



COLOMBIA
Medellin GLT Site Profile

AZUSA PACIFIC UNIVERSITY
GLOBAL LEARNING TERM

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NOTE: Information is subject to change at any time, including policies and costs. Please contact GLT Coordinator for more information.



INTRODUCTION TO MEDELLIN

Medellin, the second largest city in Colombia, was named the “most innovative city” in 2013. This is a significant change from its history with drugs and violence. Medellin is now a strong economic center for all of the South America, a cultural hub filled with museums and libraries, and a city that has worked to enhance the mobility of its poor citizens so they can easily move from their mountainside neighborhoods to the city center. While Medellin hasn’t completely disintegrated gang activity or economic inequality, the transformation it has undergone has been described as one of the “most remarkable urban turnarounds in modern history.”

Catholicism is the most prominent religion in Medellin, a result of Spanish Colonialism. Religion and church are very important to Colombian families, and play a significant role in family structure and the local culture.

Education is very important to the city of Medellin, which is home to more than 30 universities and 20 libraries. The city believes that education is a means of alleviating poverty and social exclusion. The education umbrella expands to cover non-traditional forms of education, such as non-school based programs that work with street children and youth development.

While the city is developing economically, culture still plays a strong role in local identity. Festivals, cultural centers, and cultural education work to preserve and spread cultural awareness and pride.

Medellin is truly a city of the 21st century, full of innovation and foresight. With a vision of bridging socio-economic divides and celebrating its culture, Medellin is a city of celebration and opportunity.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Colombia is the only South American country with both Caribbean and Pacific coastlines. The fourth-largest country in South America, it has a total area of 1,138,910 sq km (439,736 sq mi), including insular possessions, and extends 1,700 km (1,060 mi) nnw–sse and 1,210 km (750 mi) nne–ssw. Comparatively, the area occupied by Colombia is slightly less than three times the size of the state of Montana.

A rapid transfer of population to urban centers has taken place since the 1950s, and during the 1990s, over a million people were internally displaced. The UN estimated that 75% of the population lived in urban areas in 2005, and that urban areas were growing at an annual rate of 1.96%. The capital city, Bogotá, had a population of 7,290,000 in that year. The populations of other major metropolitan areas were as follows: Medellín, 3,236,000; Cali, 2,583,000; and Barranquilla, 1,918,000. Other metropolitan areas include Cartagena, Bucaramanga, and Cúcuta.

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Colombia.aspx>

CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

The Andes Mountains divide just north of Colombia's southern border with Ecuador into three separate chains, or cordilleras, known as the Cordillera Occidental (western), the Cordillera Central, and the Cordillera Oriental (eastern). The area south and east of the Andean ranges is largely composed of river plains divided among the effluents of the Orinoco and Amazon rivers. Open plains immediately adjoin the mountains, but as the distance from the cordillera increases, the plains give way to largely uninhabited and unexplored jungle. The Pacific coastal area is also characterized by jungle vegetation. Principal rivers on the Pacific coast include the Baudó, San Juan, and Patía. Colombia's climatic variations are determined by altitude, and seasons are periods of lesser or greater rainfall, with little or no





temperature change. Rainfall is heaviest on the west coast and in the Andean area; rainy and dry seasons, or "winter" and "summer," generally alternate in three-month cycles, as in Bogotá, where precipitation occurs most heavily and consistently during the periods of April to June and October to December. Northern areas have only one long rainy season, from May through October.

DIET

Participating in the local food culture is a central aspect of daily life in Colombia. You should be willing to try the local cuisine and share in your host family's mealtimes. A typical Colombian meal: fish, coconut rice, salad, and fried plantain with a mild salsa on top // Una comida típica: pescado, arroz de coco, ensalada y patacón con hogao. Also a meal called "Bandeja paisa" includes beans, plantains, rice, salad, avocado, and chicken.

MONEY

The Colombian peso (c\$) of 100 centavos is a paper currency. There are coins of 10, 20, and 50 centavos and of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50 pesos, and notes of 100, 200, 500, 1,000, 2,000, 5,000 and 10,000 pesos.

The most common bank in Colombia is **Ban Colombia**, you'll see their branches and ATM's everywhere. Some other banks you may see in Medellín are **Citibank**, **Davivienda**, **Banco de Bogotá**, **Servibanca** and **Banco Caja Social**. ATM's can be found throughout Medellín and especially in El Poblado. At most banks, you can usually withdraw between 600,000 to 800,000

COP. Some banks may allow you to do this up to three times. If you are having trouble withdrawing money sometimes it's your own bank that put limits on what you can withdraw. However Ban Colombia ATM's are notorious for not allowing 1 in 4 international card withdrawals, for absolutely no reason. If you experience problems simply try a different bank. If you have trouble withdrawing money from any ATM you can always withdraw money at the counter of the bank, but remember to take your passport. Also available are Western Unions and you can have money sent to you via Western union.



