour drive from Medellin international airport.

Property tax is a low \$600,000 Colombian Pesos (USD\$337.00) per year.

**Price for quick sale is \$295,000**

NOTE: If a buyer would prefer to purchase this property with US Dollars the seller is willing to offer a very generous exchange rate of \$2,000 Colombian pesos to the dollar (Market rate has been hovering around \$1,780).

If you would like additional information on this beautiful Medellin getaway and future Colombia HOT Deals of the Month, please provide your information in the form below and we will send you more details.

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## Colombia: Gold in the 21st Century - EFAM | Escape From America Magazine | EFAM

exciting opportunities for gold mining in Colombia

Gold has always possessed a hypnotic allure. Humans almost intuitively place a high value on gold, equating it with power, beauty, and the cultural elite. As gold is widely distributed all over the globe, you can uncover this ubiquitous belief throughout ancient and modern civilizations everywhere. Regardless of the fact that gold is only a metal, it has always been universally accepted to have *real value* as a medium of exchange; for example, in today's market, gold has risen to all time high levels. These market levels and gold's accepted value is simply a function of supply and demand, and concerned investors have created that demand. Additionally, as the U.S. dollar continues to decline, gold will continue to attract astute investors seeking refuge in this traditional "safe haven".

Throughout history, there have been many gold rushes on many different continents. In the new world it all started with the first explorers looking for the fabled city of El Dorado, later to be followed by the early rush for gold in Brazil in 1695. The Carolina Gold Rush of 1799 followed just 104 years later. The series of discoveries began to accelerate with the Georgia Gold Rush of 1828. And then, from the 1840s through the 1930s, over 40 gold rushes ensued from Australia to Canada, South Africa, New Zealand, Scotland, Kenya, Chile and Peru. What we are most familiar with is the California rush of 1848, the Comstock Lode in Nevada, the Black Hills of South Dakota, Cripple Creek, Colorado in 1891 and the Klondike in Alaska in 1896.

On December 7, 1848, gold from John Sutter's sawmill confirmed the discovery of "extensive and valuable" mines in California. Soon, thousands of Easterners were investing in supplies and transport to carry them west. In 1851, a gold strike in Australia lured thousands of these California prospectors. In 1858, discoveries were made in the Canadian northwest and at Colorado's Pike's Peak. However, the fabled Comstock Lode in Virginia City, Nevada dwarfed all the earlier gold strikes. After that came the Klondike stampede of 1898, an event that equaled the California rush of some fifty years earlier.

Never again would the attraction be quite so powerful to such a variety of people or to so many. By the end of the nineteenth century, America was starting to fill up and the populace was settling down; the last of the Western frontiers – which had once seemed an almost unending resource – were being used up. Although several more gold discoveries occurred during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they were rather quiet by comparison to the earlier discoveries; however, there remained one area of the world that had always been kept on the "back burner" for most prospectors.

magic yellow metal

The presence of fairly large deposits of the magic yellow metal have been known to geologists for quite some time, as ever since the days of the Spanish arrival in 1502, gold has been recognized as one of the major resources of the country. But the problem has been that, during relatively modern times, [Colombia](#) has been in a continual state of turmoil and violence, starting with the first civil war in 1876. Since then, there have been three civil wars and four other armed conflicts that have continued, almost without interruption, until the present. Few, if any, gold mining enterprises dared to conduct mining activities during the midst of such upheaval.

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The "Colombian armed conflict" is a term employed to refer to the low-intensity conflict in Colombia that has existed since approximately 1964 between the Colombian government and peasant guerrillas such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN). During this period of time, the growing [illegal drug trade](#) and its violence became a matter of widespread importance to all participants in the Colombian conflict. Guerrillas and newly wealthy drug lords found themselves in competition, thus leading to numerous incidents between them and anyone that got in their way.

On August 7, 1998, [Andrés Pastrana Arango](#) was sworn in as the President of Colombia. The new president's program was based on a commitment to bring about a resolution of Colombia's civil conflict and to cooperate fully with the United States to combat the trafficking of illegal drugs. The "Plan Colombia" program was unveiled in 1999 to combat narco-terrorism, spur economic recovery, strengthen democratic institutions and respect for human rights, and provide humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons. Alvaro Uribe was elected president in May 2002, promising to pursue the goals of Plan Colombia by utilizing a long-term security strategy.

In the fall of 2002, Uribe released his national security strategy designed to weaken all illegal narco-terrorist groups. His government offered a peace agreement with these groups, conditional upon a unilateral cease-fire and an end to drug trafficking and kidnapping. Between 2002 and 2006, Colombia saw a decrease in homicides by 37%, kidnappings by 78%, terrorist attacks by 63%, and attacks on the country's infrastructure by 60%. In short, [Colombia has suddenly become an attractive country where foreign corporations are encouraged to make substantial investments](#). As a result, for the first time in over 150 years, Colombia has been opened up for the exploration of gold.

Simply put, the creation of a relatively safe environment for gold mining has created what very likely might be the world's last great gold rush. The bottom line is that security can be effectively managed today in Colombia, by, for example, security firms

run and staffed by ex-British military personal with years of experience in places such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Mexico, etc. Large companies like Anglo Gold Ashanti from South Africa and B2B Gold Corp. from Canada have secured large tracts of land from the Colombian government as mining concessions. Other smaller companies, such as Santa Fe Gold Mining Company, have procured several extremely attractive concessions for river suction dredge mining.

