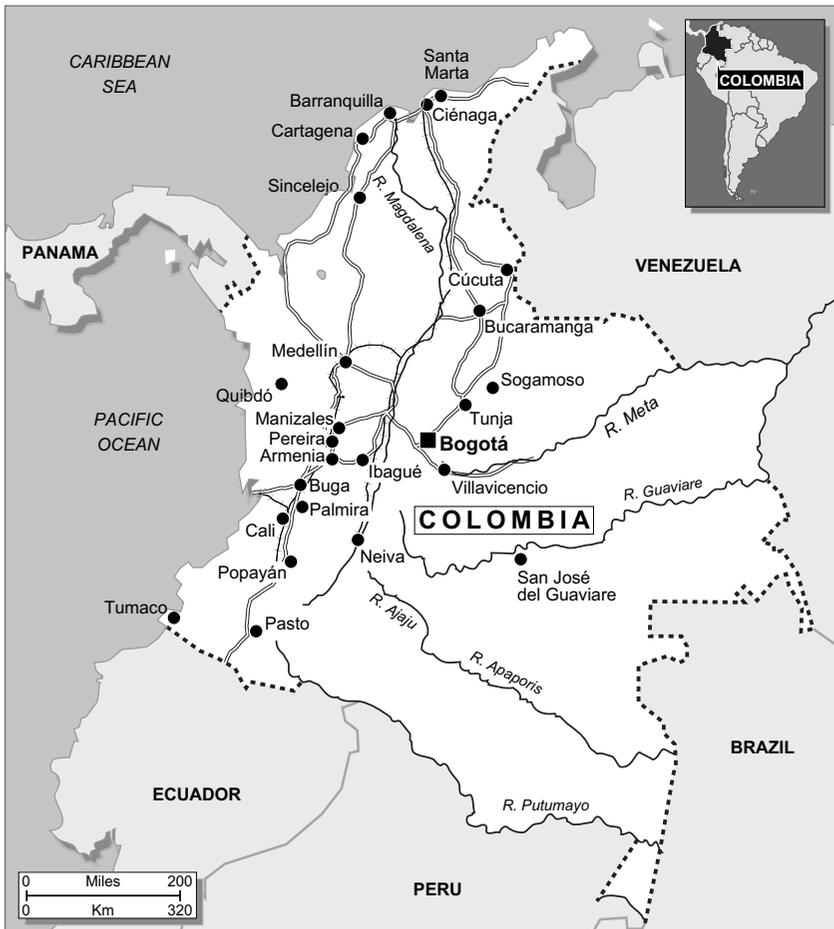


Colombia



KEY FACTS

Official name: República de Colombia (Republic of Colombia)

Head of State: President Juan Manuel Santos (PSUN) (from 7 Aug 2010)

Head of government: President Juan Manuel Santos

Ruling party: Coalition led by Partido Social de Unidad Nacional (PSUN) (Social National Unity Party), with Parte de Integración Nacional (PIN) (National Integration Party) and Alas-Equipo (elected 2006; re-elected 14 Mar 2010)

Area: 1,138,914 square km

Population: 46.60 million (2012)*

Capital: Santa Fé de Bogotá

Official language: Spanish

Currency: Colombian peso (Col\$) = 100 centavos

Exchange rate: Col\$1,891.50 per US\$ (Jul 2013)

GDP per capita: US\$7,855 (2012)*

GDP real growth: 4.00% (2012)*

GDP: US\$366.02 billion (2012)*

Labour force: 23.23 million (2012)*

Unemployment: 10.38% (2012)*

Inflation: 3.17% (2012)*

Oil production: 944,000 bpd (2012)

Natural gas production: 12.00 billion cum (2011)

Balance of trade: US\$4.87 billion (2012)*

* estimated figure

In July 2013 President Juan Manuel Santos took an historic step when, for the first time, he acknowledged that the Colombian government had 'on some occasions by omission, on others intentionally', been responsible for serious human rights violations during Colombia's fifty year period of conflict. President Santos made this announcement in front of the judges of his country's Constitutional Court. The President was appearing before the Court as the official representative of the Colombian government in a bewildering array of legal hearings to consider whether the new *Marco Jurídico Para la Paz* (Judicial Peace Framework) was constitutional. The legislation, which had already been approved by Congress,

was designed to facilitate negotiations with Colombia's most prominent guerrilla group, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Farc). It was also conceived to establish a judicial model for the Farc's eventual disarmament.

All had not been plain sailing for the new legislation. The Colombian Jurists' Commission had questioned the law on the grounds that it was likely to create a climate of impunity for any human rights violations. The opinion was not shared by the President who roundly stated that it did not 'Invite impunity, but secured the rights of victims of human rights violations during this prolonged conflict.' The President insisted that the new legislation

went further; it was not a question of 'sacrificing justice in order to establish peace, rather of securing peace with maximum justice.' While acknowledging the state's guilt, the President did not miss the opportunity to inculcate the members of the Farc as well as those of the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) (National Liberation Army) – both of which had been largely demobilised – for their crimes against humanity. 'They, too, must accept their responsibility in these crimes against humanity' declared President Santos.

The President of the Sala Penal del Tribunal Supremo (Penal Chamber of the Supreme Court), Leónidas Bustamante, sought the approval of the Constitutional Tribunal that the new legislation was constitutional. The Tribunal's decision was expected in August 2013. Meanwhile, the negotiations between the government and representatives of Farc continued in Cuba. The talks – initially held in secret for some seven months, appeared to be advancing slowly. A five-point agenda had been agreed, but the Santos administration – believing itself to have the upper hand – had refused a cease-fire, demanding instead the demobilisation of the Farc. The government appeared to be playing hard-ball on the agenda itself, saying that it would agree to nothing until agreement was reached on all the five points set out on the agreed agenda. Nearly a quarter of a million Colombians had lost their lives

in 50 years of conflict, according to a Colombian government-funded report. Some observers calculate that a comprehensive peace agreement could boost Colombia's gross domestic product (GDP) by as much as 1.5 per cent. Colombia found itself fighting a war with two left-wing rebel groups founded in 1964, after a long period of civil war that became known as *La Violencia*. The Farc and the ELN also battled paramilitary groups, leaving civilians caught in the middle. 'We all deserve to know the truth, we all deserve to understand what happened in our rural areas and cities, and only then will we be able to say with force: Stop!' President Santos said at the presidential palace when the study was released. 'Only in a Colombia without fear and with truth can we begin to turn the page.'

The negotiations' balancing act required the participants not to allow any continued fighting back in Colombia derail an apparently positive mood in Cuba. Initially the positive mood was helped by a unilateral cease-fire declared by the Farc between November 2012 and January 2013. For the most part – with the odd exception – the level of violence plummeted. None the less, Colombia has long lived with excessive levels of violence and insecurity. In 2012 the Farc announced the end of random kidnapping for ransom. It seemed that the very process of negotiation had brought about a more measured climate, a by-product of

which was that the Farc were now apparently endeavouring to be more cautious in the targeting of their attacks.

The economy

In 2013 the Paris-based Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) decided to open membership talks with Colombia. This was something of a feather in Colombia's international cap, conferring a perceived degree of both economic and political respectability on a country once best known for its guerilla groups and drug cartels. In purely economic terms, Colombia certainly outperformed many OECD member countries. In its January 2013 assessment of the Colombian economy, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) noted that Colombia's economy had been 'resilient to the adverse global shocks of recent years.' The IMF took the view that Colombia's strong policy framework and skilful policy management provided the government with enough policy legroom to undertake effective counter-cyclical measures to mitigate the impact of the 2008–09 financial crisis. Economic growth had rebounded strongly in 2010 and reaching almost 6 per cent in 2011, supported by sound macroeconomic policies and favourable terms of trade. As the output gap closed, the Banco de la República (central bank) raised interest rates from 3 per cent at end-2010 to 5.25 per cent by February 2012.

During 2012 growth was expected to have moderated to below its estimated potential rate of 4.5 per cent, largely reflecting the lagged impact of counter-cyclical policies, supply shocks, and weaker external demand. Headline inflation fell to 2.4 per cent (year-on-year) by the end of 2012, down from 4 per cent in late 2011. Following several years of robust economic expansion, the unemployment rate fell to 9.2 per cent at end 2012 (from more than 17 per cent in 2002). The external current account deficit remained broadly unchanged at 3 per cent of GDP despite a moderation in growth and high export prices; large imports and profit repatriations by multinational firms also seem to have been key contributing factors. The current account deficit continued to be more than covered by large net inflows of foreign direct investment (FDI), putting upward pressure on the peso and leading to a balance of payments surplus that is likely to exceed US\$5 billion.

