

Colombia

Bunkuany & Lost City Trek

S. America | 1,190m



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Colombia

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You will need to don both Indiana Jones' battered archaeological hat and David Attenborough's naturalist hat for this fascinating expedition to **Ciudad Perdida**, Colombia's '**Lost City**', hidden deep in the Caribbean jungle. This trek offers an incredible experience **in the heart of Colombia**, drawing you into one of its oldest indigenous communities and offering a glimpse of one of the world's secret wonders. Journey into the rainforest and become, for a short moment, the explorer you always wanted to be.

Our time in Colombia begins with a two-day **Bunkuany Hike**, trekking through coffee plantations and cloud forests teeming with jungle wildlife, you'll get to spend some time exploring one of the many archaeological sites built in this area, learning about it's

importance for the indigenous of the area. Whilst the Lost City's focus is on trekking and exploring deep in the jungle, Bunkuany is about the people and you'll spend a night in the company of one of the most **spiritual and powerful indigenous of the Sierra**.

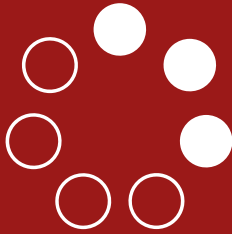
Our Lost City trek then takes us into the equatorial jungle for four days and delivers an adventure like no other. Crossing rivers of pure glacial water, showering under thundering waterfalls, sleeping in hammocks or jungle beds and following rough and ready forest trails leads us to one of the last wonders of the world, the Lost City of Colombia, Ciudad Perdida. It's a truly unforgettable South American adventure.

Colombia's lost city, and much more, awaits.

Colombia

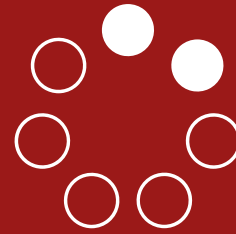
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Physical – P3

This trip is physically tough. Frequent exercise is necessary to prepare properly for this expedition. Regular walking mixed with training at the gym to build up endurance and cardiovascular fitness is key. Expect to be able to do 8 hour days in hilly and often steep terrain, carrying a pack of 6-10kg in weight with the occasional extra long day.



Technical – T2

Consider this a trek, although there may be occasion to use hands for short sections of easy scrambling. No previous climbing or trekking experience is necessary.

Please note that the grading system used is a rough guide only.



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ITINERARY

DAY 1 : Depart UK

Depart the UK, likely on an evening flight from London.

DAY 2 : Arrive in Colombia

On arrival in Santa Marta, a city bordering the Caribbean Sea, you'll head to your hotel where you can freshen up, then it will be time to explore this wonderful city.

Santa Marta was the first city to be founded in Colombia. It is a city of great cultural wealth and marked by the cultural and natural influence of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. You'll visit the gold museum which is a fantastic way to learn all about Colombia's history – we think it helps start to knit together everything you will experience over the next 10 days.

There's plenty of time to immerse yourself in the vibrant culture and colorful streets of Santa Marta's historic downtown, where you can stroll past colonial architecture, bustling plazas and lively markets soaking up the local atmosphere before your first Colombian dinner.....

(D)

DAY 3 : Minca – Coffee & Waterfalls

Today is a fabulous day spent in the rustic jungle mountain town of Minca. It's a favourite spot for travellers and nature lovers looking for lush mountain scenery and it's a place we just know you'll fall in love with.

Soak in the breathtaking views as you visit a coffee plantation. Here we'll discover how world-class coffee is made – it's an interactive visit and a fantastic experience not to be missed.

After lunch we'll have time to explore the famous Minca waterfalls for a refreshing swim. The surrounding jungle is a nature lover's paradise and you can expect to see monkeys, toucans and parrots.

Should you wish you'll have time for some craft shopping before heading for dinner and a final night of relaxation and comfort before our trekking begins!

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ITINERARY

DAY 4 : Bunkuany Trek

The Bunkuany ancestral corridor is a connection to the magical territory of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, which for the indigenous cultures represents "the heart of the world". We'll have a unique experience exploring mountains covered with jungle, visiting stones with engravings that speak to the indigenous and connecting with ancient ruins of the Tayrona culture.

Today will start with a 4x4 transfer to Bonda, an important place for the indigenous resistance during times of the Spanish conquest. From here we'll transfer to the stones of Donoma, a sacred site to the indigenous communities. After receiving permissions to enter their territory, we continue to El Boqueron where our trail begins.

We'll walk through the low mountains of the Sierra to the lost city of Bunkuany, one of the many different archaeological sites built hundreds of years ago by the Tayronas. We'll visit the complex and learn about its importance for the indigenous before continuing on beautiful trails that take us to La Playita farm which is where we stop for the night. It's a beautiful place by the Piedras river, perfect for recharging.

Trekking time: 6 hours

(BLD)

DAY 5 : Teiku Kogui Town

We start our morning by exploring La Playita, a self-sustainable farm. After learning about how they keep their bees and sampling some fresh honey, it's now time for the hard work to begin as we start walking along undulating jungle trails. Weaving through beautiful rainforest, our guide will point out many different species of bird and wildlife.

After roughly 5 hours of trekking we arrive at Teiku, an indigenous village. You'll spend the night in the company of one of the most spiritual and powerful indigenous of the Sierra, and you'll have the chance to chat to the Kogi about their role in caring for the "heart of the world".

Trekking time: 5 hours

(BLD)

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ITINERARY

DAY 6 : Lost City Trek - Day 1

From Teiku, it's a 50 minute trek out to the town of Calabazo, followed by a 1 ½ hour 4x4 transfer to Machete Pelao, the gateway to the start of our four day trek in the heart of the Colombian jungle.

The Lost City trek then begins on a dirt track. Leaving farmlands behind we enter the terrain of indigenous villages where around 80 families, mainly Kogi and Wiwa, reside. We follow a trail that weaves past large banana trees, towering palms and dangling vines, with the surrounding jungle full of wildlife.

