



Tour 04/17 Colombia & Panama September 2017

We are pleased to offer the PTG Hidden Colombia by Rail tour to LCGB Members.

Highlights are 15 days 14 - 29 Sept From: £4,250 An exciting opportunity presents itself for you to join us on what we believe is the first dedicated railtour to Colombia in the 21st century. once considered off-limits, five decades of conflict have now ended in what is Latin America's oldest democracy. our tour visits the exquisite heritage sites of Salento, Villa de Leyva, Barichara and Cartagena together with La Candelaria, the historic neighbourhood in downtown Bogota. • Extensive steam travel • Dramatic scenery by train • Coffee plantation visit • Visit Cartagena, a Unesco World Heritage site

Day 1 Friday 15 September (D) Arrivals in Cali Colombia and transfer to hotel for dinner. Dependant on final flight options and arrivals, we may offer a short tour to city attractions in Cali.

Day 2 Saturday 16 September (B,L,D) We make a leisurely start on our first morning visiting a plinthed locomotive or two on the way to a transport museum. This welcoming museum contains both steam locomotives, airplanes and a giant model railway. We lunch here too. In the afternoon, we plan a visit to Yumbo, the Bogota rail base for the line towards Buenaventura and plan a short rail journey in one direction or the other, hopefully heading westerly up the pass, before we transfer back to our hotel for dinner.

Day 3 Sunday 17 September (B,L,D) We transfer to the Palmira railway workshops for a brief visit before our chartered train, using the President's coach heads first east, then north, halting at the municipality of Buga to join with pilgrims visiting the very significant Basilica del Señor de los Milagros, which houses an image of Christ called el Señor de los Milagros (the Lord of the Miracles). After lunch we hope to be able to take our train further north to Tulua or La Tebaida, from where we take to the road for our overnight halt in delightful Salento, one of the major tourist attractions in Colombia.

Day 4 Monday 18 September (B,L,D) We start our day with some free time to wander the main square and streets of this captivating place where your time will not go unrewarded. After departure, we make for one of the plantations in this traditional coffee region where you can observe the biodiversity of the crop in stunning surroundings before we enter the Parque del Café. This in fact is a theme park in the coffee region and our purpose in entering is more for the rail journey on offer than the other attractions. Regrettably their steam locomotive is 'out of ticket' as they say. By mid-afternoon, we need to head further east towards our overnight at Ibague.

Day 5 Tuesday 19 September (B,L,D) It is but a short journey this morning to Girardot and across the river is Flandes. The latter was the location of the main workshops of the Colombian Railways, but now all that remains is the locomotive park and the 1930-built magnificent steel railway viaduct high above the Magdalena River. We plan to walk over it, ride over it on rails using a maintenance vehicle then and sail under it on a river boat ride. We also lunch in Girardot. Early afternoon, we will depart for our 2-night stay in the La Candelaria area of Bogota.

Day 6 Wednesday 20 September (B) We commence our visit to Bogota with a ride to Monserrate on the funicular railway from where fine views of the orientation of the capital can be obtained. On descending we walk over the road to the Quinta de Bolivar, which served as a residence to [HYPERLINK "https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sim%C3%B3n_Bol%C3%ADvar"](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sim%C3%B3n_Bol%C3%ADvar) "Simón Bolívar" Simon Bolivar in the capital after the war of independence. It is now a museum dedicated to Bolivar's life and times. We plan to use an imitation streetcar for our journey back to the central area for a free-time lunch. First after lunch we visit the Museo de Oro, Bogotá's most famous museum and one of the most fascinating in all of South America, containing 55,000 pieces of gold and other materials from all the major pre-Hispanic cultures in Colombia. Following the Museo de Oro there is free-time for another of Bogotá's many renowned museums such as perhaps the National or Botero Museums. There is more free-time in the evening for a dinner of choice such as perhaps at the adjacent premises of the notable Bogota Beer Company (BBC) where a selection of ales are offered, or perhaps back at Monserrate, accessed in the evening by cable car. #