In the opinion of the IMF, the financial health of Colombia's credit institutions appeared to be sound. The banking system

KEY INDICATORS

Colombia

	Unit	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Population	m	44.45	44.98	*45.51	*46.05	*46.60
Gross domestic product (GDP)	US\$bn	240.20	228.80	285.50	328.40	*366.02
GDP per capita	US\$	5,404	5,087	6,273	7,132	*7,855
GDP real growth	%	3.5	1.7	4.0	5.9	*4.0
Inflation	%	7.0	4.2	2.3	11.6	*3.2
Unemployment	%	11.7	12.0	11.7	10.8	*10.4
Oil output	'000 bpd	618.0	685.0	801.0	930.0	944.0
Natural gas output	bn cum	9.1	10.5	11.3	11.0	12.0
Coal output	mtoe	47.8	46.9	48.3	55.8	58.0
Exports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	38,546.0	34,026.0	40,777.0	12,800.0	61,506.0
Imports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	37,556.0	31,480.0	38,628.0	11,649.0	56,635.0
Balance of trade	US\$m	990.0	2,546.0	2,150.0	1,150.0	4,872.0
Current account	US\$m	-6,765.0	-5,033.0	-9,032.0	-9,955.0	*-12,355.0
Total reserves minus gold	US\$m	23,479.0	24,748.0	27,766.0	31,283.0	36,444.0
Foreign exchange	US\$m	22,810.0	23,158.0	26,349.0	29,750.0	34,920.0
Exchange rate	per US\$	1,967.71	2,166.80	1,898.60	1,827.57	1,806.00

* estimated figure

remained well-capitalised and profitable; non-performing loans are low and well-provisioned; and funding is stable, relying mostly on domestic deposits. Colombia's Financial Superintendency effectively supervises all financial institutions, and has been taking steps to strengthen supervision further. In 2013, Colombia's GDP growth was projected to be around its estimated potential rate while inflation was projected to remain close to the midpoint of the central bank's target range. The external current account deficit was also expected to remain at about 3 per cent of GDP. The knock-on effects from the global turmoil had been relatively limited. However, Colombia remained vulnerable to a sharp growth slowdown in its trading partners, a steep drop in oil prices, or a sharp rise in global risk aversion.

Hydrocarbons

According to the US based *Oil and Gas Journal* (OGJ), Colombia had some 2 billion barrels of proven crude oil reserves in 2012, up from the 1.9 billion barrels registered in 2011. Colombia's increasing reserves were the result of the exploration of several new blocks that had been sold by auction in the last bidding round in 2010. Much of Colombia's crude oil production takes place in the Andes foothills and the eastern Amazonian jungles. Meta department, in central Colombia, is also an important production area, predominately of heavy crude oil, and its Llanos basin contains the Rubiales oilfield, the largest producing oil field in the country.

All Colombia's hydrocarbon reserves are owned by the state. Control is exercised in the oil and gas sectors through two national companies Ecopetrol and Ecogas. Ecopetrol is the largest primary oil and gas producer in Colombia, accounting for 60 per cent of total oil production.

According to the US government Energy Information Administration (EIA) Colombia has been concerned to make its investment climate more attractive to foreign oil companies. Upstream sector initiatives include allowing foreign oil companies to own 100 per cent stakes in oil ventures and compete with Ecopetrol, the introduction of a lower, sliding-scale royalty rate on oil projects and lengthening the time period for exploration licences. The government plans to sell shares of Ecopetrol to private investors, reducing its share to roughly 80 per cent. These reforms have sparked a renewed interest in Colombia's upstream sector, with record

levels of exploratory and development drilling underway. According to the central bank, the oil sector received US\$2.86 billion in FDI in 2010.

In June 2010, Colombia's Agencia Nacional Hidrocarburos (ANH) (National Hydrocarbons Agency) conducted a bidding round, which included 228 exploratory blocks. The round featured both known hydrocarbon-rich areas as well as frontier regions in offshore blocks in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. However, the ANH only awarded 76 total licences in well-established areas in the round. A new bidding round was opened in February 2012, which focused on the exploration and development of non-conventional gas sources. One-third of the 110 blocks offered were believed to contain shale or coal bed methane gas. To attract investment, the government announced a 40 per cent discount on royalties from non-conventional gas at the end of 2011. The auction had also included 13 mostly deepwater offshore blocks with crude oil and natural gas indications.

Colombia produced 944,000 barrels per day (bpd) of oil in 2011, up 59 per cent from the 595,000bpd produced in 2008. This rising production trend is continuing. Most recently, the ministry of mines and energy reported that Colombian production reached 951,000 barrels per day in March 2012, and that production is expected to reach 1 million bpd by the end of 2012 and 1.5 bpd by 2020. Colombia consumed 274,000bpd in 2012, allowing the country to export most its oil production.

In the years before 2008, Colombia's oil production had for some time been largely flat, following a period of steady decline that started in 1999, when Colombia's oil production peaked at 830,000bpd. The principle cause of the fall in oil production was that of natural decline at existing oil fields and the absence of sizeable new reserve discoveries. However, the combination of changes to the regulatory framework and the improved security situation has contributed to increasing investment in the country by international oil companies. Pipelines and other energy infrastructure are still the targets of attacks by anti-government guerrillas, but the number and severity of these attacks is lower than in the past. According to the Colombian government, there were about 31 attacks against pipelines in 2010, and 84 attacks in 2011, a significant increase, but it did not affect export levels. This figure compared favourably

with hundreds of such incidents that occurred per year in the early 2000s.

As a result of these improvements, Colombia reversed the decline in its oil production in 2008 and by 2013 was experiencing rapid growth. The EIA forecasts that Colombia's oil production will increase in the next two years, forecasting that Colombian oil production will rise to 970,000bpd in 2012 and will exceed one million bpd in 2013. The United States is the top destination for Colombia's oil exports. In 2011, Colombia exported 422,000 bpd of crude oil and refined products to the United States. China has recently expressed interest in financing new infrastructure projects in Colombia to facilitate the transport of oil to the Pacific coast for export. In May 2012, it was reported that preliminary agreements were signed for China Development Bank to finance a 600,000bpd pipeline to transport Colombian and Venezuelan oil to the south Colombian Pacific coast.

According to the OGJ, Colombia had proven natural gas reserves of 4.7 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) in 2012, up from 4Tcf in 2011. The bulk of Colombia's natural gas reserves are located in the Llanos basin, although the Guajira basin accounts for the majority of current production. Natural gas production, like oil production, has been rising substantially in the last few years owing to increasing international investment in exploration and development, rising domestic consumption, and new export opportunities. Colombia produced 12 billion cubic metres (bcm) of dry natural gas in 2012, while consuming 9.8bcm. About 57 per cent of the country's total gross natural gas production of was re-injected to aid enhanced oil recovery.

The coal face

According to the *British Petroleum Statistical Review of World Energy June 2013*, Colombia had 6,746 million tonnes of recoverable (mostly bituminous) coal reserves at the end of 2012, the largest in South America. These deposits are concentrated in the Guajira peninsula bordering the Caribbean and in the Andean foothills. The majority of Colombia's coal production and export infrastructure is located on the Caribbean coast. Colombia's coal is relatively clean-burning, with a sulphur content of less than 1 per cent. The country exports most of its production – in 2009 it was the fourth-largest coal exporter in the world after Australia, Indonesia, and Russia. Colombia produced 58 million short tonnes of coal in 2012, while only consuming 4 million

tonnes. Colombian coal production is exclusively carried out by private companies and has doubled since 2000. The country's 2012 production set a record for national production, and the government aspires to double the figure by 2019. Coal is Colombia's second export commodity; although in early 2013 the widespread protests and strikes by coal face workers rather dented the industry's performance. The strike by 5,000 workers at the Cerrejón mine – Colombia's largest – halted production at the mine, at a reported daily loss of US\$3 million. The apparently cavalier behaviour of the US mining company Drummond in dumping hundreds of tonnes of coal into the Caribbean did little to improve the mining companies' image. Drummond is Colombia's second largest coal producer. The dumping incident was only reported by the company after footage of the event appeared on television.

Risk assessment

Politics	Good
Economy	Good
Regional stability	Fair

COUNTRY PROFILE

Historical profile

1820 Colombia became independent from Spain.

1800s Outbreaks of fighting erupted sporadically throughout the nineteenth century, often between anti-clerical Liberals and pro-church Conservatives.

1899–1903 The (Civil) War of 1,000

Days in which some 100,000 people were killed. Panama separated from Colombia during the war and became an independent state.

1930 A Liberal president was elected, leading to social reform.

1948–57 The two major parties, the Partido Social Conservador (PSC) (Social Conservative Party) and the Partido Liberal (PL) (Liberal Party) became more extreme – the Conservatives veering towards fascism and the Liberals towards left-wing populism. Civil war broke out, resulting in up to 300,000 deaths.

1957 The civil war ended when the PSC and PL agreed on a power-sharing pact with the presidency going alternately to a PL then PSC member, with seats in cabinet and Congress to be split equally.