The jungle is a hard environment to trek through as it's humid and the trails are often slippery and covered in tricky roots. Despite all this, it's an unforgettable experience. If we're lucky, we will see howler monkeys (no doubt we will hear them), lizards, toucans and perhaps even snakes (though they are usually found under rocks and found by the guide should we choose to search for them).

With plenty of breaks for photos, snacks and refreshing fresh fruit juices, the final hours see us on a long downhill stretch followed by a sharp ascent to 620m, then we head downhill again to rest at camp.

Tonight, we are sleeping in either jungle beds and hammocks, to the hum of the jungle life that surrounds us.

Trekking time: 5 – 7 hours

(BLD)

DAY 7 : Lost City Trek - Day 2

Begin early for a challenging day hiking through a jungle that's alive with bird species. Watch out for glimpses of panoramic views of the coastal mountain range while learning about the sacred traditions of the indigenous Wiwa and Kogi communities. This is a big day as we journey towards the Lost City!

We will walk through pristine jungle, down mountain sides and we pass through the Kogui indigenous reserve. The Koguis don't just conserve what they have, but they somehow achieve an incredible ecological balance where ecosystems thrive under their stewardship.

Our route joins and follows the Buritaca River valley up to Paraiso Teyuna, the camp which is located at the base of the Lost City. On the way we'll pass the ceremonial Kogui village of Mutanshi and we'll have time to bathe in the clear waters of the Buritaca River before continuing onwards to Paraiso Teyuna.

We'll spend the night in camp. We encourage you to chat to our amazing guide about the myths and legends of the land and the history behind the civilization that used to live in Ciudad Perdida.

Trekking time: 9 – 10 hours

(BLD)

ITINERARY

DAY 8 : Lost City Trek - Day 3

Today we will reach Ciudad Perdida, which is an ancient site shrouded with mist, glory and magic at an altitude of 1,190 metres.

After breakfast, we trek 1 hour on more jungle trails before starting the hike up 1,200 steps that ascend to the Tayrona village. The stairs wind their way up through forest and go on and on... it's more than worth it though, as you explore one of the world's most stunning and important archaeological sites. Once in the Lost City, our local Wiwa guide will lead us on a fascinating tour, explaining the history and secrets of this magical place, showing us the circular ruins of the former market and meeting places and giving us a fascinating insight into the drainage systems and agricultural structures of years before.

We then follow another stone trail that will take us to the 'Central Axis'. The spot where the main houses and temples once stood, and now a site of large, stacked stone terraces, is steeped in history, and we have the chance to explore before turning around for the once-in-a-lifetime magnificent view over the Lost City. We'll have time to bask in our trekking achievements above the clouds, looking into the thick jungle from atop one of the high platforms in this ancient masterpiece where the overgrown nature shrouds the site.

When we have had our fill of the views, we descend down to our camp for dinner under the stars.

Trekking time: 7 - 8 hours

(BLD)

DAY 9 : Lost City Trek - Day 4

Today is our last full day of jungle trekking. This morning we will learn about the local Kogi cultures and their ancestral traditions as we walk alongside Kogi land. We'll learn from afar, giving the community their space as they are semi-nomadic people and farmers and only come back to these villages sporadically. The houses in the village are fascinating, and symbolically built, with two stumps on the top of each house representing the two sacred highest peaks of the Sierra Nevada mountains, which are the ones closest spiritually.

We'll not only experience the Kogi way of life today, but also the culture of the Wiwa people, descendants of the Tairona, who have been left undisturbed for centuries. They have a deep spiritual connection with the land that continues today. Dressed in all white, a colour the Wiwa respect as holy, tribe members will allow us a peek into their lives. They will show us how they strip the wax from palm leaves and use the fibre to make cross-body satchels called mochilas, and we have the opportunity to taste the coca leaf, which the Wiwas consider a sacred plant and chew throughout the day.

This is another day of challenging, humid, jungle trekking, with climbs on rocky pathways and over protruding tree roots, through small parts of dense jungle and thick forest that leads us back to the head of the trail where we pack up the 4x4's and head off to our welcomed accommodation within walking distance of Tayrona National Park. With sea views, hot showers, and jungle cocktails it is a welcome place to celebrate the last 6 days of trekking.

Trekking time: 8-9 hours

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ITINERARY

DAY 10 : Travel to Cartagena

After a delicious breakfast, a dip in the pool and generally a lazy morning we'll head off to the vibrant coastal town Cartagena. We'll take a packed lunch with us on our 4 hour journey.

Cartagena packs a punch and is definitely worth the journey. The old town is truly mesmerising, full of vibrant colours, enjoy getting lost in the array of cobblestone streets and colourful colonial buildings.

After checking into our stunning hotel located in the chaos of old town, we head out on a guided tour of this fascinating city before dinner & cocktails on one of the many roof bars.

(BL)

DAY 12 : Arrive UK

Today marks the end of your Colombian adventure. It is always hard to return to reality after such an adventure, but the memories will last a lifetime.

DAY 11 : Depart Colombia

We're planning for a late breakfast and a lazy relaxing day!

Our flight won't be until this evening so we have most of the day to explore and make the most of this wonderful town.

Cartagena has a very rich history and we'd suggest spending time exploring and taking a city tour for a few hours (it is brilliant). There are lots of things to do, from relaxing and having a massage, to explore the back streets, endless shops and beautiful buildings and if neither of these take your fancy you could just linger in one of the many restaurants and simply watch Colombia life unfold.

What we guarantee is that you'll love Cartagena and it will give you the perfect ending to your adventure, and the airport is only a 20-minute transfer so you really don't need to rush!