Until recently, the long-term reputation of Colombia's internal strife has slowed the influx of mining companies. However, as the price of gold has risen to unprecedented levels, those mining companies that have already secured mining concessions are finding these assets to be rapidly increasing in value. These companies that were early in recognizing the improving environment in Colombia have a distinct advantage in that they know the lay of the land and have the right business and government relationships in place, as well. The abundance of gold resources in Colombia will likely fuel this next great gold rush for a long time to come.

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# Pre-Sale Real Estate Investment Strategies in Colombia - EFAM | Escape From America Magazine | EFAM

The time to invest in Colombia is now

The number of [investment opportunities in Colombia](#) has expanded significantly over the last ten years as the economy has stabilized itself without the former underpinnings of the illicit drug markets. Colombia's political structure has provided a solid foundation for investments in resource and energy projects, while the real estate market has climbed alongside the growing economy.

## Marketplace

As the service sector catches-up with manufacturing companies in Colombia, cities such as Bogotá, Cali, Cartagena and Medellín have become ideal locations for international visitors and business interests. Complimented with the beauty of the landscape and culture, Colombia has become a very attractive real estate market for many people.

The GDP of Colombia is growing at a steady 3.5% or more, with consistent interest rates held below 4%, and in regions such as Medellín, production exploded by almost 9% in 2010. Standard & Poor's have recently elevated Colombia's credit rating, and HSBC has named Colombia on the list of CIVETS; composed of the new power-house emerging markets, akin to the list of BRIC countries. In the next three to five years Colombia is expected to experience a surge of wealth never before experienced in the nation's legal trade, and consumption will grow along with this growth. Now is the time for property investments and capital infusions for Colombia, and at the same time, cities like Medellín now offer a more inviting quality of life than almost anywhere in the world.

## Pre-Sale Investment Strategy

enjoy the security of a guarantee on your investment

One attractive [real estate investment strategy](#) is the pre-sale purchase of properties in developments that are yet to be constructed. Buyers purchase at a pre-construction price, and funds are held in a fiduciary account until a certain percentage of the project budget has been raised. Buyers always have a guarantee on their investment because the bank protects the initial pre-sale capital, and guarantees the construction of the building and therefore an increase in the valuation of the property itself. Buyers pay the remaining 50% of the pre-sale price when the property is completed and handed-over to them.

The price of the completed property is on average 10-15% greater than the pre-sale price, guaranteeing an immediate ad-valorem when the owners walk through the door, and they can opt to cash-out or carry a quality investment in a steadily growing economy.

This 10-15% price increase is due to the pre-sale construction model used in Colombia, where the construction firm starts pre-sales before building begins, and the apartments' prices increase as each respective unit is sold. Since the firm has to sell a predetermined percentage of apartments before they can start construction (according to the agreement held by the fiduciary account), by the time you raise the required capital the prices have already begun to increase towards this 10-15%.

## Property Example: MACANA

An excellent example of such an opportunity is a new project in Medellín, in the stunning neighborhood of El Poblado, close to the border of beautiful Envigado, on the Loma de Alexandria.

The Macana Apartment Complex will begin construction when approximately 60% of the apartments are sold. This is stipulated in the contract between the construction firm and the bank managing the fiduciary account where the buyers' funds are deposited, so that these funds will not be available for the construction firm until a certain percentage of project capital is raised, thus guaranteeing the buyers' investment. If the 60% of sales is not reached before a specified date, the investment is returned to the buyers, creating a very safe investment strategy.

In all of the private projects such as Macana, the construction firm that builds the apartment complexes always has speculators that invest early in a couple units and then sell for profit before the construction of the building is completed. Buyers who wait for a year or more will enjoy the increase in value from the pre-sale investment, as well as the general trends in the Colombian real estate markets.

What's more, when real estate developments are this lucrative, many of the developers and original land owners receive apartments in the project rather than cash payouts, simply because they are so confident of the property valuation increase, due to the pre-sale strategy. This is certainly the case with Macana; the construction firm is quite familiar with such approaches, and can provide examples of past projects, for those interested.

## Investment Considerations

Another great reason to invest in a project like Macana is the pricing itself. Certain construction firms are savvy enough to manage every project like an independent company, leaving them with minimum overhead, which allows the apartments to sell at below-market prices. The firm that is building Macana manages a single office on the site premises, with very low administration expenses or fixed costs to carry, and manages each luxury project individually and with such low expenses that

larger corporate firms cannot compete with Macana-level prices.

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The two nearby projects that could be considered as competition are priced above Macana by \$350,000 COP/sq. m. and \$500,000 COP/sq. m. This is an incredible difference that guarantees further valuation in the marketplace for buyers, as neighboring real estate will have higher asking prices. This is a common factor of all of the construction projects for the firm that is building Macana; they “strive to supply the marketplace with lower prices, without compromising quality, service or any other factor important for the customer.”

Regarding the amenities, Macana will have squash courts, sauna, Turkish bath, solarium and a commons room for all residents to enjoy. Also, there will only be 33 apartments, versus 52 and 40+ that competitors will have, and Macana will only have 1 tower, versus 2 towers that one of the projects of the competitors will have, making Macana a much more exclusive project to live in, and another means of further valuation.

Beyond the pre-sale pricing strategy, the most attractive feature for Macana would be without a doubt its location. Macana is a block away from what is known as “La Milla de Oro” (The Golden Mile), in the most exclusive neighborhood in Medellin, El Poblado. La Milla de Oro is where all of the most important offices, banks, and hotels are located in the heart of the financial district of Medellin, along with shopping centers, parks and plazas, and various entertainment venues. A majority of the city's life is centered on this area, and Macana is well positioned nearby.