1965 The Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) (National Liberation Army) and the Maoist People's Liberation Army were founded.

1966 Another and largest rebel group, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (Farc) (

Revolutionary Armed Forces of

Colombia-Peoples' Army), was formed.

1971 After disputed elections, elements of the defeated Alianza Nacional Popular (Anapo) formed an armed movement (M-19) to fight the PSC government. They were joined by dissident members of the Farc.

1970s Guerrilla violence increased, at the same time as an increase in cocaine production.

1982 President Belisario Betancur granted guerrillas an amnesty and freed political prisoners.

1984 The assassination of the justice minister led to a step-up in the government war on drug traffickers.

1985 M-19 guerrillas stormed the Palace of Justice, killing 11 judges and 90 other people. The Andean volcano, Nevado del Ruiz, erupted and killed around 23,000 people in four surrounding towns.

1986 Virgolio Barco Vargas (PL) won an overwhelming victory in the presidential election. Violence became endemic as right-wing paramilitaries targeted PL politicians, left-wing groups carried out insurgency actions and death squads were controlled and sent out by drug cartels.

1989 A peace agreement between the government and M-19 allowed it to become a legal political party; other guerrilla groups remained active. PL and Unión Patriótica (UP) Patriotic Union (founded by Farc) presidential candidates were killed on the hustings, allegedly by drug cartels.

1991 A new constitution legalised divorce and gave indigenous people democratic rights.

1993 The infamous Medellín drugs lord, Pablo Escobar, was shot dead while trying to evade police arrest.

1994 Ernesto Samper won the presidential election.

1998 Andrés Pastrana Arango won the presidential election, bringing the Partido Conservador Colombiano (PCC) (Colombian Conservative Party) to power and ending 12 years of rule by the PL. In a move to allow peace talks to continue uninterrupted, the government agreed on a demilitarised area where military action against rebel groups would be suspended.

1999 President Pastrana began formal peace talks with the Farc in an attempt to end the region's longest-running civil war; after only two weeks the talks stalled. The two rebel movements, the Farc and the ELN, were estimated to control 40 per cent of Colombia. The president's *Plan Colombia* won US\$1 billion in US support through the anti-drug trafficking and insurgency plan. The peace talks broke down with recrimination on both sides.

2000 President Pastrana issued 11 emergency decrees to increase the armed forces from 10,000 to 42,000, with further increases to 52,000 by end-2001. The demilitarised area order was revoked. 2001 Pastrana agreed to extend the life of the demilitarised areas for a further eight months; Farc released 359 police and military in exchange for 14 rebel prisoners. An agreement to negotiate a cease-fire was signed.

2002 After three years of complex peace talks Pastrana broke off negotiations with Farc and ordered rebels out of the demilitarised area and stepped up a government crackdown. Threats from Farc and the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) (United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia) hindered electoral campaigning in rural areas, despite a security operation involving 150,000 troops and police; only 48 per cent of the population voted. The political party linked to the Farc, Unión Patriótica (UP) (Political Union), failed to present any candidates for the election and lost its legal standing. Presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt was kidnapped by Farc while campaigning. The PCC and the PL remained the largest groups in the legislature. Álvaro Uribe won the presidential election.

2003 Uribe's legislation raised tax revenues and boosted funding for the state pension system. Certain regional factions of the AUC disarmed.

2004 Farc guerrilla leader Ricardo Palmera was sentenced to 35 years imprisonment. The right-wing AUC movement and the government began peace talks.

2005 An international confrontation erupted when a leading Farc guerrilla commander was captured in Venezuela. The Presidents of both countries held a summit to resolve the matter. The national government passed new legislation, reducing jail terms for members of paramilitary groups who surrendered and disarmed. Tentative peace talks began, in Cuba, between the government and ELN, the second-largest rebel group.

2006 A disarmament agreement with right-wing paramilitaries led to a reported 20,000 fighters surrendering their weapons and being pardoned and retrained for civilian life. Colombia and the US signed a free-trade agreement. President Álvaro Uribe won re-election and the Partido Social de Unidad Nacional (PSUN) (Social National Unity Party) formed a coalition government in support of the president. 2008 Ecuador cut diplomatic relations with Colombia after Colombia took pre-emptive strikes against terrorists of Farc hiding out in Ecuador, killing senior Farc leader Raul Reyes. The founder and leader of Farc, Manuel Marulanda, died.

Ingrid Betancourt, captured by Farc in 2002, was freed by government troops. 2009 Farc continued to release foreign and high profile hostages. The president offered a cease-fire with Farc in return for a cessation in criminal activities.

2010 In parliamentary elections, over 2,500 candidates contested seats in both houses. The ruling PSUN coalition won 101 seats (out of 166) in the chamber of representatives and 58 seats (out of 102) in the senate. Following two rounds of presidential elections, Juan Manuel Santos (PSUN) won with 69.1 per cent of the vote, Antanas Mockus (PV), his nearest rival, was runner-up with 27.5 per cent. President Chavez of Venezuela severed diplomatic ties with Colombia, objecting to claims by Colombia that Venezuela was harbouring Farc guerrillas.

2011 In the latest army tactic of combatting Farc by targeting high-ranking members, the Farc security chief was killed by the army in June. In response Farc formed an elite unit (called Teófilo Forero) to engage in hit-and-run attacks on villages and military posts and kidnapping for extortion. The UN reported in June that annual cultivation of coca had fallen by 15 per cent in 2010, a drop for the third year running, as acres of coca crops fell from 182,500 in 2009 to 155,000 acres in 2010. The on-going result was credited to *Plan Colombia*, in which billions of US dollars in aid funds efforts for countering drug trafficking. A trade agreement with the US was agreed by both houses of the US congress in October. A military operation which targeted a Farc encampment resulted in the death of Farc's leader (since 2008), Alfonso Cano (real name Guillermo Leon Saenz), in November.

2012 In February, Farc announced that it would stop its campaign of kidnapping for ransom and that it was prepared to release six military and police hostages currently being held. President Santos welcomed the news confirming that halting kidnapping was an 'important and necessary step in the right direction, but it's not enough.' Civilian hostages of Farc were not mentioned in its announcement.

On 28 August, President Santo announced that secret meetings with Farc had resulted in the planned resumption of peace negotiations. On 19 October, talks got underway, with representatives from Norway and Venezuela acting as 'honest brokers'. On 2 December President Santos set a deadline of November 2013 for reaching an agreement with Farc. On 19 November, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) rejected Nicaragua's claim to ownership of a group of seven disputed islets in the Caribbean and awarded them and the seabed around them to Colombia. The maritime border was redrawn

and more sea territory (including fishing grounds) was awarded to Nicaragua. However, President Santos rejected this aspect of the court's decision, despite the ICJ ruling being binding. On 28 November the government announced that it was withdrawing Colombia's recognition of the jurisdiction of the ICJ.

2013 The Farc linked UP party regained its legal standing, lost in 2002 when it refused to put forward candidates for the election. President Santos announced on 16 July that the ELN, the second largest armed group after the Farc, had laid down their arms. Although not part of the peace talks with the Farc they have expressed an interest in joining the negotiations. The government has insisted that they must first release their hostages. On 19 August farm workers went on strike, blocking roads and leaving the central province of Boyaca cut off. The farmers were striking for subsidies on farm products and cheaper fuel. Within a week there were concerns that Bogota could face shortages of basics such as milk and potatoes. The President met with strikers on 26 August and later said that ministers would work with strike leaders to settle the dispute. Colombia was beaten into second place by Peru as the world's largest producer of coca leaves in 2013. By 6 November the government and Farc had agreed on a political future should talks, being held in Cuba, lead to a peace deal.

Political structure

Constitution

The current constitution dates from 6 July 1991. Colombia has a representative democracy composed of an executive, legislative and a judicial branch.

Administratively, the country is divided into 32 departments ruled by governors, representing the executive branch, and a Departmental Assembly representing the legislative branch. Cities are governed by a mayor and a municipal council. All are elected by democratic vote.

Colombian citizens aged 18 and over are eligible to vote.

Form of state

Presidential democratic republic

The executive

Executive power is vested in the president, elected by universal adult suffrage for four years but not for consecutive terms. The president appoints a cabinet.

National legislature

The bicameral Congreso de la República (Congress of the Republic) (lower house) is composed of the Cámara de Representantes (Chamber of Representatives), with 166-members. The Chamber may examine the budget and treasury audit, review government actions and impeach senior national office holders. The

Senado de la República (Senate of the Republic) (upper house) has 102 members. Among other things the Senate may approve or reject the resignation of the executive and military promotions and authorise the government to declare a war. All Congress members are elected for four-year terms by universal suffrage.

Legal system

The judicial system maintains formal independence but has experienced problems operating normally in circumstances that have extended to massed attacks using heavy firepower on major court institutions.