Day 7 Thursday 21 September (B,L,D) Our morning comprises a guided tour of La Candelaria, the old quarter of Bogota, with some free time in the historic centre. We then plan on taking a light lunch respite at the Ferro Club, which has preserved, Colombia's

oldest locomotive from 1878 when lines in the Bogota area were metre gauge. Other items of rail interest are here too. Then we relocate to the Sabana terminal railway station where we take afternoon tea in the small museum. No time should be lost by rail enthusiasts in examining the station and workshops where there are 5 operational locos and other abandoned locos, and of which we have asked for 2 to be in steam for photos. One would normally be under repair. The station also holds a 1905 British built steam crane. After we conclude, we plan to relocate to a new hotel adjacent to Usaquen station some 15km distant by a steam-hauled train out of Sabana Station. In the evening, we visit one of the Andres Carne de Res restaurants in Zona Rosa, near our hotel. Day 8 Friday 22 September (B,L) We continue our journey northwards from the adjacent Usaquen Station with a steam-hauled train using one of the other locomotives. We will proceed to La Caro Junction, from where we take the line to Zipaquirá, halting for photos en route. At Zipaquirá, we walk the short distance to the attractive town square for a late lunch. After lunch it is but a short transfer to the unbelievable underground cathedral carved within what was formerly a working salt mine. We will have a guided tour of the complete complex before retiring to our hotel. The evening comprises free time to enjoy one of the many restaurants and bars in Zipaquirá.

Day 9 Saturday 23 September (B,L,D) We return to La Caro junction by bus where yet another steam locomotive awaits us as we relax and watch the Colombian landscape pass whilst we enjoy lunch on the train as we make for Villapinzon. The scenery gets more interesting as we proceed past Suesca where we plan to make good use of the photo opportunities hereabouts. At Villapinzon, we

will need to say goodbye to our steam locomotive and continue our journey by 1960s railcar towards Tunja. After some scenic running and halting at a viaduct and tunnel, we plan to alight at a remote road crossing to transfer to Villa de Leyva, one of the colonial

gems of the continent, with its enormous central square. There may be an option for railfans to continue to Tunja by railcar.

Day 10 Sunday 24 September (B,L,D) Our day commences with a guided tour of the main sights of our base, followed by free time. After departure, we visit a site known as the Stonehenge of Colombia having many large rocks carved to resemble phallic symbols. Then, close by is a museum hosting a significant dinosaur fossil and many others found in the area. After lunch taken nearby, we make our way to Paipa for an early check-in to a natural springs hot-spa hotel once used by Simon Bolivar – take your bathing outfits to relax at in the spa waters. For railfans, per chance, there may be a freight working from Tunja to Paipa to ride. There is also the possibility of a visit to Belencito where a small museum contains a preserved steam locomotive. Dinner is planned at our hotel.

Day 11 Monday 25 September (B,L,D) A very early start is required this morning for those wishing to join us. We plan to ride in the passenger car of the c.7:30 mixed coal or ore empties from the Belencito steel complex as it makes its way through a spectacular gorge, reminiscent of Colorado, en route to Paz del Rio at the end of the line. We hope to have a photo stop or two on this workaday electrified railway. We have time at the terminus for photos of both the electric loco and the local diesel pilot before our bus takes us back to the hotel to wash the coal and ore dust away prior to a late morning check-out. We then commence a journey through the mountains to Barichara, another of the exquisitely preserved small colonial towns which will be our base for this evening. It is said to be the kind of town that Hollywood filmmakers dream about, a Spanish colonial town saturated with atmosphere!