However, one of the greatest advantages held by Macana is that it is located on a cul-de-sac, which guarantees low traffic, less sound, and more tranquility. Furthermore, because the project is located on a creek running through the Poblado as well as 20 sq. m. of green space along the creek, Macana affords occupants a peaceful get-away for escape, away from the hustle and bustle of the most popular sector of Medellin. This is truly one of the more exclusive projects in the city.

If you are interested in learning more about pre-sale strategies in Medellin, or would like further information on Macana or other real estate opportunities in Colombia, please don't hesitate to contact us.

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# Colombiamoda 2011: Colombia's Fashion Week - EFAM | Escape From America Magazine | EFAM

Inexmoda – a celebration of Colombian fashion

**Colombia's fashion week:** Organized by the Instituto Nacional para la Exportación y la Moda, **Inexmoda**, (National Institute of Exportation and Fashion), is one of the most important fashion platforms in Latin America. This year, Inexmoda will take place July 26-28 at Plaza Mayor in Medellín, under the motto Conciencia Moda (Fashion Awareness), where designers, [investors](#), consumers and guests will come together to celebrate Colombian fashion.

## Highlights of the show

- 18 important Colombian designers will showcase their 2012 Spring/Summer collections.
- The biggest name brand in fashion will be in Colombiamoda 2011.
- International designers will include the distinguished Italian duet Leitmotiv and the Brazilian-Japanese Akihito Hira.
- 450 exhibitors are estimated to take part, with more than 1,600 international buyers and possible business opportunities of \$80 million (US).
- Pabellon Nuevos Modelos de Negocios (New Business Models Pavilion) is a space that links investors and leading brands under franchise formulas, joint ventures and diverse strategic alliances.
- There will be a total of 27 conferences that will take place in the Pabellon del Conocimiento Inexmoda-UPB (Inexmoda-UPB knowledge Pavilion).

In this 22<sup>nd</sup> annual show, the catwalks of [Colombia](#) will be filled with elite Colombian designers, including: Olga Piedrahita, Pepa Pombo by Monica Holguin, Amelia Toro, María Luisa Ortiz, Beatriz Camacho, Lina Cantillo, Jorge Duque, Camil Alvarez, Amulette, Agua Bendita, Pink Filosofía and Silvi Alfonso, among others. Academies will be represented by the Young Creators of Chocolyne, the Colegiatura Colombiana and the fashion design program from the Fundación Universitaria del Área Andina. In addition to these renowned names, there will be new talent proposals in hand with Fucsia and Infashion magazines, El Tiempo newspaper, and the government's venture program Cultura E. (Alcaldía de Medellín). Commercial fashion will be present in the form of Studio F, Cueros Velez, Magazine El Tesoro, Women Secret and Leonisa, among others.

Italian designers Juan Caro and Fabio Sasso from Leitmotiv will be there to celebrate Colombian fashion; their distinguished association in fashion design will help to place Inexmoda on fashion's world page.

Brazilian-Japanese designer Akihito Hira will also showcase his 2011 Fall- Winter collection.

Unmistakenly Colombian

Designers by Vogue is set to return for the 2011 show, which will help budding designers showcase their designs in front of foreign investors. This event will be taking place thanks to the successful alliance between Inexmoda and Vogue. For several months, Inexmoda has been working hand-in-hand with Proexport to offer a suitable and worthy space for these up-and-coming designers.

The forum in charge of the Lab of Inexmoda's fashion will also be present at this show. They will showcase the four sartorial moods of the 2012 Fall-Winter season, in addition to displaying some of the exhibitors' finished products and answering guest questions.

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Besides being recognized as the most important and recognized fashion fair in Colombia, Colombiamoda is a great business platform. This year's show is estimated to bring in the participation of 450 exhibitors, more than 1,600 international buyers and \$80 million in business opportunities. Thanks to Medellín City Hall and Proexport, Colombiamoda will continue positioning itself as Colombia's ultimate fashion week and the most important business event in the country's fashion industry. This is in addition to it being named as the Latin-American event with the highest number of international fashion buyers.

Thanks to the success in Colombiamoda 2010, this year the 2nd annual El Encuentro Empresarial Nacional (National Enterprise Gathering) took place June 27-28. This had been organized by Medellín Ciudad Cluster (Medellín City Cluster), Medellín City Hall and the Chamber of Commerce of Medellín for Antioquia, together with Inexmoda. This gathering – which showcased all exhibitors who will participate in this year's show – is hoped to exceed the 326 appointments and the \$2.8 million in business registered during last year's show.

Fashion Awareness in Colombia

Through an alliance with the Pontificia Bolivariana University, UPB, Colombiamoda will have the Pabellon del Conocimiento (the Knowledge Pavilion) academic space, which will play host to 27 conferences of fashion analysts and experts, who are excited to explore this year's topic: Fashion Awareness.

Colombiamoda 2011 is supported by: Medellin City Hall, the Government of Antioquia, Proexport, UNE, Chamber of Commerce of Medellin for Antioquia, Copa Airlines, Pontificia Bolivariana University and the cosmetic brand Natura.

Colombiamoda would also like to express thanks for the support of companies such as: TCC, Fabrica de Licores de Antioquia (Liquor Factory of Antioquia), Marangoni Institute, GEF, Estrada & Velasquez, the Gastronomic Tour, Procter & Gamble, Coltejer, El Colombiano (Newspaper), Plaza Mayor, Red Bull, Chocolyne, Cotton USA, Haceb, Colanta and Brinsa, among others.