Last elections

14 March 2010 (parliamentary); 30 May and 20 June 2010 (presidential, first and second round)

Results: Chamber of Representatives: Partido Social de Unidad Nacional (PSUN) (Social National Unity Party) won 48 seats (out of 166), Partido Liberal Colombiano (PLC) (Colombian Liberal Party) 39, Partido Conservador Colombiano (PCC) (Colombian Conservative Party) 38, Partido Cambio Radical (PCR) (Radical Change Party) 14, Parte de Integración Nacional (PIN) (National Integration Party) 12, Polo Democrático Alternativo (PDA) (Alternative Democratic Pole) four, Partido Verde (PV) (Green Party) three; four other political parties won no more than two seats each. Turnout was 43.8 per cent.

Senate: PSUN won 25.8 per cent of the vote (28 seats out of 102), PCC 21.2 per cent (22), PLC 16.3 per cent (17), PIN 8.71 per cent (nine), PCR 8.34 per cent (eight), PDA 8.1 per cent (eight), Partido Verde Oxígeno (PV) 4.99 per cent (five), Movimiento Independiente de Renovación Absoluta (MIRA) 2.8 per cent (two), Compromiso Ciudadano por Colombia (CCC) (Citizen's Compromise for Colombia) 1.7 per cent (one); two seats are reserved for indigenous peoples. Turnout was 44.2 per cent.

Presidential first round: Juan Manuel Santos (PSUN) 47.3 per cent of the vote, Antanas Mockus (PV) 21.8 per cent, Germán Vargas Lleras (PCR) 10.3 per cent, Gustavo Petro (PDA) 9.3 per cent, Noemí Sanín (PCC) 6.2 per cent, Rafael Pardo (PLC) 4.5 per cent; turnout was around 49 per cent. Second round: Santos won 69.1 per cent of the vote, Mockus 27.5 per cent.

Next elections

2014 (presidential and parliamentary)

Political parties

Ruling party

Coalition led by Partido Social de Unidad Nacional (PSUN) (Social National Unity Party), with Parte de Integración Nacional (PIN) (National Integration Party) and

Alas-Equipo (elected 2006; re-elected 14 Mar 2010)

Main opposition party

Partido Liberal Colombiano (PLC) (Liberal Party of Colombia)

Population

46.60 million (2012)*

The population is projected to reach 52.6 million by 2015. About 34 per cent of the total population is under the age of 15 years.

Last census: 22 May 2005: 41,468,384

Population density: 39 inhabitants per square km. Urban population 75 per cent (2010 Unicef).

Annual growth rate: 1.7 per cent, 1990–2010 (Unicef).

Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)

*3.1 million (UNHCR 2004)
*estimate

Ethnic make-up

Mestizo 57 per cent, white 20 per cent, mulatto 14 per cent, Indian 1 per cent, and others 8 per cent.

Religions

Roman Catholicism is the official religion and the vast majority of Colombians consider themselves Catholic. There is freedom of worship.

Education

Financing for the education sector is decentralised and municipalities are required to use 30 per cent of the resources transferred to them from central government for education purposes.

Although the illiteracy rate averages 8 per cent among adults over 15 years of age, drop-out rates are increasing on an annual basis; Oxfam estimates that one in every four children drops out before completing primary education and girls' enrolment rates, estimated at 65 per cent, are at least 30 per cent lower than boys' enrolment rates. Primary education has also suffered due to cuts in government budget, while per capita spending is 12 times higher in the tertiary sector.

The New School Programme, known as the *Escuela Nueva*, was begun in the mid-1970s and governs the principles of the Colombian education system. It emphasises flexible school schedules and an appropriate curriculum catering to the needs of the poor rural areas.

Literacy rate: 92 per cent adult rate; 97 per cent youth rate (15–24) (Unesco 2005).

Compulsory years: Nine years in urban areas

Five years in rural areas

Enrolment rate: 113 per cent in primary; 67 per cent in secondary, of relevant age groups (including repetition rates) (World Bank).

Pupils per teacher: 25 in primary schools

Health

HIV/Aids

HIV prevalence: 0.7 per cent aged 15–49 in 2003 (World Bank)

Life expectancy: 73 years, 2010 (Unicef 2012)

Fertility rate/Maternal mortality rate: 2.4 births per woman, 2010 (FAO 2012); maternal mortality 80 per 100,000 live births (World Bank).

Child (under 5 years) mortality rate (per 1,000): 18 per 1,000 live births (WHO 2012); 7 per cent of children aged under five were malnourished (World Bank).

Head of population per physician: 1.35 physicians per 1,000 people, 2002 (WHO 2006)

Welfare

UN agency World Food Programme (WFP) stated that in 2003 there were two million internally displaced persons (IDP) who had fled their homes due to conflict and violence; 80 per cent of the two million lacked access to food production. Food aid is being provided for over 300,000 people, particularly in the northern states. International medical aid provides primary care, prenatal treatment and vaccinations for victims of the internal conflict, and the rural and urban disadvantaged.

Pensions

Colombia undertook major reforms in its pension system in the 1990s by shifting its priorities from government-run pay-as-you-go systems to multi-tier systems characterised by a privately run and fully-funded scheme. New workers have the choice of a pay-as-you-go defined-benefit as the primary system, if they prefer. An individual can only be a member of one scheme. In addition, there is a redistributive scheme for the elderly poor who are not entitled to a social insurance pension. Estimates show that only 30 per cent of individuals above the age of 60, or 2 per cent of the population, receive a pension. Consequently, compared to other industrial countries, the average pension remains very high and is estimated at about twice the GDP per capita.

Main cities

Bogotá (capital, estimated population 7.5 million (m) in 2012, 2,640 metres above sea-level), Medellín (2.4m), Cali (2.3m), Barranquilla (1.1m), Cartagena (943,163), Cucuta (617,932), Bucaramanga (526,923), Ibagué (513,671), Santa Marta (464,771), Villavicencio (436,978). More than 40 cities have populations of over 100,000.

Languages spoken

Some 200 Indian dialects are spoken. English is spoken in the business community.

Official language/s

Spanish

Media

Colombia is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists to work in, with intimidation coming from drug runners, guerrillas, paramilitary groups and corrupt politicians.

Press

Dailies: There are many newspapers, in Spanish, including *El Espectador* (www.elespectador.com), *El Tiempo* (www.eltiempo.com) and *El Nuevo Siglo* (www.elnuevosiglo.com.co) are owned by political parties, *Vanguardia Liberal* (www.vanguardia.com) and *El Espacio* (www.lespacio.com.co) is an evening edition. Other provincial dailies include *El Colombiano* (www.elcolombiano.com) and *El Mundo* (www.elmundo.com) from Medellín, *Diario Occidente* (www.diariooccidente.com.co), from Cali and *El Heraldo* (www.elheraldo.com.co) from Barranquilla.

Weeklies: In Spanish, *Semana* (www.semana.com) is a news magazine with several specialist imprints. *Revista Gatopardo* (www.gatopardo.com) and *Revista Diner* (www.revistadiners.com.co).

Business: In Spanish, dailies include *La Republica* (www.la-republica.com.co) is an authoritative newspaper, *Portafolio* (www.portafolio.com.co), *La Nota Económica* (www.lanota.com), also publishes special supplements. *Deporte y Negocios (Sports & Business)* (www.deporteynegocios.com) is a monthly magazine.

Broadcasting

The Comisión de Regulación de Telecomunicaciones is responsible for all broadcasting regulations. The national broadcaster is the Radio Televisión Nacional de Colombia (RTVC) (www.rtv.gov.co).

Broadcasting is closely controlled by the government although most programmes are produced by commercial companies.

Radio: RTCV operates Radio Nacional de Colombia (www.radionacionaldecolombia.gov.co) with music and cultural programmes for news. Radio Continental de Noticias (RCN) (www.rcn.com.co) operates a national network of 27 stations across the frequencies offering programmes of news, music and culture, for all audiences including the young and international listeners.

There are many local and regional commercial stations including La Z (www.laz92.com), Radio Activa

(www.radioactiva.com.co) and Caracol Cadena Basica (www.caracol.com.co) with news programmes, from Bogota and Tropicana Estereo

(www.tropicanafm.com) from Cartagena.

Television: There are over 30 TV stations broadcasting a wide variety of channels and programmes via cable and satellite facilities providing local, regional and national services. Most people gather their news from television.

RTCV operates Señal Colombia (www.senalcolombia.tv) with cultural and information programmes. Other national networks include Caracol TV (www.canalcaracol.com) and RCN Television (www.rcntv.com), showing domestically produced news, cultural, entertainment and sports programmes

Other news agencies: Prensa Latina: www.plenglish.com

Economy

The wealth of Colombia lies in its natural resources, which constitute the majority of its exports. At the end of 2011 oil reserves were 2.0 billion barrels with production at 930,000 barrels per day (bpd), an increase of 16.3 per cent on the 2009 production levels of 801,000bpd. In 2011, natural gas reserves were 200 billion cubic metres (cum), with production of 11 billion cum; coal reserves were 6.7 billion tonnes with production at 55.8 million tonnes of oil equivalent (mtoe). Oil exports in 2009 topped US\$10.27 billion and accounted for 3.2 per cent of GDP. Exports of gem emeralds in 2008 reached US\$180 million, although the industry was considered under-developed and in need of foreign direct investment (FDI); in 2011 Colombia attracted a record US\$13.2 trillion in FDI. Agricultural products for export include coffee, bananas and cut flowers.