(B)

If you have the taste for adventure or wish for more ideas on what to do in Cartagena including rum and chocolate tasting or a half day kayaking in the mangroves or even adding in a few days diving or beach time on the Islas del Rosario, known for their coral reefs, check out our 5-day Colombia extension!

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KIT LIST

Bags & Packs

Travel duffel bag

This bag will be your main travel bag for your international travel. We would suggest you pack your rucksack for the trekking part of the expedition (if you are not taking it as hand luggage) in here, along with your casual clothes for before and after the trekking. This bag can then be left with the team while you are out on the trek.

Rucksack

We would suggest a 40 to 50 litre capacity rucksack fitted with shoulder straps and, importantly, a waist belt. We would recommend your rucksack weighs no more than 8-10kg when fully packed (including your water bottles).

Waterproof rucksack cover

To protect rucksack from rain

Padlocks

For use on your kit bag for travel and on the expedition plus your hotel bag

Drybags

Nylon rolltop bags that keep fresh clothing and other important items like passports and iPods dry in the event of a total downpour that seeps into your kitbag. Good for quarantining old socks. Please note that many countries are now banning plastic bags. We would always advise buying re-usable nylon rolltop bags for keeping your kit dry (and sustainability).

Sleeping Gear

1 season sleeping bag

This is not compulsory. If you choose to bring a sleeping bag, we would suggest a light summer bag, preferably a 1-season bag with a rating of around 5C. Please note that the temperature at night on the Cerro Kennedy could get down to about 8 degrees and the temperature on the Lost City around 10 or 12 degrees so please pack accordingly. All of the accommodation will provide blankets, and we suggest you sleep in light long trousers and a long sleeved top.

Light summer silk liner

Either a light summer silk liner or a 1 season sleeping bag for the camps and farmstead.

Headwear

Wide brimmed hat

Keeps the sun off exposed areas like ears and the nape of the neck

Sunglasses

Category 4 minimum. Worth spending money on good UV filters. Julbo is our preferred supplier

Neck gaiter

Worn around the neck or head for comfort, to wick away sweat. Buff, or similar brands, are ideal.

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KIT LIST

Upper Body

T-shirts

We suggest breathable, quick-dry / wicking tops. Gym-style or sports clothing, or lighter safari-style trekking tops or shirts work best, and we would suggest lighter colours. You will sweat a lot, and can't count on drying your clothes along the way.

Long sleeved t-shirt x 2

The average daytime temperature is 30 degrees, but this can drop to around 12 at night. We would suggest two long sleeved options, one to sleep in and one spare for the day.

Fleece top/jacket or Softshell

A lightweight soft top (jumper or hoodie) is perfect – remember it will likely be hot in the daytime but you feel the temperature change in the evenings, and the temperatures can drop to around 8 – 12 degrees.

Rain poncho

For jungle or rainforest downpours! Due to the heat this is often a preferable option over a more bulky waterproof jacket and trousers.

Lower Body

Trekking trousers

We would suggest breathable, quick-dry / wicking trousers or leggings. You will sweat a lot and can't count on being able to dry clothes along the way. Gym-style / sports clothing, or lighter safari-style trekking clothes work best, and we would suggest lighter colours.

Shorts (optional)

Light weight shorts are advisable for this expedition as some of the days can be hot. Zip off trekking trousers are the most versatile. Consider buying this

Underwear

How many pairs you take is entirely up to you

Sleepwear

Though daytime temperatures can be warm, they drop at night, so we would suggest light weight / fleece leggings and a long-sleeved top or t-shirt to sleep in. As well as being comfortable, long sleeves / legs are good protection against mosquitos.

Swimsuit

For showers in camp or the odd swim

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KIT LIST

Feet

3-4 season walking boots

Well worn in 3-4 season waterproof boots with mid to high ankle support. Your feet will get wet if you don't have decent boots which over 4 days can have major complications.

Trekking socks

Single layer or wearing 2 pairs is a personal choice and lighter weight merino wool is a good option. You must have a clean dry pair for each day of you trek.

Gaiters (Optional)

This are a must in jungle conditions

Sandals

Walking sandals with a good grip are a good choice for river crossings and in camp.

Technical Equipment

Trekking poles

These tend to be a personal preference but help with your stability and can dampen the pressure on the knees coming down hill

Head torch

We recommend Petzl head torches. Bring spare batteries.

Toiletries

Sunblock

Buy the highest SPF you can find as UV intensifies with altitude

Lip salve

Sun cream will not work on your lips and they are very susceptible to burn without proper protection

Wash kit

Keep it simple on the mountain. Essentials are handsoap, toothbrush, toothpaste and deodorant. Moisturiser is advisable, everything else is a luxury!

Nappy sacks

For waste and rubbish including toilet paper.

Wet wipes

Preferably biodegradable, these are great for washing when modern shower facilities become a thing of the past

Expedition towel

Towels from the likes of Lifesystems are perfect

Alcohol gel

A must have for good camp hygiene

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KIT LIST

Insect repellent

This might sound an odd one but we have found that Vicks Rub provides a fantastic protection to insect bites. Use over the spray in generous quantities on your ankles!

Personal first aid kit

Your own first aid kit should contain: A basic blister kit, plasters, antiseptic, sun-protection, any personal medication, basic pain relief (paracetamol/aspirin/ibuprofen), strepsils, anti-nausea, a personal course of antibiotics if prone to illness etc.

Personal medication

Keep this in your daysack

Hydration

Water bottles / bladder

A 2 litre bottle equivalent is perfect (camelbacks are always a good option) and a small collapsible water bottle for night time is also a good additional option.

Water purification

Although generally all water is boiled some prefer to double up and add purification tabs as well. Always good to have in your bag

Miscellaneous

Camera

Bring plenty of spare batteries and memory cards

Ear plugs

For protection against the inevitable snorers!

Snacks

For when your energy levels flag and you need a pick me up

Entertainment

Of course optional, but most trekkers like to bring an iPod, book, Kindle, cards etc for evening entertainment.