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# Testosterone: An Essential Hormone for Both Men and Women - EFAM | Escape From America Magazine | EFAM

[ age-related declines in testosterone can cause significant problems

## Testosterone in Men

A man's virility and sexuality greatly depends on Testosterone as a major steroid of the testicles. Its importance lies not only in the sexual functioning of the body, but also to the well-being of a man's immune system, as it prevents cardiovascular system diseases, regulates mood and cognition, controls cholesterol levels and blood pressure, and even reduces the risk of prostate cancer.

The production of testosterone begins at the pituitary gland, which is located inside the brain. The gland secretes luteinizing hormone (LH), thus stimulating the Leydig cells in the testicles to produce testosterone. Men are born with an estimated 700 million Leydig cells; however, after a man's 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, around six million cells are lost every year. Studies have revealed that these testosterone levels hit the highest point at the age of 30 and begin to decline at a 2% rate per year.

Declines in testosterone levels are attributed to various factors other than the decrease in the number of Leydig cells. The lack of or diminished testicular response to pituitary stimulus is one such reason. Another reason is that most of the testosterone that is secreted into the bloodstream attaches itself to a protein known as sex hormone binding globulin (SHBG), which does not allow it to exert its powerful effect throughout the body's cells. Therefore, an increase of SHBG levels will typically lead to lower amounts of available testosterone.

Andropause is the main reason why age-related declines in testosterone can cause significant problems. Symptoms of this condition can include negative attitudes towards life in general, loss of focus and drive, the questioning of values and accomplishments in one's life, decreased libido, cognitive impairments, and even depression.

Lower testosterone levels can lead to declines in sex drive, frequency of sexual thoughts, and even cause erectile dysfunction; these symptoms create a negative impact on the male mind and relationships.

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In addition to the psychological effects, physical changes can also occur. Some of these effects include: thinning hair, decrease in bone mass, increase of body fat, and the decline in lean muscle tissue and strength, which invariably leads to the increased risk for falls and fractures. The likelihood of being diagnosed with osteoporosis disease also increases. The decline in mental skills, concentration and memory result from the decline in stamina.

Enzymes can convert testosterone into other hormones. The 5- alpha reductase enzymes, found in high concentrations in the prostate gland, convert testosterone into dihydrotestosterone (DHT). Another enzyme, called aromatase – found in skin, brain, fat, and bones – converts testosterone into estradiol, the major estrogen in humans. As men get older and estradiol levels increase, these hormones begin to compete with testosterone, causing negative effects such as prostate cancer, heart disease, and stroke. Irregular estradiol increases are caused by excess amounts of aromatase enzyme, impaired liver function, obesity, and zinc deficiency.

During andropause (otherwise known as the male menopause), growth hormone, thyroid hormone, and dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) levels also fall. These declines in hormonal levels add to men's testosterone deficiency problems.

Andropause should not be considered as inevitable in the aging process. With the use of bio- identical hormones and precise monitoring techniques, replacement therapy is possible.

Age Management Medicine physicians offer hormone optimization programs that have contributed greatly to the enhancement of men's and women's quality of life.

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## Women and Testosterone

Although testosterone is an essential hormone for men, it is also very important for women. As women age and enter menopause, estradiol and progesterone levels drop, along with testosterone (produced in the ovaries and adrenal glands), growth hormone, and thyroid hormone levels. The sudden reduction in the amount of these key hormones can cause deep degenerative changes to occur with growth and metabolism, thus affecting the breasts, vagina, bones, blood vessels, urinary tract, gastrointestinal tract, skin, brain, cardiovascular system, and energy levels.

Testosterone is important for a woman's libido, sexual responsiveness, mood, and general feelings of sexual wellbeing. Like men, women need to maintain adequate testosterone levels to reach a high level of mental acuity, healthy bone density, and muscle tissue. Women who do not take supplements have a 50% chance of experiencing a pathological hip fracture or vertebra at some point, which is why maintaining bone density is so critical.

Testosterone is also significant for women as it prevents body fat accumulation, heart disease, and loss of cognitive function. Replacement therapy is recommended for women with suboptimal blood cells.

Like with men, women must have all of their hormones at optimal levels, which can be monitored through laboratory follow-ups and controlled hormonal therapy.

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# Santa Fe de Antioquia: A Colombian Treasure - EFAM | Escape From America Magazine | EFAM

Santa Fe de Antioquia - of the most beautiful colonial towns in all of Colombia

If you're looking to escape to one of the most beautiful colonial towns in all of [Colombia](#), then it's time to make a pilgrimage to the quaint town of Santa Fe de Antioquia.

Visiting Santa Fe de Antioquia is like taking a trip back in time. You'll feel like you're walking alongside Spanish royalty as you wander the cobblestone streets and take in the beautiful 15<sup>th</sup> century Spanish architecture. As you gaze out over the Spanish stucco walls and ornate door carvings that make Santa Fe de Antioquia so special, you'll understand why this colonial town is regarded as a Colombian treasure that remains undiscovered by tourists.

And if you're ready for a Colombian experience that you'll never forget, then you will want to discover [real estate in Santa Fe de Antioquia](#). Take a look at what makes this city so special – and why you'll quickly fall in love with the locals and lifestyle of Santa Fe.

## The History of Santa Fe de Antioquia

Many people think that the town of Santa Fe de Antioquia was founded in 1584; however, it was actually established by Spaniard Jorge Robledo in 1522. As Spanish explorers pushed into the lush jungles of South America in search of treasure, Santa Fe de Antioquia became renowned for its fertile soil, which is fed by the Cauca and Tonusco rivers. In 1545, King Phillip of Spain officially established it as a Spanish colony, and in 1584, Santa Fe de Antioquia became the capital of the Antioquia region, where it remained as the seat of Antioquia's government until 1826, when that function was moved to Medellín (located just 50 miles north of Santa Fe).