GDP growth in 2008 was 3.5 per cent, which fell to 1.7 per cent in 2009 as the global economic crisis weakened foreign trade. However as international trade began to strengthen, particularly with China which has an almost insatiable need for raw materials, GDP growth in 2010 jumped to 4 per cent and higher still to an estimated 5.9 per cent in 2011.

Long-term unemployment is a problem, with a rate in double digits for all of the 2000s, with the national rate year-on-year of 12.1 per cent in May 2010. Some regional cities have fared worse than others with the highest unemployment rate of 21.3 per cent recorded in Pereira and 18.7 per cent in Armenia. Remittances were at a record high in 2008, of US\$4.9 billion (2 per cent of GDP), which fell steadily to US\$4.1 billion (1.5 per cent of GDP) in 2010. However remittances were

estimated to have risen to US\$4.2 billion in 2011.

The illegal production and export of cocaine undermines the economy; in 2009 smuggled cocaine was estimated to be valued up to US\$13 billion and with no signs of reduction. Drug trafficking not only undermines the rule of law but denies the national treasury revenue that would otherwise come to it if the work undertaken was legitimate. It has promoted paramilitary organisations in isolated regions of the country, which could otherwise be developed, and weakened the political system in general as they usurp legitimate government through violence, intimidation, bribery and political corruption.

External trade

Colombia belongs to the the Unión de Naciones Suramericanas (Unasur) (Union of South American Nations) – formerly known as the South American Community of Nations (CSN), modelled on the European Union (EU), which seeks to integrate with the Andean Community of Nations and Mercosur in a single market by 2014, when tariffs on non-sensitive products are to be abolished with the remainder eliminated by 2019. However political tensions within the region have hampered the ongoing process.

Coffee and petroleum, both commodities that react to world prices, are the main export products while Colombia is the world's second largest exporter of cut flowers (after The Netherlands).

Colombia is the world's largest exporter of illegal cocaine. A UN report in 2010 estimated that 400–600 tonnes of cocaine was produced and smuggled abroad, mainly to North America and Europe.

On 15 May 2012 the US-Colombia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) came into effect.

Imports

Principal imports include industrial equipment, vehicles and equipment, consumer goods, chemicals, paper products, fuels and electricity, plastics and natural rubber products.

Main sources: US (25 per cent of total in 2011), China (15 per cent), Mexico (11.1 per cent).

Exports

Principal exports are crude oil and derivatives, precious gems, coffee, coal, clothing, bananas and cut flowers.

Main destinations: US (38.9 per cent of total in 2011), The Netherlands (4.5 per cent), Chile (3.9 per cent).

Agriculture

The agricultural sector has traditionally played a prominent role in the Colombian economy and it continues to contribute a sizable amount to total GDP. A wide

variety of crops are grown throughout Colombia, depending on the altitude in a given region, but coffee is by far the most lucrative crop farmed.

Agricultural exports, primarily coffee, earn US\$2 billion or more annually, and when prices have been high, have generated over half of the country's US dollar income. Colombia is the world's second largest producer of coffee after Brazil. Other important cash-export crops include bananas, exotic fruits, cut flowers, tobacco, cotton, sugar cane and cocoa. The illegal export of cocaine, and to a lesser extent marijuana, has been estimated to earn the country between US\$500 million and US\$1 billion per year.

The government has been successful in promoting the diversification of agricultural export crops and lessening the economy's dependence on coffee revenues. Projects included drainage and irrigation schemes to bring more land under cultivation, cheaper credit for farmers, the improvement of road networks and taking electricity to isolated areas. Basic food subsidies in favour of urban consumers were revised to increase incentives for farmers.

Colombia's flower industry began in 1970 and the country is now the world's second-largest exporter of cut flowers after The Netherlands. The US is the main destination for this product. Climatic conditions are ideal, with no special heating or cooling conditions required. Colombia produces over 3.5 billion flowers a year, mostly on the plains near Bogotá. Shipments of fresh and processed tropical fruit are also increasing.

Meat production was hit by guerrilla violence in ranching zones. The government has launched emergency development programmes in low-income farming districts as part of its plans to boost agricultural output and to passify politically turbulent regions.

Despite a substantial coastline of 2,880km and recent modest successes in developing the shrimp and shellfish industries, the fishing industry as a whole remains underdeveloped. As a member state of the Andean Community Colombia has benefitted from special duty-free status and is increasing its shipments of canned tuna to the EU. Exports of artificially reared shrimps are rising as the sector gathers strength.

The typical annual catch is 190,000mt, inclusive of 91,420mt marine fish and 20,580mt shellfish.

Approximately half of Colombia's total landmass is forested. There are 49.6 million hectares (ha) of forests in the country. Most of the forests are located in the south-east of the country and form part of

the Amazon jungle. Around 20 per cent of forested land is protected, with 40 national parks and reserves.

Despite its extensive forest resources, Colombia has a very modest production of industrial round timber. Sawn timber and panels have a large domestic market. Import of paper meets nearly one-third of the country's demand.

Industry and manufacturing

Manufacturing accounts for 14.3 per cent of Colombia's total GDP. Products include textiles and garments, chemicals, metal products, cement, cardboard containers, plastic resins and manufactures, beverages, wood products, pharmaceuticals, machinery and electrical equipment.

The industrial sector typically contributes a quarter of GDP, including the manufacturing sector which contributes 13 per cent, and employs 46 per cent of the workforce.

Food processing, beverages and textiles are the largest industries, followed by chemicals, leather goods, shoes and clothing, capital goods industries and motor vehicles. Metals, tobacco, cement, electrical engineering and paper are also important.

Tourism

The tourist industry has been severely impeded by the political situation and poor security resulting in the kidnapping of foreigners by the Farc terrorist group. As security has improved since the late 2000s the government has promoted Colombia as a tourist destination. It has five ancient and historic cultural sites as well as two natural sites on the Unesco World Heritage List. It is also a destination for those that wish to see a wide variety of birds and butterflies.

Travel and tourism only contributes some 2 per cent of GDP, but employs around 5 per cent of the total workforce. The government has made a commitment to the industry and foreign direct investment (FDI) has been attracted, particularly Bogotá for luxury business trips. As a result capital investment in travel and tourism rose from US\$1.8 billion in 2006 to an estimated US\$3.4 billion in 2011.

Mining

Mining in Colombia is concentrated on gold and other precious metals, iron ore, nickel and coal. In a typical year the mining industry contributes 4 per cent to the country's total GDP and employs 5 per cent of the total workforce. The industry is Colombia's main legal source of foreign exchange.

In recent years foreign investors have become fully aware of Colombia's potential for coal mining. With 20,000 tonnes of

proven and inferred reserves the country's coal resource base is extensive and the quality of Colombian coal is high. Colombia is the second largest exporter of coal to Europe and the largest exporter to the US.

Colombia is one of the largest gold producers in the world, the fifth largest in Latin America after Peru, Brazil, Chile and Argentina. About 70 per cent of Colombian gold originates from the mines of Buritaca in Antioquia, using small-scale and primitive methods. Other precious minerals include silver and platinum (fourth largest producer of platinum), which are found in Choco Province along the Pacific coast.

Colombia is the world's top producer of high-grade emeralds, accounting for over 90 per cent of world output. The Muzo mine in the Eastern Andes near Bogotá is the world's largest emerald mine. Estimates put total emerald exports at US\$250 million, of which a little more than 15 per cent is exported legally, for the most part (90 per cent) to Japan. Worker supervision in many of the emerald mines is minimal, fuelling the problems of smuggling.

Hydrocarbons

Reserves of 100 million tonnes of iron ore assure Colombia of self-sufficiency until 2050. The known reserves are owned by Colombia's only steel company, Acerías Paz del Río. The reserves are on the whole deep, expensive to extract and of low quality with a high sulphur content. A large part of the industry is located north-east of Bogotá, including the fully integrated steel works of Acerías Paz del Río.

Colombia has a high output of nickel supplying around 12 per cent of world demand. The country also mines copper, lime, sulphur, manganese, phosphates and salt.

Colombia has one of the largest proven crude oil reserves in South America. At the end of 2011 proven oil reserves were 2.0 billion barrels, however, reserves have fallen from 2.6 billion barrels since 1997. Annual production of oil was 930,000 barrels per day (bpd), an increase of 16.3 per cent over the 2011 production. Colombia has managed to contain its consumption of oil, an average 306,000bpd (2006–10), mainly by switching to other energy supplies.