Documentation

Passport

Don't forget this! Your passport should have at least 6 months validity. With your passport expiry date at least six months after the final day of travel.

Copy of passport

Just in case

Money

Tips for local guides (tipping your 360 leader is optional) plus any extra cash for meals not included, or additional drinks, snacks or souvenirs on the trek. Please see the FAQs or for advice on additional spending money.

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KIT LIST

Travel insurance

Copy of own travel insurance details. And relevant contact numbers. We have a partnership with True Traveller and would recommend that you contact them when looking for travel insurance for your trip with 360. However, it is vital that you ensure that the insurance cover they offer is suitable for you, taking your personal circumstances (items to be insured, cancellation cover, medical history) into account. Many other insurance providers are available and we do recommend that you shop around to get the best cover for you on the expedition you are undertaking. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the appropriate insurance for your intended trip. To include medical evacuation and coverage up to the maximum altitude of this trip.

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FAQ'S

The Lost City

Where is the Lost City, and what is it?

Ciudad Perdida, known as the 'Lost City' is buried deep in Colombia's jungle and is impossible to access by road due to several river crossings and steep climbs, finishing up with 1,200 stone steps that lead to the Lost City. Here, there are around 170 stone terraces carved into a mountain, with numerous small "plazas" and connecting "streets". These are the remains of a city built in around 800AD, some 650 years before Peru's Machu Picchu. The mountain in question is part of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta range, just 42km from Colombia's Caribbean coast. With peaks reaching 5,700m, it is the world's highest coastal mountain range.

Why was it "lost"?

Ciudad Perdida was re-discovered in 1972, when treasure hunters found steps in the jungle leading to the city, naming it the "green hell". Treasures from the site, including gold figures and ceramics, soon began to appear on the black market which alerted archaeologists to its presence and, on reaching the city in 1976, began a careful excavation and restoration that was completed six years later. However, local indigenous people, including the Koguis, Wiwas and Arhuaco, all descendants of the Tairona, say they had always known the city's location and had visited it, but preferred to keep it secret.

Who lived there?

It is believed the Lost City was once at the heart of several small villages inhabited by the Tayrona people, a pre-Colombian population whose habitation of the city dates back to 1AD. The city was likely their political centre, and may also have played an important role in trade and manufacturing, given its position on the Buritaca River. It is thought up to 8,000 people once lived in the Lost City but it was abandoned during the Spanish Conquest, its inhabitants probably fleeing further into the mountains.

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FAQ'S

Can you tell me more about the Tayrona people?

The Tayrona / Tairona were advanced in construction, engineering and military operation, with a complex hierarchy of society, a religious and political elite, and organised as a federation of towns. It's thought the Lost City was their capital and most sacred town, connecting and trading with other groups in people in Colombia.

By the time the Spanish arrived in the 16th century, the Tayrona (at an estimated one million people) was suspected to be at the edge of becoming a major civilisation in the Americas. Sadly, at least 60% of them died from diseases brought over by the colonisers or died defending their land.

What little was found of the Lost City in the 20th century was stolen and often sold on the black market and what was recovered is now in the gold museums in Santa Marta and Bogota.

Today, it remains a permanent archaeological area with archaeologists using the knowledge from the Kogui and Wiwa people, said to be direct descendants or at least related to the Tayrona, to fill the gaps in the story. Outsiders trek to Ciudad Perdida in search of them.

What is the Lost City trek like - is there climbing involved?

The Lost City sits at 1,190 metres (3,937 ft.) above sea level, and the city itself is the highest point of our trek. Technical equipment (eg. ropes and harnesses) are not required, but this is raw, uneven jungle territory with narrow pathways, uneven surfaces, loose rocks and dense foliage in parts.

How long is the trek to and from the Lost City?

The expedition plan is to trek over 4 days to the Lost City, with 2 days before hand trekking in the Bunkuany corridor, which will add an extra indigenous element to the expedition.

The total distance of the trek to and from the Lost City site is about 55km, using the same jungle path. It is estimated that if you factor in the steep uphill and downhill climbs along this route, in both directions, the total distance is around one and a half times this, meaning you will rack up closer to 75-80km trekking here.

Is there any additional support on the Lost City trek?

Along with our guide, we have a team of porters, and a mule that carries our food. If needed, they can help carry some weight from the bags. After the 2-day Bunkuany trek, if you feel you need a bit more help with luggage carrying we can also arrange an extra porter or even a mule before the Lost City trek, at additional cost.

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FAQ'S

Do they ever close the National Park where the Lost City is found?

The National Park is closed every September for preservation and maintenance. At this time the indigenous communities perform ceremonies and offer payment so to restore the balance of energy in the park. They say this mountain is the 'heart of the world' for them and that if the balance of this place should break, the whole world will break along with.

Who will our guide be in Colombia?

360 work with an amazing team and you will be accompanied by local, licensed, indigenous Wiwa trekking guides. We feel this is vital for your experience and a significant portion of your money for the trek is a contribution to these indigenous communities. This is their sacred land (alongside the Kogui community).

Not only is your expedition cost helping support these two communities, but it is also spread amongst the farmer communities, the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta National Park and the Colombian Institute of Archaeology.

What is the history of this region?

The region has seen three economic booms.

The first two were tied to illegal substances: firstly marijuana farming, and then coca, the plant used to produce cocaine. (Coca leaf tea is legal in both Bolivia and Peru, although not in Colombia. Currently, there are some movements to legalise coca in the country.)

Through farming, these crops provided a means for communities to make money, though this type of industry also brought with it warring cartels and guerrilla groups. A solution to the violence and problems with the government arrived when Ciudad Perdida was uncovered, setting the stage for the third wave: tourism.

How out of my comfort zone will I be?