As Santa Fe became a bustling Spanish colony, gold was unearthed near the Cauca and Tonusco rivers. Explorers in search of riches soon flocked to Santa Fe de Antioquia, and gold mining soon became the foundation of its blossoming economy.

When you visit Santa Fe de Antioquia, you'll notice that this Colombian gem seems frozen in time. Spanish architecture pays tribute to the *conquistadors* who came before; you can practically hear them walking the cobblestone streets as you walk past the whitewashed colonial houses and admire the tropical flora in one of Santa Fe's many lush plazas.

Although Santa Fe de Antioquia is well-known to locals, it's been considered off-limits to tourists due to the mountainous terrain between the city and Medellín. However, in 2006 the Tunnel of the West was opened, allowing tourists from the capital to discover the wonders of Santa Fe de Antioquia for themselves. Colombians began to set up summer homes (known as *fincas*), in Santa Fe, which in turn provided an extra boost to the city's economy. Despite its newly accessible connections, Santa Fe de Antioquia remains largely undiscovered by foreign tourists, meaning there's a wealth of [real estate opportunities](#) in this colonial paradise.

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## The Sights and Sounds of Santa Fe de Antioquia

As soon as you visit Santa Fe, you'll immediately notice just how relaxed life is in this tight-knit Colombian community. Elderly men wile away the hot days playing chess in the cool shade of the plaza trees, while local children enjoy a frenetic game of *fútbol* on the street corner. Be sure to watch out for Colombian tourists and locals on horseback trotting through the city streets.

Santa Fe is home to a bevy of fascinating sights. As soon as you settle into your Santa Fe de Antioquia weekend home or hotel, why not set off to take in the beautiful scenery near the Metropolitan Cathedral (established in 1799), or visit the local cemetery to gaze at the graves of early Spanish explorers?

When you're done with your sight-seeing, stay in the city square and enjoy a glass of world-famous South American wine in one of the many tiny bars and cafes (we recommend a glass of Argentinean Malbec or Chilean Carmenere for an authentic experience). Ask the locals to tell you about Santa Fe legends and myths, or head to Las Acacias to enjoy some of the best smoked ribs and chicken in all of Colombia (and, dare we say, South America).

If you're looking to get back to nature, Santa Fe de Antioquia provides you with plenty of opportunities to enjoy the awe-inspiring sights of Colombia. Santa Fe's economy is bolstered by maize and beans so take advantage of a local's knowledge and tour the farmlands. Back in town, you can also learn about Medellín's bustling textile industry, which is a main component of the area's economy. See if you can pick up any finds for yourself and get a taste of world-famous Colombian fashion.

## Real Estate in Santa Fe de Antioquia

There's no denying that Colombia has been a dangerous place to visit in earlier decades; however, thanks to recent clean-up

efforts by a succession of progressive presidents, Colombia has now earned a reputation as a relatively safe and enjoyable tourist destination for nature lovers and culture aficionados alike.

As Colombia opens its borders to tourists, a new opportunity has developed as a result: investing in real estate in Santa Fe de Antioquia. Between incredible opportunities to take part in one of the last gold rushes on Earth to a clean and healthy lifestyle, the Santa Fe de Antioquia real estate market can provide you with a beautiful vacation destination or even a new place to call home.

If you're ready to experience the wonder of Santa Fe de Antioquia, then consider investing in local real estate. While the dollar isn't as strong against the peso as it used to be, you can still purchase a stately holiday residence or new home for much less than what you'd spend at home.

With such a wealth of activities, amenities and experiences awaiting your arrival in the Medellin area, you'll quickly agree that there's no place on Earth quite like the Colombian treasure of Santa Fe de Antioquia.

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## Your Most Profitable Investment Opportunity in Colombia – The Land Itself - EFAM | Escape From America Magazine | EFAM

The future of agriculture in Colombia in safe hands

Colombia is a country that offers many advantages to the [potential investor](#), such as its location, weather, soil and the wonderful qualities inherent in its people. In spite of all of these attractions, its investment potential has yet to be fully explored for the opportunities that are opening in the economic and social development of the country.

The agricultural sector is probably the one sector showing the least development; however, this sets up fantastic opportunities for those interested in growing crops in [Colombia](#). Over the past few years the Colombian government has contributed to boosting this industry, along with promoting the creation of some great agro-industrial developments. There have been such powerful economic surges, that they have earned themselves the nickname as being one of the “Locomotoras” (Locomotives) which will pull the country’s economic growth forward over the next decade.

In the majority of countries around the world, larger-scale investments in agricultural projects are limited to large multinational corporations, for reasons of experience as well being able to capitalize large land acquisitions. As a result, small investors have been precluded from investing in most of these activities.

That’s where [Agrofuturo](#) comes in. **Agrofuturo** is a company which promotes the development of fallow lands, or the commercialization of products that have an export potential. They have created a business model which allows anyone with a small investment to participate in some of these projects. This proposal consists of the creation of independent enterprises that by means of a trust fund fulfill the requirements of the projects on behalf of the investors

The administrators of these projects are experts in their respective field, thus assuring guaranteed returns to the investors. These independent administrators will invest the resources in collaboration of approved projects by working with previous owners/operators. This should comply with all previously stipulated activities and is strictly tied to contractual obligations as stated.

The advantages of [investing in these kinds of projects are](#) manifold; you gain access to a growing economy in need of better technical support, the possibility of commercializing certain featured products by creating an export market, and most importantly, opening an excellent financial opportunity for individual investors.