Crude oil remains Colombia's largest export earner. It is a key source of foreign exchange earnings and is a major contributor to fiscal revenues. Expansion and exploration have therefore been at the forefront of the activities of the state owned entity, Ecopetrol, which announced plans to undertake US\$6.2 billion in

capital investment in new ventures over 2008–09. Geological features that match existing oil fields in Colombia suggest further hydrocarbon-rich territories.

With responsibility for all aspects of oil exploration, production, refining, transporting and trade in oil and gas, Ecopetrol is one of the world's top forty largest oil companies. There are five major oil pipelines, four of which link Colombia's largest oil field in the Cusiana/Cupiagua complex to ports in the Caribbean. But the ongoing civil conflict has resulted in attacks on its pipelines and sabotage of its installations by insurgent groups.

Colombia had proven reserves of 200 billion cubic metres (cum) of natural gas at the end of 2011, with production at 11.4 billion cum. Government policy through the *Plan de Masificación de Gas Natural* is to increase domestic consumption of natural gas.

There are plans to establish Colombia as an Andean regional gas hub with over 3,200km of gas pipelines providing national domestic supplies already. A 230km pipeline for gas from Colombia to Venezuela transports a minimum of 5.7 million cum per day.

Colombia had 6.7 billion tonnes of proven coal reserves at the end 2011. Production was 55.8 millions tonnes of oil equivalent (mtoe), which represented a 5.8 per cent increase on the 2010 production figure. The country has the largest coal reserves in Latin America of high-quality and profitable bituminous coal most of which is exported. Sixty per cent of Colombia's coal reserves lie in the interior around Bogotá, where the giant El Cerrejón Norte mine is located. New development is centred on an open-cast mine in Guajira. Coal is Colombia's third most important export after oil and coffee.

Energy

Generating capacity in 2008 was over 50 billion-kilowatt hours (KWh); over 40 billion KWh (10.1mtoe) was consumed, which represented a 4.1 per cent increase on the 2006 figure. The surplus allows Colombia to be a net exporter of energy to neighbouring countries, particularly Ecuador. Around three-quarters of the energy produced came from hydropower, with conventional thermal and renewable sources constituting the remainder. Colombia has been self-sufficient in energy since 1984.

The energy sector has been deregulated since the 1990s and is composed of a mixture of private and publicly owned operators.

Financial markets

Stock exchange

Bolsa de Valores de Colombia (BVC), (Colombian Stock Exchange), Bogotá

Banking and insurance

Both Bancolombia and BBVA Colombia, two of the country's largest banking houses, have enjoyed significant profitability in recent years. Bancolombia, one of the oldest banks in Latin America, recorded pre tax profits of US\$339 million in 2004, an increase of 53 per cent on the previous year's total. BBVA Colombia reported an earnings increase of 80 per cent in 2004. Both banks have indicated the likelihood of continued robust growth in 2005.

Following several years of a difficult economic and financial environment in the Colombia, the country's banking sector is now considered to be one of the leading markets in Latin America.

Central bank

Banco de la República
Main financial centre
 Bogotá

Time

GMT minus five hours

Geography

Colombia, covering 1.14 million square km, is split between a coastal plain, high Andean peaks rising to more than 5,000 metres and a tropical Amazonian lowland. The only nation in South America with both Pacific and Caribbean coastlines, Colombia is bordered by Venezuela and Brazil to the east, Peru and Ecuador to the south and Panama to the north. Colombia owns the Isla de Malpelo in the Pacific and several Caribbean islands – including the San Andrés y Providencia islands. Its territorial waters border those of nations as distant as Honduras and Haiti. Around 80 per cent of the population is concentrated in the Andean region, which covers around a quarter of the country's area. The Andes fan out northwards from the Ecuadorian border into three high cordilleras (parallel ranges) separated by deep valleys. Many of the peaks are volcanic. Colombia's highest mountain, the Pico Cristobal Colón, reaches 5,800 metres; it is 50km from the Caribbean coast in the Sierra de Santa Marta, which is isolated from the three main cordilleras.

Just over half of the country lies east of the Andes. Known as Los Llanos, most of this region is virtually unexplored and sparsely populated jungle. A low plain fringes most of the coast in the west and the north. About a fifth of the population lives in this area, which is also about a fifth of the total land area.

Hemisphere

Northern

Climate

The equator runs across the south of Colombia. The low coastal plain and the

jungle regions east of the Andes have a tropical climate, with frequent rains and temperatures between 24–28 degrees Celsius (C). Temperatures fall with the higher altitudes. In Bogotá, at 2,650 metres, temperatures average around 14 degrees C.

Dress codes

Dress codes in Colombia are partly determined by formality but mostly by climate. In the capital, Bogotá, at 2,650 metres, suits for men and skirts for women are usual for business. Residents recommend a light coat for the evenings. In low-lying cities such as Cali in the south or Cartagena on the Caribbean coast, informal lightweight clothing is common.

Entry requirements

Passports

Required by all with few exceptions (eg tourist nationals of Ecuador and certain tourist visitors from Trinidad and Tobago).

Visa

Required for all business visits and must be obtained before arrival. A letter, issued by the traveller's company, giving name and position of applicant, a detailed summary of intended purpose of trip, an itinerary, and the acceptance of full responsibility for any expenses incurred during the term of stay must be submitted with the application, (an original and copy, to be translated into Spanish), which will be notarised by the Colombian embassy.

Tourist visas are not required by citizens of North America, most EU and West European and most South American countries for stays up to 90 days. For further details and confirmation, contact the nearest embassy.

Currency advice/regulations

There are no limitations on the import of foreign and local currency. The export of foreign currency is limited to US\$25,000. Travellers' cheques are recommended. Banks are generally the only reliable location for changing travellers' cheques or cash.

Prohibited imports

Illegal drugs, food products, vegetables and plant material are prohibited. Permits are required for the import of firearms and ammunition.

Health (for visitors)

Mandatory precautions

None, although vaccination against yellow fever is essential for visitors travelling to certain parts of the country, notably the central valley of the Magdalena River, the inland border areas (with Ecuador, Peru, Brazil and Venezuela), Uraba district, the south-eastern part of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta and the forest area along the Guaviare River. A certificate of

inoculation may be required by immigration officials.

Advisable precautions

Precautions should be taken against cholera, malaria, hepatitis; typhoid immunisation should be current. There are risks of dengue fever, TB, measles and rabies. Tap water is not considered safe to drink, boiled or bottled water should be used at all times. Milk is unpasteurised and should therefore be boiled or avoided. Meat and fish should be thoroughly cooked and preferably eaten hot. It is advised to avoid uncooked vegetables and dairy products made from local milk. Fruit should be peeled. Visitors to Bogotá should take it easy for a few days to get used to the altitude, which may induce drowsiness, dizziness or altitude sickness. Health insurance including medical evacuation is strongly recommended.

Hotels

Hotels are graded from one- to five-star by the Colombian Hotel Organisation. There are two seasonal tourist tariffs, low season is May–Nov and high season is Dec–Apr. A 5 per cent tax is imposed on all hotel bills. It is advisable to book well in advance. Service charge is normally added to bill, otherwise a 10 per cent tip is expected.

Credit cards

American Express, Diners, Visa and MasterCard are widely used.

Public holidays (national)

Fixed dates

1 Jan (New Year's Day), *6 Jan (Epiphany), *19 Mar (St Joseph's Day), 1 May (Labour Day), *17 Jun (Corpus Christi/Thanksgiving Day), *29 Jun (St Peter and St Paul Day), 20 Jul (Independence Day), 7 Aug (Battle of Boyacá), *21 Aug (Assumption Day), *16 Oct (Columbus Day), *6 Nov (All Saints' Day), 8 Dec (Immaculate Conception), 25 Dec (Christmas Day).

Variable dates

Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, *Ascension Day, *Corpus Christi (May/June).

* Holidays that do not fall on Monday are taken on the following Monday.

Working hours

Banking

In Bogotá: Mon–Fri: 0900–1500.
 Other cities: 0800–1130 and 1400–1630.

On the last working day of the month, banks open up to 1200 only.

Business

Mon–Fri: 0800–1230, 1400–1800.

Shops

Mon–Fri: 0900–1900 or 2000.

Telecommunications

Mobile/cell phones

Some GSM 850 and 1900 services available in limited areas.

Electricity supply

110V AC 60 cycles; two-pin flat blade plugs.

Social customs/useful tips

It is customary to tip porters but not maids or clerks in hotels.

Security

With a virtual war being fought between the government, drug barons and Farc insurgents, realistic security measures must be carried out as kidnapping, armed robbery and bomb explosions are frequent hazards. Visitors should exert due care and vigilance at all times. It is advisable that embassy officials be informed of their national's presence in Colombia and itinerary, particularly if travelling to the north of the country.