Day 12 Tuesday 26 September (B,L,D) The first part of the day gives us the opportunity to explore Barichara, initially with our guide, then using free-time. We have an evening flight to catch from Bucaramanga to Cartagena but, before this we make for Parque Nacional del Chicamocha where we take lunch on arrival. In the afternoon, we take the aerial tramway over the spectacular canyon of the National Park, where our bus meets us on the other side. Our short evening flight should soon see us in Cartagena and to our central hotel for 2 nights.

Day 13 Wednesday 27 September (B,D) The day is spent in Cartagena, a Unesco World Heritage site and a fairy-tale city of romance, legends and superbly preserved beauty lying within impressive 13km of centuries-old colonial stone walls. In the morning, we take a leisurely guided tour until lunchtime. The afternoon comprises free-time in this undisputed queen of the Caribbean coast.

Day 14 Thursday 28 September (B,L,D) This morning we transfer to Santa Marta. Passing by Barranquilla, where once existed a 3' 6" railway, we travel across a causeway to arrive at Cienaga. Railfans will alight here with a packed lunch, to visit the rail facilities on this busy coal-carrying northern section of the Colombian railway. We hope to continue our journey to Santa Marta in a Director's Coach and visit rail facilities also at the Puerto end of the line. Those continuing by bus will take lunch in the old town, and after which, will enjoy a guided tour of the Cathedral, Quinta de San Pedro Alejandrino, the resting place of Simon Bolivar and the Museo del Oro. The evening is completed by a farewell dinner in the Ouzo restaurant.

Day 15 Friday 29 September (B) Our day of departure, when we take transfers to either Santa Marta or Barranquilla airports depending on which international flights are finally determined.

Prices (per person) • Full 15 day holiday with UK flights: £4,999 • Full 14 day holiday joining in Colombia: £4,250 options • Single room supplement: £600 • Add on to Panama: £650 (twin/double), £850 (single) Deposit • £1500 Price includes • All trains and excursions as listed in the itinerary • Hotel accommodation each day • Meals as listed in itinerary B= Breakfast, L= Lunch, D= Dinner • Fully escorted holiday Flights • Flights by Iberia via Madrid

Our Panama extension will comprise a pre-tour. Not only do flights work out better that way, but it places us in Panama during the week when the railway's passenger service is operating. We plan to: Tuesday 12 September (D) Arrivals at Tocumen Airport Panama City and transfer to our hotel sited within the historic old quarter of the city for dinner. Dependant on final flight options and arrivals, we may offer a short programme. Wednesday 13 September (B,L,D) We commence our Panama exploration by transfer across the Isthmus of Panama to the Caribbean province of Colon. In about 1 hour we will have crossed the continent, from ocean to ocean, after which, we drive over the massive Gatun locks to the Castle of San Lorenzo, a UNESCO World Heritage Site built to fortify and protect the river entrance and Las Cruces Trail that led to Panama City. Lunch will be taken at Shelter Bay Marina before we visit Gatun Locks and the Observation centre. Our return to Panama City will be by the Panama Canal Railroad, following a similar route to the canal and taking some of the trans-ocean container traffic. The railway takes us along the magnificent waterway, flanked by the exuberant rainforests of Soberania National Park. Thursday 14 September (B,L) Today we transfer to the town of Gamboa, where the Chagres River meets the Panama Canal to enjoy extraordinary views of the Panama Canal and board an expedition boat which will include a voyage across Gatun Lake in the Panama Canal passing by gigantic cargo ships. Our boat will pass close to rainforest covered islands (former hill tops) where we search for various items of wildlife including crocodile and white-faced monkeys. In early afternoon, we can return to our hotel or, remain in the Gamboa area to observe canal and rail traffic until the passenger train passes. Friday 15 September (B) Our day starts with a visit to the Miraflores Locks visitor centre, where there is a preserved steam locomotive used at the time of the canal's construction. Later, we have a guided tour of the UNESCO Heritage old quarter of the city before we break for lunch (own arrangements). Our Panama tour finishes with some free time and a late afternoon transfer to the airport before flights to Colombia for the main tour.

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