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Another important factor is the creation of employment as well as a reduction of local poverty. This will contribute to communal well being in the impacted areas, reducing unemployment and crime in areas that will benefit from a surging macro economy in the regions affected.

From the moment investors join in this type of project, opportunities are opened for people in all walk of life, some of whom may have previously been involved in criminal behavior or the cultivation of illicit crops due to lack of opportunities to make an honest living..

In Colombia, agriculture has much to offer due to its rich soil and wealth of natural resources. This opportunity goes hand-in-hand with the ever improving infrastructure from expanded rural services and transportation, thus becoming an excellent Colombian investment to become a part of.

**Agrofuturo** is an excellent source, which allows both small and larger investors to obtain financial returns which are very competitive, as compared with those offered in current markets.

There’s no denying that Colombia will become a major agricultural producer for the world, as the availability of land around the world is limited and growing food scarcity continues to be one of the biggest challenges the world faces.

If you’re interested in an opportunity to participate in the agricultural and livestock sector in Colombia, [AGROFUTURO](#) invites you to invest in different potential projects. For more information you can visit our [website](#) or contact us directly by email [info@agrofuturoexpo.com](mailto:info@agrofuturoexpo.com) or telephone (574) 444-6212

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## Medellín: The New City of Fashion - EFAM | Escape From America Magazine | EFAM

Colombia - avant-garde and innovative mentality

Medellín is undeniably the city of the eternal spring. A city that was once gripped in fear, Medellín has now shed its image of violence in favor of a new image – one that displays its avant-garde and innovative mentality.

Reinvigorated economic growth has seen Medellín jump an impressive ten spots in rankings in the renowned publication, *Chilean American Economy* (from 25 to 15). The rankings praised Medellín as the Colombian city with the greatest progress and skillfulness for attracting investors.

The city is located between the center of [Colombia](#) and the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean regions; this places Medellín in a perfect position to develop economical investment programs with export at the forefront. This competitive advantage is reinforced by the fact that it is one of Latin America's cultural capitals and comes with one the region's best public utilities and transportation infrastructures.

To add to the business vision and the commercial savvy of the *paisa* (another word for Medellín locals), let's explore vital factors in the rise of prosperous, stable, and reliable businesses in Medellín. According to the Corporate Registrar's Office, out of 3,150 companies in Antioquia, 332 are owned by international businesses, while 30 are determined to be based on a combination of foreign and national capital.

The bustling industry in Medellín and its metropolitan area contributes to 60% of [Colombia's economy](#). It is the second largest industrial center in the country. Textile production is the signature activity of Antioquia, and it generates 53% of industrial employment in the region. The main Colombian companies in this industry originated here: *Fabricato*, *Coltejer*, *Tejicondor*, *Vicuña*, *Fatelares*, and *Everfit* are included in the numerous success stories that abound here in the textile industry.

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Today these enterprises export their products to international markets. The progress in this sector makes Medellín the undisputed fashion capital of Latin America. Two of the most renowned annual fashion shows take place here: *Colombia Moda* and *Colombiatex*.

The well-known international show, Colombia Moda, shows off the latest fashions elegantly on glamorous catwalks. On display is clothing for all types and occasions, all tendencies and sensitivities. Colombia Moda has graced the fashion world for over 22 years and continually shows not only the best of Colombian fashion and design, but the best international tailors and designers as well. Famous designers – including Oscar de la Renta, Carolina Herrera and Agatha Ruiz de la Prada – have rubbed shoulders with distinguished Colombians such as Silvia Tcherassi, Isabel Henao, Judy Hasbun, Beatriz Camacho, Amelia Toro and Daniel Hoyos. At the same time, another fashion show – *Moda Para el Mundo* (Fashion for the World) – is celebrated for displaying the biggest urban catwalk in the world.

During its 21 years of existence, Colombiatex of America has demonstrated itself to be an excellent business investment opportunity, where the supply and demand surrounding textile supplies, machinery and productive processes can meet – and where avant-garde fashion and the launch of new products mark their legacies. Thanks to international attention, Colombiatex of America is considered to be the most important textile fair in Latin America. This year, Colombiatex closed with over \$119 million in business expenditure, a respectable 7% increase from 2010, when sales totaled \$112 million.

In Medellín, you can indulge your inner fashionista; from malls to tourist attractions, fashion reflects on everything. Medellín is also famous for its medical tourism because it features some of the best plastic surgeons, hospitals and aesthetic centers.

Fashion in Medellín is a very important sector of Colombia. Here, you can constantly see the discriminating consumer who expects more from his or her fashion, higher levels of fashion photography that is comparable with cities like Paris or New York, and beautiful models who continually grace the covers of international fashion magazines. Respected fashion photographer Felipe Restrepo once said that the *paisa* consumer is very demanding when it comes to fashion – and you'll see evidence of this no matter where you go in Medellín.

To learn more about fashion in Medellín and its different *paisa* models, please go to [www.feliperestrepo.com.co](http://www.feliperestrepo.com.co), where you will find his photography projects, along with the various fashion brands in the city.

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# Don't be afraid of Colombia... - EFAM | Escape From America Magazine | EFAM

San Andres Colombia – the island of 7 colors of blue

Well, at least not San Andres anyway. Ever hear the song "Beautiful San Andres"? The words of the song describe it to a "T".

When I decided in February 2011 that I wanted to get away from the snow and cold for a week I threw my dart at a world map (literally)...Destination San Andres Island, [Colombia](#).

After a little research on the island of seven colors of blue, I knew that this was going to be a place to explore. How could it not be when the main means of getting around the island are by golf carts and scooters?