The trek itself is not too hard but the humidity can be tough at times. The highest altitude we will reach on the trek is 1,190 metres, and though it is not a technical trek (ropes and harnesses are not required), we will be trekking through raw, uneven jungle territory with narrow pathways, uneven surfaces, loose rocks and dense foliage in parts. A good level of fitness will help with your enjoyment of the trek itself, and a positive spirit for trekking in jungle climes!

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FAQ'S

Training

How can I best train / prepare for this?

It is a tough trek due to the conditions, some say tougher than our main treks such as Kilimanjaro and Machu Picchu – therefore we suggest train hard, to enjoy all the more! We suggest if you are comfortable with the level of training at the end of month 4 on our training program (found at the end of the brochure – click 'Discover More' above) you should be in good shape for this expedition. We also recommend that, if you want to delve a little more into training, you head over to www.uphillathlete.com as they have some brilliant plans outlined.

It is also worth reading up on the area and the culture so you have a good understanding that you can build on with our knowledgeable guides.

Accommodation

What's the accommodation like either side of the trekking?

You will stay in 3-4* hotels either side of your 6 days trekking, in shared rooms. Selected for their location, hospitality and splendour we hope you enjoy these nights as much as we do.

You do have the option of a single sleeping arrangement for these nights if it's your preference, see further FAQs.

What's the accommodation like during when we're trekking?

During the Bunkuany trek, you stay at La Playita farm and in a Kogi indigenous village. The accommodation will be basic with a small number of bedrooms and then overspill hammock space. There are bathrooms, and electricity. Spending the night with the Kogi is a privilege and is a fantastic place to learn about the life of the indigenous people.

During the Lost City Trek you will stay in basic accommodation which often compromises one large communal sleeping room, with shared bathrooms and limited electricity. Camps are open shared spaces, with bunk beds and hammocks under an open-sided roofed area. You should expect the accommodation for all nights to be busy and noisy as there are limited overnight spots on the trail.

Do I have to share a room?

Yes for the most part. Rooms are organised according to sex and where possible age groups. If you have joined this expedition with a friend or partner then you will share rooms with them. If you have joined the team by yourself then it is highly likely that you will be sharing a room with a pre-assigned room buddy of the same gender.

If you would rather sleep solo, that's also possible to organise for some of the nights – please see the next FAQ.

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FAQ'S

If I want my own room, how much will this cost?

If you'd prefer we can make the arrangements for you to sleep solo for all nights either side of your trek. This would be for the 5 nights in Santa Marta, Minca, Tayrona and Catagena.

This will cost an additional £390.

Is there an option to not have a hammock during the treks?

You should have a choice of a bed or a hammock but during the Lost City Trek these are often treated on a first come first serve basis. At times the trail will be busier and availability may be limited – sometimes we may not always have the choice. If a hammock is absolutely not an option for you, please let the 360 office know in advance of travel.

Are there showers during the treks?

Yes, there are showers at all of the camps. They are cold water only, but incredibly refreshing, and much welcomed at the end of the trekking day!

Is there electricity at the camps?

All camps have electricity which is available between roughly 4pm & 10pm.

Food & Water

What is the food like during the treks?

The food is a typical Colombia afare – you should expect a buffet breakfast including eggs, tomatoes, onion, arepa (cornbread) and fruit, along with coffee.

Lunches are usually a chicken, fish, or vegetable dish, with salad and fruit juices, while dinner is often a pasta or rice dish, with vegetables, and local fruit juices.

The underlying aim is to provide balanced and nutritional meals with a good amount of carbohydrates to refuel hungry bodies and to replenish stores for the next day of activity!

We would also encourage you to bring along any of your favourite snacks from home if you want a little extra.

I have food allergies; can these be catered for?

Absolutely, please inform the 360 office team of any allergies, intolerances or dietary requirements and we will ensure that these are taken into account on the trek.

Where does the drinking water come from?

We will have access to purified drinking water throughout the trek.

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FAQ'S

How often is fresh water available for replenishing during the day?

You are able to refill your bottles at breakfast, lunch and dinner. There will be plenty, so do refill when you need – it is important to stay well hydrated!

Should I bring a few snacks with me? What is best for the jungle?

Snacks are always a great idea, especially on any of the longer trekking days to give you that additional boost. Nuts, trail mix or sweets are always good, or dried fruit or energy bars. We'd avoid chocolate, it is likely to melt!

Health & Safety

Is Colombia considered a safe destination to travel? I have heard many stories of kidnapping and unrest...

There are regions in Colombia where we would advise against visiting, however, the along our itinerary are safe routes to travel. Of course, no expedition is without its risk and we would advise our 360 travellers to practice the same safety consciousness as travelling anywhere else. This means keeping your personal belongings close, not bringing expensive valuables with you, getting registered taxis at night if needed and, if you are exploring, enquiring of your guide as to the safe places to walk.

Is theft and/or violence a concern?

As with the questions above, keeping your belongings close to yourself when out and about should always be a priority, wherever you are travelling. Though petty crime is common in some areas of Colombia, the rate of unprovoked theft in the Santa Marta area is low, and if you practice sensible safety precautions there should be no issue.

I see we are mainly based in the Santa Marta region, what is the safety like here?

Please see the above FAQ on general safety in Colombia – we would, as with any travel destination, advise practicing basic safe travel procedures, but Santa Marta is a popular traveller's destination.

What about Cartagena – what is the crime rate like here?

When you are on the coast, we would advise sticking to the tourist-visited towns and main centre of Cartagena. As stated above, if you wish to explore further afield at any point, we would recommend you check ahead of time with your guide on which areas are best.

Colombia

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FAQ'S

Can you tell me a little more about FARC?

FARC (The Revolutionary Armed Forces of *Colombia*—People's Army) was a guerilla group involved in the country's conflicts in the late 90s. In June 2017, FARC ceased to be an armed group, disarming itself and handing over its weapons to the United Nations, and is now no longer officially in operation since the peace deal. There may be some FARC members in more remote sections of Colombia, but there have been no reports in the areas of the country we travel through.