Colombia has the highest murder rate in the Americas and one of the worst reputations, in South America, for street crime, which is common during daylight hours in main cities. Visitors are advised not to display jewellery and to carry as little cash and documentation as possible; watches and briefcases are prime targets. It is advisable to keep a copy of all documents in an hotel safe in case of mishap. Much crime is drug-related and visitors should be wary of any unwarranted attention from strangers.

Getting there

Air

National airline: Avianca (Aerovías Nacionales de Colombia).

International airport/s: Bogotá-El Dorado (BOG), 12km from city, duty-free shop, restaurant, post office, bank, shops, hotel reservations, car hire.

Other airport/s: Regional international flights also arrive at Barranquilla-Ernesto Cortissof (BAQ), 10km from city, car hire; Cali-Palmaseca (CLO), 19km from city, restaurant; Cartagena-Crespo (CTG), 2km north-east of city; Medellín-Rionegro (MDE), 15 minutes' flight by scheduled and frequent helicopter service to city, (36km south-east of Medellín).

Airport tax: International departures US\$25-29 in cash, not applicable to transit passengers. An exit tax of US\$19 is charged to travellers whose stay exceeds two months.

Surface

Road: Access is possible by road from Ecuador via Tulean to Ipiales and Venezuela from Christóbal to Cucuta.

Water: The rivers Meta, between Venezuela, Putumayo and a section of the upper Amazon in Peru, and the Orinoco

between Brazil and Colombia, all act as borders. They are used by small boats.

Main port/s: Caribbean: Santa Marta, Barranquilla, and Cartagena. Pacific: Buenaventura and Tumaco. Upper Amazon: Leticia.

Getting about

National transport

Air: Domestic air travel is the most practical way of getting around the country. There are frequent and cheap air services between Bogotá and all main centres. Major international air carriers operate internal flights as well as smaller companies that operate domestic services.

Road: Travelling by road can be arduous and potentially dangerous. There are paramilitary groups in rural areas.

Fifty per cent of the main roads wind through steep *cordilleras*, with bridges and tunnels in constant need of repair. Only 4,600km of the country's 120,000km road network are considered to be in good condition and less than 13,000km are paved.

There are highway links for Bogotá-Cali; for other journeys local enquiries are advisable.

Buses: There are many bus companies providing services between coastal towns and cities. Bogotá-Medellín inter-city service is fairly reliable and comfortable.

Rail: There is no longer an intercity passenger rail service.

Water: Cargo boats that travel along the Magdalena, Guaviare, Caqueta, and Meta river systems offer passage to passengers; the is a slow means of travel. There are 10,000km of navigable rivers between the three main Andean ranges.

City transport

Taxis: Within Bogotá, taxis are usually metered with minimum charge and extra at night, holidays, Sundays and for out-of-town journeys. Tourist taxis (green and cream) are likely to have drivers able to speak English and can be hired by the hour/day from major hotels. Typical taxis can be hailed in the street and tipping is not usual. For unmetered, taxi fares should be agreed in advance of journey. Shared taxis, *colectivos*, operate within cities and suburbs.

Buses, trams & metro: Bogotá has a trolleybus system, buses and minibuses with flat rate fares.

Car hire

It is not recommended for foreign drivers as local conditions are so poor. Nevertheless, major car hire companies exist. Urban speed limits are 45-60kph while the rural speed limit is 80kph. An international driving licence (in Spanish) is required. Traffic drives on the right and during the working day is heavily congested in main towns.

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

The addresses listed below are a selection only. While World of Information makes every endeavour to check these addresses, we cannot guarantee that changes have not been made, especially to telephone numbers and area codes. We would welcome any corrections.

Telephone area codes

The international dialling code (IDD) for Colombia is +57 followed by the area code:

Armenia	67	Cartagena	5
Baranquilla	5	Cucuta	70
Bogotá	1	Manizales	69
Bucaramanga	73	Medellín	4
Cali	2		

Chambers of Commerce

American-Colombian Chamber of Commerce, 22-64 Calle 98, Bogotá (tel: 623-7088; fax: 621-6838; e-mail: info@amchamcolombia.com.co).

Barranquilla Chamber of Commerce, 36-135 Via 40, Barranquilla (tel: 330-3701; fax: 330-3750; e-mail: info@camarabaq.org.co).

Bogotá Chamber of Commerce, 16-21 Carrera 9, Bogotá (tel: 2381-0270; fax: 284-7735; e-mail: ccbcentro@ccb.org.co).

British-Colombian Chamber of Commerce, 77A-52 Carrera 12A, Bogotá (tel: 321-7077; fax: 321-7964; e-mail: britanica@cable.net.co).

Bucaramanga Chamber of Commerce, 36-20 Carrera 19, Bucaramanga (tel: 652-7000; fax: 633-4062).

Cali Chamber of Commerce, 3-14 Calle 8, Cali (tel: 886-1300; fax: 886-1399; e-mail: contacto@ccc.org.co).

Cartagena Chamber of Commerce, 32-41 Calle Santa Teresa, Cartagena (tel: 660-0795; fax: 660-0802; e-mail: camaradecomercio@ccccartagena.org.co).

Colombian Confederation of Chambers of Commerce, 27-47 Carrera 13, Oficina 502, Bogotá (tel: 346-7055; fax: 346-7026; e-mail: confecamaras@confecamaras.org.co).

Cucuta Chamber of Commerce, 4-38 Calle 10, Cucuta (tel: 571-5922; fax: 571-2502; e-mail: cccuc02@col1.telecom.com.co).

Manizales Chamber of Commerce, 26-60 Carrera 23, Manizales (tel: 884-1840; fax: 884-0919; e-mail: ccm@ccm.org.co).

Medellín Chamber of Commerce, 52-82 Avenida Oriental, Medellín (tel: 511-6111; fax: 513-7757; e-mail: subcontramed@camaramed.org.co).

Pereira Chamber of Commerce, 23-09 Carrera 8, Local 10, Risaralda, Pereira (tel: 252-587; fax: 250-957; e-mail: camarap@pereira.multi.net.co).

Banking

Banco Andino, Carrera 7a No 14-23, Piso 3, Apdo Postal 6826, Bogotá (tel: 284-8800; fax: 286-7919).

Banco Anglo Colombiano (associated to Lloyds Bank plc), Cra 8 No 15-46/60, Zonal postal 1, Bogotá (tel: 334-5088; fax: 286-1383).

Banco Cafetero, Calle 28 No 13 A-15, Apdo Postal 240332, Bogotá (tel: 282-7742; fax: 284-5430).

Banco Caldas, Calle 72 No 7-64, Apdo Postal 240332, Bogotá (tel: 282-7742; fax: 284-5430).

Banco Central Hipotecario, Carrera 6a No 15-32, Zona Postal 1, Bogotá (tel: 283-7100; fax: 283-2802).

Banco Colombo Americano, Carrera 7a No 16-36, Piso 10, Apdo Postal 12327, Bogotá (tel: 334-5530; fax: 283-2939).

Banco Colpatria, Calle 13, No 7-90, Piso 2, Apdo Postal 30241, Bogotá (tel: 283-1567; fax: 286-3914).

Banco Co-operativo de Colombia (Bancoop), Calle 98 No 14-41, Apdo Postal 12242, Bogotá (tel: 257-7411; fax: 218-1601).

Banco de Antioquia (Bancoquia), Calle 12 No 746, Bogotá (tel: 334-9040).

Banco de Bogotá, PO Box 3436, Calle 36 No 7-47, Bogotá (tel: 332-0032 fax: 338-3302).

Banco de Colombia, Calle 30A No 6-38, Zona Postal 1, Apdo Postal 6836, Bogotá (tel: 285-6767; fax: 287-0595).

Banco de Cio Exterior de Colombia (Bancoldex) (Foreign Trade Bank of Colombia), Calle 28 No 13A-15, Apdo Postal 240-092, Bogotá (tel: 341-0677; fax: 282-5071).

Banco de Crédito, Calle 27 No 6-48, Zona Postal 1, Bogotá (tel: 286-8400; fax: 282-7256).

Banco del Occidente, Carrera 5a No 12-42, Apdo Postal 7607, Cali, Valle (tel: 824-081; fax: 822-705).

Banco del Estado, Carrera 10 No 18-15, Apdo Postal 8711, Bogotá (tel: 282-8471; fax: 284-9775).

Banco Extebandes de Colombia, Calle 74 No 6-65, Zona postal 2, Bogotá (tel: 217-7200; fax: 212-5786).

Banco Ganadero, Carrera 9A No 72-21, Apdo Postal 53851/9, Bogotá (tel: 217-0100; fax: 255-2457).

Banco Industrial Colombiano, Carrera 52 No 50-20, Apdo Postal 768, Medellín,

Antioquia (tel: 251-5216; fax: 251-4716).