Friends and family looked at me kind of strange when I said I was off to Colombia, most all of them asked if it was safe? All had heard stories about some places in Colombia that were not quite as safe for tourist anymore. When I explained that the island itself is closer to Panama than Colombia they seemed to have a little more confidence in my choice of destination.

So off we went, my 27 year old son and 21 year old daughter decided to tag along with me, leaving the snow behind.

Our first surprise was upon our descent in the plane, out of both sides of the plane's windows all we could see were different shades of blue, from turquoise to deep blue, we got a feeling of how small this Island was.

As soon as we were out of the airport, a wonderful breeze hit us with the smell of the ocean. A short five dollar taxi ride (tip included) brought us to our hotel, where we were greeted with a very well built (according to my daughter) male island dancer in the lobby who preformed for us as we waited to be checked in.

Even though we had been traveling most of the night, none of us were wanting to rest, something about the Creole beat in the music just made you want to move along with it.

The next morning we started exploring and for the next 7 days go to know a lot about this little island and it's very friendly people who treat you as family and make you feel like their island is your island.

On the east side of this island there is a beach where you can walk about 1000 meters in waist high water to the very tiny island of Rocky Cay. Even if Rocky Cay is literally just a wisp of an islet, [two men have made a little tiny hut out of brush and reeds and live there full time](#). No electricity for these guys, there is a plastic tube that they use to catch rain water for drinking and cooking. They have a makeshift table set up full of all different kinds of seashells that they sell to the people who go and visit this little piece of paradise. On the walk to the islet the water is so clear that you can take pictures of little tiny fish swimming around your toes.

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skeleton of a boat that was stranded on the coral reefs

Just off Rocky Cay is the skeleton of a boat that was stranded on the coral reefs for over 30 years. No one seemed to be able to tell me exactly how long it had been there, only that some of the braver divers and swimmer would swim the short distance to it, climb up on just to dive off the far side of it into deeper waters.

There are two other little island, also on the east side of the island called El Acuario and Cayo Haynes that you can take a short boat ride to and when the tides are low you can walk between these 2 also. We were told that you should wear some kind of beach shoe because there are some places that have coral and you could cut your feet, but with the water so crystal clear you can see where you were walking with no danger.

Did you ever hear of Helmet Diving? We hadn't either until we got here. Want to swim with the fish but don't know how to scuba dive? You don't even have to know how to swim to do this helmet diving. We went to the beach called West view and here we were greeted by our three instructors who explained the hand signals we were to use once we "walked" down 30 meters with our diving helmets on our heads. These helmets weight about 75 pounds, they are molded to fit on your shoulders, have air hoses attached directly to them so you have no air tanks to drag around. Once you climb down a ladder to the sea, you grab onto a little platform where one of the instructors places the helmet on your head, since you are already in the water you don't even feel the weight of the helmet.

The next step is to walk down into the sea with the aid of a rope to help you, once you are on the sea bed the other 2 instructors are there waiting for you, they have their little shakers of fish food and as soon as you give them the sign that all is ok they will start spreading the food so that you are literally surrounded by hundreds of fish of all shapes and colors. The fish come right up to you and stare at you though the glass of your helmet. You can touch them and feel them swimming around your legs. This little adventure cost \$68 U.S dollars, including the ride to and from hotel, and 25-30 minutes under water with the fish, maybe a bit expensive but for someone who does not know how to dive it is worth every penny. Needless to say you can buy a CD of yourself with photos and a 2 minute video for an extra \$20 but that also is great to show your friends back

home.

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We got to know some of the locals there who would meet up with us every day and give us tips on things we should see and do, off the beaten path. We decided to rent a golf cart through them for \$25 US plus gas for a whole day. We picked up the cart made for six people, filled up a cooler with ice and drinks and off we went. We managed to go around the whole island that day, stopping along the way at a place called The Pond where we saw a baby crocodile and his mother (or father). We got within 10 feet of them, and with the zoom of my camera, managed to get quite a few super shots that my friends back home thought I was just a little nuts to get that close.

Explore the wonderful trees and beautiful flowers

Our new found friends brought us to the oldest part of the island where Creole English is still the main language spoken. When we stopped the cart to go exploring the beautiful trees and flowers, three of the cutest little girls followed behind us, giggling into their hands as we smiled and talked to them. All three were dressed in little sundress and all had the traditional braided hair that most of the islanders had. I gave them each a piece of gum before they ran off to hide behind the low concrete wall of presumably their house. The problem was, my daughter kept watching them and realized that they had all put the pieces of gum in their mouths without taking off the wrappers. They chewed that gum, paper and all for the next hour.

Every evening, in the little bar of our hotel we would stop in and see Smitty, an older islander who went to play his guitar every night for a few hours for the guests of the hotel. This 70 year old gentleman was still a fisherman by day, every day, (except Sundays) and would get up at dawn, go out on his little green, beaten up boat, fish until noon to provide for his family, then at night would go to sing and play his guitar for all who would listen. By the second night we stopped in for a nightcap both Smitty and Wesley (the barman) would greet all three of us by name and would have our usual drinks ready and waiting for us by the time we sat down at one of the ten small round tables in the lounge.

Smitty tried and tried for seven days to get my daughter to sing a song with him, but being shy promised him that NEXT year when she came back to the beautiful island of San Andres, she would sing with him whatever song he would like.