We have a few transfers on the itinerary - what are the roads like, and is there a risk of "hold ups"?

The transfers on the bus are run by our brilliant local team, or on well-known local public routes. Our usual hold up is because of traffic! If you plan to take any other bus journeys in your free time, please do check with the guide. As always, we keep an eye on safety in Colombia, and if the situation changes we will advise the team accordingly.

Travelling as a single, young female - should I be worried? What advice do you have?

We have many solo female travellers on our expeditions – and the same safety measures and advice apply as stated in the above FAQs when you are travelling in a group with 360. We would advise additional caution if you are planning on going out in the evenings, but the same recommendations on personal belongings and valuables apply.

Is there a dress code?

No, but respectful clothing is preferable on the trek – shorts and t-shirt or a similar style of gym clothing will be fine. At the coast there is no dress code.

We are going to pass lots of waterfalls – are we okay to swim in them?

The waterfalls are stunning and there are often large pools below. These provide an excellent spot to swim, and are also a great way to cool down and refresh, though do be aware there are no lifeguard services and any swimming is at your own risk.

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FAQ'S

We are in the jungle - is there anything specific I need to be aware of?

You always need to be aware of your surroundings, respect nature and what lies within. There could be snakes and spiders, but they won't hurt you unless they feel at risk. Your guide will give the team a full safety briefing at the start of the trek.

Am I likely to suffer from altitude sickness on this expedition?

No, there is no risk of altitude sickness on this trek.

What happens if there is a problem during the treks?

All of our guides are trained in wilderness first aid, and carry emergency communication equipment in case of an incident. If an accident occurs, the guides are there to give first aid treatment, evacuate the trekker and liaise with insurance companies accordingly – and all of our trekkers are required to have travel insurance covering them for such incidences.

You advocate taking a small first aid kit, what should it contain?

We advocate a little bit of self-help on the trek. For example, if you have a blister developing, then please stop, take off your boot and treat it, before it becomes a problem.

We would recommend your own first aid kit should contain: a basic blister kit, plasters, antiseptic, sun-protection, your own personal medication, basic pain relief, rehydration salts, antibiotic cream in case of infected bites, antihistamines, and, if you are prone to infections, a personal course of antibiotics. Foot powder in your socks every morning is great for preventing blisters, especially in such humid environments.

Generally, the best approach to packing your first aid kit is to include such basic medications as if you would on a family or personal holiday.

Your guide will also carry a comprehensive first aid kit which contains a wide range of supplies. They are fully trained to use whatever is needed for any emergency that may arise.

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FAQ'S

What vaccinations do I need?

It is important you check with your GP or local travel clinic for the latest recommendations and to ensure you are up to date on necessary vaccinations.

For additional information, both the FOC and NHS offer guidance on entry requirements:

www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/colombia/health

www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations/south-america-antarctica/colombia

Do I need a yellow fever vaccination?

Yellow fever is present in some areas of Colombia and it is a recommendation to be vaccinated if you are a visitor to certain areas, including the Tayrona National Park (www.parquesnacionales.gov.co/portal/en/ecotourism/caribbean-region/tayrona-national-natural-park). Please check with your doctor or a local travel clinic for the most up to date advice for your personal situation.

Do note also that a yellow fever certificate is required for any travellers arriving from or transiting for more than 12 hours through an airport of a country with a risk of yellow fever transmission.

Should I be worried about Malaria?

Malaria is present in Colombia however, there have been no recent cases of malaria in the areas we visit on the trek.

We would advise you consult your doctor or a local travel clinic for the most up to date advice and decide if you wish to take prophylactics. We would advise you to bring mosquito spray and cream for bites.

Whilst on the trekking phases of your itinerary, your accommodation (whether beds, dorm bunks, or hammocks) will have a mosquito net. In the evenings and early mornings we advise you cover up with long sleeves and light trousers.

Kit & Clothing

On the trekking days do I carry all my own kit?

Yes, during the trek you will need to carry your own kit – you should use your rucksack for this. You should pack as lightly as possible with your rucksack weighing no more than 8kg-10kg fully loaded including water.

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FAQ'S

Can I leave a bag somewhere for the end of the treks?

Yes, the plan is for your duffel bag to be left in the care of our Colombian crew.

You should pack your rucksack for the 2 day 2 night Bunkuany trek. Your duffel bag will go with our crew and your rucksack will be on your back. After the trek you'll be reunited with your duffel bag in Calabazo. You'll have time here to reorganise yourself and pack again for your 4 day Lost City Trek. Again, you'll carry your rucksack with everything you need and will leave everything else in your duffel bag in the care of our crew. You'll be reunited with your duffel bag again at the end of the Lost City Trek trail.

Please do note the bags are left at your own risk and we would advise not leaving any valuables behind.

What clothing should I wear on this trek?

You will be sweating a lot and it's likely to rain whilst on the trail so your clothes will be most likely be wet inside and out. It's unlikely they'll will dry out overnight / along the way so you should mentally prepare for your trekking clothes to stay wet.

We suggest breathable, quick-dry / wicking clothes – gym-style / sports clothing, or lighter safari-style trekking clothes work best, and we would suggest lighter colours to try and combat some of the suns heat!

Our suggestion would be to have one or two trekking outfits, and then one outfit you're comfortable in for around camp / sleeping. It can feel chilly in the evenings as the temperature drops so a light jumper or hoodie is a good idea and you shouldn't forget your swimwear!

Check out the kit list, and do ask us in the office if you have any questions, but essentially, remember you'll be carrying your own bag so pack light and pack smart.

Will I need to bring waterproofs?