Banco Latino de Colombia, Calle 72 No 10-07, Apdo Postal 056397, Bogotá (tel: 210-999; fax: 284-0056).

Banco Mercantil Colombia, Carrera 9A No 99-02, Zona Postal 8, Bogotá (tel: 618-2249; fax: 618-2111).

Banco Popular, Calle 17 No 7-35, Zona Postal 1, Bogotá (tel: 334-9640; fax: 282-4246).

Banco Real de Colombia, Carrera 7a No 33-80, Apdo Postal 034262, Bogotá (tel: 269-8523; fax: 287-0507).

Banco Sudameris Colombia, Carrera 8a No 15-42, Zona Postal 1, Bogotá (tel: 283-8700; fax: 281-6191).

Banco Superior, Carrera 10a No 64-28, Bogotá (tel: 217-3888; fax: 235-4352).

Banco Tequendama, Diagonal 27 No 6-70, Apdo Postal 29799, Bogotá (tel: 285-9900; fax: 287-7020).

Banco Uconal, Calle 72 No 8-56, Bogotá (tel: 310-5155; fax: 212-2094).

Banco Unión Colombiano, Piso 2, Carrera 7 N°71-52, Bogotá (tel: 3120411 fax: 3120843).

Caja de Crédito Agrario Industrial y Minero, Carrera 8a No 15-43, Zona Postal 1, Bogotá (tel: 334-9066; fax: 286-5824).

Caja Social, Calle 72 No 10-71, Apdo Postal 58175, Bogotá (tel: 310-0099; fax: 211-6036).

Citibank, Carrera 9a No 99-02, Bogotá (tel: 618-4455; fax: 618-2515).

Central bank

Banco de la República, Carrera 7, No 14-78, Bogotá (tel: 342-1111; fax: 286-1686; e-mail: wbanco@banrep.gov.co).

Stock exchange

Bolsa de Valores de Colombia (BVC), (Colombian Stock Exchange), Bogotá

www.bvc.com.co

Travel information

American Express, TMA, Cra.10 No 27-91, Offices 1-26, Bogotá (tel: 283-2955).

Avianca (Aerovías Nacionales de Colombia), Avenida, Eldorado 93-30, Piso 4, Bloque 1, Bogotá (tel: 413-9511; fax: 413-8325).

Colombian Hotel Organisation, Carrera 7, No 60-92 Bogotá (tel: 130-3640; internet: www.cotelco.org).

Fondo de Promoción Turística de Colombia, Carrera 16A No 78-55 Of. 604, Bogotá (tel: 611-4330, 611-4185; fax: 236-3640; e-mail:

turismocolombia@andinet.com; internet site: <http://www.turismocolombia.com>).

National tourist organisation offices

National Tourist Office, Calle 28 No. 13A-15 P 17 Y 18, Bogotá (tel: 283-9466; fax: 283-8945).

Ministries

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Avenida Jiménez No. 7-65, Santafé de Bogotá (tel: 334-1199; fax: 284-1775).

Ministry of Communications, Edificio Murillo Toro, Carrera 7 y 8 Calle 12 y 13, Santafé de Bogotá (tel: 286-6911; fax: 286-1185).

Ministry of Culture, Calle 8 No 6-67, Santafé de Bogotá (tel: 282-0854; fax: 282-0666).

Ministry of Economic Development, Carrera 13 No. 28-01, Apartado Aéreo 99412, Santafé de Bogotá (tel: 320-0077; fax: 287-6025).

Ministry of the Environment, Calle 38 No 8-61, Santafé de Bogotá (tel: 288-6010; fax: 243-3004).

Ministry of Finance and Public Credit, Carrera 7a No. 6-45, Santafé de Bogotá (tel: 284-5400; fax: 284-5396).

Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Palacio de San Carlos, Calle 10 No. 5-51, Santafé de Bogotá (tel: 282-7811, 287-6800; fax: 341-6777).

Ministry of Foreign Trade, Calle 28 No. 13A-15 P 5,6,7,9, Santafé de Bogotá (tel: 286-9111; fax: 284-9537, 334-9908).

Ministry of Health, Carrera 13 No. 32-76, Santafé de Bogotá (tel: 336-5066; fax: 336-0116, 336-0296).

Ministry of the Interior, Palacio Echeverry, Carrera 8a No. 8-09, Santafé de Bogotá (tel: 283-0676, 283-6853; fax: 281-5884, 286-8025).

Ministry of Justice and Law, Avenida Jiménez No. 8-89, Santafé de Bogotá (tel: 286-0211, 286-5888, 286-9711; fax: 281-6384, 283-2761).

Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Carrera 7a No. 34-50, Santafé de Bogotá (tel: 287-3434/5045, 285-7092/7098, 285-8362/7361; fax: 285-7091, 287-3861/8342).

Ministry of Mines and Energy CAN, Santafé de Bogotá (tel: 222-4555, 2068, 222-0179; fax: 222-3651).

Ministry of National Defence, Avenida El Dorado Cra 52 CAN, Santafé de Bogotá (tel: 220-4999; fax: 222-1874).

Ministry of National Education, CAN, Santafé de Bogotá (tel: 222-2800; fax: 222-0324).

Nations of the World: A Political, Economic and Business Handbook

Ministry of Transport, CAN, Santafé de Bogotá (tel: 222-4411, 222-7577, 7966; fax: 222-1647, 222-1121).

Other useful addresses

Asociación Nacional de Industriales (ANDI), Carrera 13 No 26-45, Bogotá (tel: 334-6673, 281-0600).

Bolsa de Bogotá (Stock Exchange), Carrera 8a, No 13-82, Apartado Aéreo 3584, Bogotá (tel: 243-6501, 243-8471; fax: 281-3170).

Bolsa de Medellín S.A. (Stock Exchange), Carrera 50 No 50-48 Piso 2, Medellín (tel: 260-3000; fax: 251-1981).

British Embassy, Apartado Aéreo 4508, Torre Propaganda Sancho, Calle 98, No 9-03, Piso 4, Bogotá (tel: 218-5111; fax: 218-2330, 218-2460).

Caja de Crédito Agrario Industrial y Minero, Carrera 8 No 15-43, Bogotá (tel: 284-4600).

Carbones de Colombia (CARBOCOL), Carrera 7, No 31-10, Pisos 5-18, Bogotá (tel: 287-3100).

Colombian Embassy (USA), 2118 Leroy Place, NW, Washington DC 20008 (tel: 202-387-8338; fax: 202-232-8643; e-mail: emwash@colombiaemb.org).

Colombian Government Trade Bureau (Proexport Colombia) Calle 28 No. 13 A

- 15 Piso 35, Santafé de Bogotá, (tel: 341-2066; fax: 282-8130, 282-8230).

Departamento Administrativo de Aeronáutica Civil (DAAC), Aeropuerto Internacional El Dorado, Bogotá (tel: 266-2237).

Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadísticas (DANE), Oficina 222, CAN-Avenida Eldorado, Bogotá.

Departamento Nacional de Planeación, Calle 26 No 13-19, Bogotá (tel: 282-4055; fax: 281-3348).

Empresa Colombiana de Mina (ECOMINAS), Calle 32, No 13-07, Apartado Aéreo 17878, Bogotá (tel: 287-7136; fax: 287-4606).

Empresa Colombiana de Petróleos (ECOPETROL), Carrera 13 No 36-24, Bogotá (tel: 285-6400).

Empresa Nacional de Telecomunicaciones (TELECOM), Calle 23 No 13-49, Bogotá (tel: 286-0077, 282-8280).

Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia, Calle 73 No 8-13, Apartado Aéreo 57534, Bogotá DE (tel: 217-0600).

Instituto Colombiana de Comercio Exterior (INCOMEX), Edificio Centro Comercio Internacional, Calle 28 No 13A-15, Bogotá (tel: 281-2200).

Instituto de Fomento Industrial (IFI), Calle 16, No 6-66, Pisos 7-15, Bogotá (tel: 282-2055).

Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Geológico-Mineras (INGEOMINAS), Diagonal 53, No 34-53, Apartado Aéreo 4865, Bogotá (tel: 222-1811; fax: 222-3597).

Instituto Nacional de Radio y Televisión, Vía del Aeropuerto Eldorado, Bogotá (tel: 222-0700; fax: 222-0080).

Invertir Corporation of Colombia (COINVERTIR), Cra 7 no 71-52 Torre A, Oficina 702, Bogotá (tel: 312-0312; fax: 312-0318).

US Embassy, Calle 38, No 8-61, Bogotá (tel: 285-1300; fax: 288-5687).

Other news agencies: Prensa Latina: www.plenglish.com

Internet sites

Business News, Latin Trade online: <http://www.latintrade.com>

Organisation of American States: <http://www.oas.org>

President of the Republic (in Spanish): <http://www.presidencia.gov.co/webpresi/>

Colombia Trade: <http://www.coltrade.org/>