On our last night there, we learned that Smitty loved books and loved to read but he didn't have extra money to spend on books, so my daughter gathered up all the books the three of us had brought to read and handed them to Smitty as we said our goodbyes. With tears shining in his eyes Smitty hugged and kissed us all (Yup, my son also) thanking us as if we had just given him a million dollars. As we were leaving the bar to go to bed, we all looked back into the dim bar to see Smitty gently wrapping the six books we had just given him in a towel as he put them into his guitar case.

You can travel far and wide, but believe me, the Beautiful Island of San Andres and its people will be hard to beat.

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# Opción Hoy: What to do in Medellin - EFAM | Escape From America Magazine | EFAM

Activities, competitions and events in Medellin, Colombia

## Reporting on Events in June

The cities of Medellin and Antioquia are renowned for culture, tourism and entertainment, both in [Colombia](#) and around the world. Opción Hoy provides a complete review of the activities, competitions and events that take place in the mountain capital.

## The Best

During the month of June, Medellin locals and tourists enjoyed a vast number of leisure activities. *Suso el Paspi* (Paisa comedian) made all of those who watched his performance – aptly entitled *Tirando Caja* (Cracking Up) Part II – burst out in laughter. This event took place at Medellin's University Theater on the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup>, as again on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>.

Music lovers enjoyed the sounds of the world's greatest musicians with the Alianza Colombo Francesa (French Colombo Alliance) on Friday the 17<sup>th</sup>. From the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup>, the city transformed into a dance floor for the V Tango Festival in Medellin, which featured the best voices, dancers, and orchestras in the genre. Finally, the best national and international duets, trios and groups delighted the senses in a spectacle of talent at the 15<sup>th</sup> annual reunion of the National Treble. This event is eagerly looked forward to every year by all of Medellin, as it represents the pinnacle of the month's competitions, events and parties.

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## Exhibitions

Starting on the 16<sup>th</sup>, the city paid tribute to Leonel Estrada at the Galeria de Arte Autopista (Highway Art Gallery). As a promoter of Biental art, Leonel Estrada put Medellin on the map within international art circles. Another of the highlighted exhibitions that went on this month was *Transparencias* (Transparency), from the artist Luis Fernando Roldán. The artist was at the Museo de Arte Moderno (Modern Art Museum) in the Ciudad del Río branch until July 24<sup>th</sup>.

Additionally, an exhibit entitled *One Hundred Years of Bellas Artes* was a sample of 18 graduate and distinguished artists from the Fundación Universitaria Bellas Artes (Bellas Artes University Foundation) from 2000 to 2010; this took place through the June 29<sup>th</sup>.

## Sports

Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Cuba, El Salvador, Panama, Jamaica and Colombia are just a few of the countries who competed in the Central American and Caribbean triathlon competition, which took place in Guatapé on June 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>. Triathlon competitors and viewers alike were sure to have appreciated Guatapé's excellent sport facilities and charming landscape.

The cycle tour in Colombia – known as *Paisa* – covered a total of 2,139 kilometers. On Monday the 13<sup>th</sup>, the convoy left from La Estrella to travel throughout western Colombia, and passed through the Cundiboyacense Savannah and Santander, in the center of the country. The cyclists then raced through the western part of the country until they arrived back in Antioquia on the 25<sup>th</sup> with the 12<sup>th</sup> phase Puerto Boyaca-La Union.

Taking part of this cycle tour were four Venezuelan teams, in addition to the clubs from Cali, Bogota, Risaralda and Cauca, and Ecomares from Medellin. The Colombian champion, Orcas – from Antioquia's capital – participated as well.

From the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup>, the 2nd Annual National Underwater Rugby Interclub Parade took place. The event was held at the water sports complex in the *Unidad Deportiva Atanasio Girardot*.

Two other national competitions took place in Medellin: hockey category beginners Sub-15 and Intermediate teen Sob-20 were keen to compete in Medellin, while the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual National Championship for Apnea Swimming took place on the 24<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup>, with beginners, intermediate and advanced swimming categories.

The World Cup is already starting to [hype up the Colombians](#); the fever has already hit the Santa Fé Mall, with a raffle ticket given for a motorcycle for every purchase of 50,000 pesos or more. A trip with all expenses paid for two was raffled at the end of the American World Cup in Buenos Aires.

## Stage Art

From the 2<sup>nd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>, La Casa del Teatro (House of Theater) opened its curtains to show *Men on Stage*, one of their most successful plays. This deeply poetic and comedic play focuses on the hopes and worries that surround men, and the way the fairer sex perceives them.

## Cinema

Through June 25<sup>th</sup>, *Federico Fellini* – the Italian film maker and three-time Oscar nominee for the films *Fellini-Satyricon*, *8½* and *La Dolce Vida* – was celebrated, with his critically acclaimed films on show during the *!Hurrah Fellini!* Cinematic event. The event is sponsored by the Kinetoscope film club, which is dedicated to showing works of art that reveal the film maker's private yet dualistic world.

Comfenalco Antioquia paid tribute to composer and director Gustav Mahler, who once famously claimed that his music wouldn't be appreciated until fifty years after his death. With video concerts of Mahler and conferences hosted by Lu Marina Monroy, listeners were transported by the beautiful symphonic music. The tribute took place every Tuesday in June, at the Casa de la Lectura Infantil (House of Readings for Children).

## Conferences

June also saw a host of conferences throughout Medellín. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual International Congress of Land Transport took place from the 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> at the InterContinental; additionally, the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Inter-American Psychology Congress took place on the 26<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> in Plaza Major. The conference focused on social transformation.

If you'd like to plan out your activities for future events, search for us on [Facebook \(Opcion Hoy\)](#) and on [Twitter \(@Opcion\\_Hoy\)](#). We'll see you there!

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