We would say yes, whether that is a waterproof jacket, or a light rain poncho. We will be in the jungle, and the weather can be unpredictable, it can also feel a little too hot to want to put a waterproof on so do bear in mind that often everything will be wet at the end of the trekking day due to the humidity (and maybe the rain). A dry pair of clothes for the evening is a must have.

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FAQ'S

What is the best type of footwear to use?

Boots should be sturdy, waterproof, have good grip (trails can be very muddy!) and offer adequate ankle support – whether you prefer boots or hiking shoes is up to you.

We would definitely recommend that your boots are well worn in to prevent the formation of blisters. Check out [Cotswold Outdoor](#) for handy advice on boot fitting – and we'll give you a discount code to use with them too when you book.

What sort of rucksack should I take for the trek?

We would recommend a 40-50 litre backpack, large enough to carry enough light clothes for four days. Ideally, one that doesn't rest directly on your spine is best, to reduce sweating.

Is there a maximum weight for my rucksack?

There is no maximum weight but remember you will be carrying it for the duration of the trek, we think 8kg-10kg fully loaded is the max it should be so if you want to train with weight, use up to 10kg.

Are there porters to carry my main bag during the trek?

While we have porters to assist the team, we do not have porters for carrying luggage unless they are specifically requested, but if you do feel you need additional help with carrying your luggage it is possible hire a porter, or even a mule, for additional help.

Please let 360 know in advance so we can organise this, and advise on the cost.

What clothing is suitable for when we come back from the trek?

You will have access to your duffel bag when you return from your treks (see above), so you can leave any clothes brought especially for after the trek in here. We suggest normal lightweight travel clothes and sandals for your evenings.

Do I need to bring a bivvy or tarp in case of rainy nights?

No – we will be sleeping in hammocks or bunkbeds under a cover. Both come with mosquito nets and blankets.

What is better – a silk sleeping liner or a cotton one?

Both are fine, it is a personal choice – a silk liner is lighter and dries faster, though usually it's a bit more costly.

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FAQ'S

What type of bag should I take with me?

We always recommend you take a large soft duffle bag as this is by far easier for our crew to move around in vehicles. Hard suitcases with wheels are simply less mouldable to spaces BUT if you only have a hard case then that's "okay" as your bag isn't traveling on mules.

The Weather

When is the best time to travel to Santa Marta?

- The dry season in Colombia usually lasts from mid November to March
- The rainy season normally occurs in April and May, and from September to November

While it is possible to do this trek year round, we suggest the best times are the end of January through to March, and then mid November to December. Later in December can become busy as holidays coincide with the optimal weather!

How hot or cold can it get?

In the dry season it can get up to 33°C and rarely gets below 23°C. However, it can get chilly at night, to around 10°C, in the evenings.

Dropping to 10°C at night is quite a dip – what do you suggest for sleeping?

The camps provide blankets and covers for sleeping, but if you wish you can bring a silk liner, or a light summer sleeping bag. We also suggest bringing a jumper or hoodie for the evening if it does get cooler.

We are in the jungle so I imagine it will be very humid – any advice?

The jungle is exciting but the humidity can be uncomfortable at times. If you come with the mindset that you will be sweaty a LOT of the time, appreciate that you will all be in the same (slightly stinky!) boat, and take advantage of the refreshing natural pools and waterfalls en route, we think you'll have an amazing time!

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FAQ'S

Travel

What if I arrive early or depart late?

If you want to arrive in Colombia a little earlier this is not a problem, we can arrange an additional airport transfer – just chat to the 360 office team, and make sure you let us know if we are booking your flights for you.

If you wanted to extend your trip then it would be worth exploring our 5 day extension, which includes surfing, diving and more time in Cartagena, which has wonderful Afro-Colombian music and dance. You will also have time to explore the fishing village of La Boquilla and go kayaking in the mangroves. There will be an opportunity to take part in a drumming workshop, and enjoy an evening of rum tasting with chocolate pairing at the sublime restaurant and rum bar El Arsenal!

What happens if I need to leave the expedition early?

If you need to leave early, arrangements can of course be made, and your guide will assist throughout. Do note that any additional costs related to an early departure (transport, hotels flights etc.) will need to be covered by you, and we would advise travel insurance that also covers for such an eventuality.

Visas / Entry Requirements

I am a UK citizen. Do I need a visa to get into Colombia?

No, currently there are no visas required for UK citizens, though we would advise you check the entry requirements for your nationality.

Though the 360 team are on hand to assist, it is your own responsibility to ensure your passport is valid and meets the entry requirements, and that you have the correct paperwork and vaccinations to enter Colombia.

Finance

When is the money due for this expedition?

360 asks for an initial deposit of £800, then the final balance is due 4 months before departure. There is also the option to set up a flexible payment plan, with the final balance then due 2 months prior to departure – chat to the 360 office team for more info!

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FAQ'S

Money in Colombia: what currency is used and what does this mean for me?

The local currency is Colombia pesos (COP).

Outside of Santa Marta, you will need cash with you as cards are not widely accepted again until you reach Cartagena.

Unlike many other South American countries, you cannot pay for things directly with US Dollars in Colombia (apart from tips).

When you arrive in country you have a few options:

- Exchange money at the airport (this is expensive and is definitely not recommended)
- Exchange money using hotels, banks or bureaux de changes in Santa Marta
- Withdraw money from ATMs at the airport or in Santa Marta

What additional spending money will we need?

The amount of money you will need depends on how many presents you wish to buy or if you are buying additional drinks and snacks throughout. As a basic rule of thumb, 250,000 COP should be more than adequate for any expedition spending, this does not include money for tips (see below).

Colombia is a relatively cheap place and, when indulging in the local custom of haggling, souvenirs can be very good value for money. Your guide will be happy to point out the relative bargains and the suitable prices plus where to get the best value for money.

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FAQ'S

How much do we tip our local crew?

Our local crew work extremely hard to ensure that your expedition runs well. Tipping is completely optional though it is increasingly seen as a way of showing your appreciation. Our guidance is intended to give you an idea of how much you should budget. Of course the amount you give is entirely your own choice.

Lead guide: between \$10 – \$15 per day. You will have one lead guide with you throughout your expedition, from day 2 through to day 10 (\$120)

Local guides: between \$5 – \$10 per day. Depending on your groups size you may have a local guide during the Bunkuany trek and Lost City trek (\$70).

Indigenous: In this itinerary you have the unique opportunity to spend one night in the Teiku Kogui Indigenous community. This community is organised in a way that different members participate in various activities, such as guiding, conversational activities, and cooking. It is not necessary to tip every individual that takes part in the activities, as the number of individuals can vary. Instead, we suggest giving a general tip for the community. Between \$10-\$15/person will help support the community's efforts and ensure the continuation of their cultural practices.

For 4 days of your itinerary you have a cook (\$20), and there are 7 journeys where you have a driver (\$35).

To sum all that up, if you allocate \$250/person for tipping, this would be more than adequate. For the most part there is no requirement to change your tips into COP in advance, tips will be happily received in USD except for the indigenous, tipping here is more helpful in COP.

Electronics

Do we need a travel adaptor for the plug sockets in the hotel?

You will need an adaptor for UK plugs. In Colombia they use types A and B – plugs with either two flat parallel pins or two flat parallel pins and a grounding pin.

Colombia operates on a 110V supply voltage and 60Hz.

Is there mobile phone reception on the trek?

There is no mobile phone reception during the trek.

Can you can get Wi-Fi at camp?

You are able to access Wi-Fi at some of the camps for a small fee.

Will I be able to charge my phone or camera out in the trek?

Yes at each camp you will have the opportunity to charge your electrical items, but do bear in mind that the charging points at the camps are communal and so availability is not always guaranteed. We would recommend a power bank – though remember the weight, as you will have to carry it.

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FAQ'S

General

Will my valuables be safe?

While we will do everything we can to provide adequate safety for the group and security for your possessions, the general rule is that if you don't need it, don't bring it. This includes jewellery, necklaces, rings and even watches. Your passport and money should be kept on you at all times. As with travel in any foreign country, you need to look after yourself and your possessions, and this is no different.

Who will I be talking to before departure?

Before and after booking, the 360 office team is on hand to help. If you do have any queries, whether it's about medical concerns, you're unsure about certain things on the kit list, or you want to add a few days onto the expedition at the end to relax a bit, we encourage you to get in touch with us. This is a dream holiday, and we are there to make sure you are fully prepared and raring to go!

Do I need special travel insurance for the expedition?

You must carry individual travel insurance to take part in the expedition. We cannot take you on this trek without proof of insurance.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the appropriate insurance for your intended trip to include, at a minimum, medical evacuation and coverage for relevant activities and up to the maximum altitude of this trip. Do remember that you may need an adventure add-on if you will be taking part in additional activities (ie. surfing or diving) after the trek

Your insurance details are requested on the booking form, however this can be arranged at a later date, though we would advise getting insurance to cover you for cancellation at the time of booking. 360 Expeditions will be requesting your full insurance details 8 weeks before your departure.

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TRAINING PROGRAM

To begin 6 months prior to the expedition where possible.

1. CVS: Cardiovascular exercise which is low impact such as swimming, cycling, cross trainer, rowing.

2. Weekend walk should be done over undulating terrain. Only a light rucksack needs to be carried.

3. For specific exercises it is worth doing static squats and heel raises on a regular basis to improve leg muscles prior to the trip. Static squats are especially useful to help protect the knees. Please remember that it is still important to have a well balanced workout using a variety of muscle groups.

4. It is worth winding down and resting in the week leading up to the trip, doing several light walks to keep things going.

5. When walking going at a pace of a brisk walk with a light sweat and enough to feel breathless is recommended

6. During the program, rather than step up suddenly each month (example, going for 3 one hour walks each week during the weekdays in April to 3 one and half hour walks suddenly in May) it is better to build up gradually each week so there isn't a large transition (example, going for 3 one hour walks during week 1 in April, going for 3 one hour and ten minute walks during week 2 in April, going for 3 one hour and fifteen minute walks during week 3 in April, going for 3 one hour and twenty minute walks during week 4 in April)

6. It is important you seek medical advice prior to starting any training program, especially if you are not used to regular physical exertion

All the best with your training!

MONTH 1

OPT 1

2 x 30 mins weekday walk
1 x 1 hour weekend walk
1 x 10 mins CVS

OPT 2

1 x 30 mins weekday walk
2 x 1 hour weekend walk
1 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH 2

OPT 1

2 x 45 mins weekday walk
1 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

OPT 2

1 x 45 mins weekday walk
2 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH 3

OPT 1

2 x 45 mins weekday walk
1 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

OPT 2

1 x 45 mins weekday walk
2 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH 4

OPT 1

3 x 1 hour weekday walk
1 x 4 hours weekend walk
3 x 15 mins CVS

OPT 2

2 x 1 hour weekday walk
2 x 4 hours weekend walk
3 x 15 mins CVS

MONTH 5

OPT 1

3 x 1.5 hours weekday walk
1 x 5 hours weekend walk
3 x 20 - 25 mins CVS

OPT 2

2 x 1.5 hours weekday walk
2 x 5 hours weekend walk
3 x 20 - 25 mins CVS

MONTH 6

OPT 1

3 x 2 hours weekday walk
1 x 6 hours weekend walk
3 x 30 mins CVS

OPT 2

2 x 3 hours weekday walk
2 x 6 hours weekend walk
3 x 30 mins CVS



"Life should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty & well preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside in a cloud of smoke, thoroughly used up, totally worn out & loudly proclaiming 'Wow! What a Ride!' "

Dream it. Plan it. Live it.