***Be sure to call your bank and let them know you are ¹traveling out of country to Colombia and any other countries.** Check current exchange rates: <http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter>

TRANSPORTATION

The public transportation system in Medellín, Colombia, is one of the most successful in the world. It is successful for promoting not just environmental sustainability, but social equity as well.

The crown jewel of the city's transportation system is the *Metro de Medellín*, a network of clean and efficient metro cars that serves over half a million (553,000) passengers every day.

Perhaps the most impressive feature of the metro system is the world-renowned *metro cable* system, a network of 9 cable car systems that take passengers up steep mountainsides that line the Valley of Medellín. Today, a fare of \$1,800 pesos (about \$0.60 U.S.) buys you a comfortable and scenic 25-minute ride down the mountainside and a transfer to the metro cars below.

Plans are in place to link the city's numerous privately owned bus lines to this one-time fare ("Metroplús"), further extending mobility and accessibility for all of the city's residents.

<http://thinkprogress.org/climate/2012/03/13/443330/medellin-metro-system-colombia-public-transport/>



COMMUNICATION

While you may want to be in regular communication with friends and family from home during the term abroad, please bear in mind that different time zones, unreliable phone lines, sometimes unreliable electricity. Past students have found it convenient to buy a cheap cell phone while in Colombia (no more than US\$20), which comes in handy when communicating with other students and with people in the United States. The cell phone will work in Colombia, after you have inserted a chip (typically no more than US\$2 in each location) and purchased pay-as-you-go minutes. Text messaging is cheap and many students find this method affordable and convenient. You may choose to bring your cell phone from home if it can accommodate a chip, and is GSM or international compatible. However, be aware that it may be easily lost or stolen.²



GETTING THERE

<http://medellinliving.com/how-to-get-to-medellin-from-the-international-airport/>

The Jose Maria Cordoba International Airport is the principal airport to serve Medellín and the Aburrá Valley. It is located about 40 miles outside of Medellín, in the municipality of Río Negro (about 2,300

meters in elevation) and there are a few different options for getting into the city, all of which take about an hour.

BY TAXI

The most convenient method to get into Medellín, albeit the most expensive, is to grab a taxi outside of the baggage claim area. Just head for the taxi in the front of the line. The going rate to Medellín is now about 60,000 Colombian pesos, or about \$34. The driver may charge between 55,000 and 60,000 but never pay more than that.

BY BUS

The official airport bus, which travels, between the city center and the airport costs just **8,600 COP (about \$4)** and leaves every 15 minutes, or when it fills up. It is a small and often crowded but a cheap and reliable option. The bus runs until about 9 pm so if you are arriving on a late-night flight, you may be forced to take a taxi. When exiting the airport, turn to your right and walk down the sidewalk until you see the white bus. It stops at the San Diego mall (first stop), and will take you to “San Juan” (5 min. from San Diego). From there it is a sort taxi ride (4,500 COP) or a longish walk) to Laureles (where the Wandering Paisa hostel is).

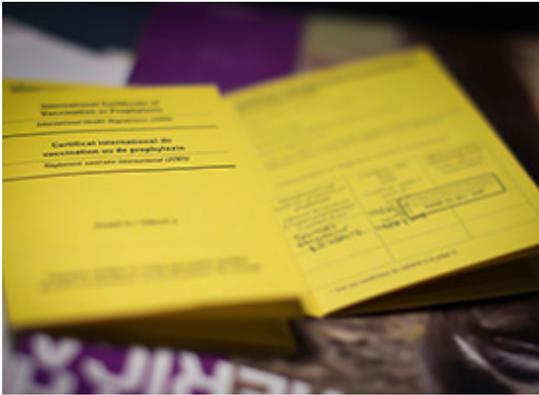
BY COLECTIVO

A *colectivo*, or shared taxi, is another option to get to Medellín. It is a taxi shared by three or four passengers, who split the fare. When split between four, the cost will only be about 15,000 COP (about \$8.50). The driver may not take you all the way to your destination if it is out-of-the-way, as they prefer to drop you at a more central location. The road between the JMC airport is four lanes, and well lit. It is a relatively safe road unless the harsh winter weather causes landslides, which can shut down a couple of lanes of traffic at a time.

VISA

- One blank passport page required for entry stamp
- All U.S. citizens who do not also hold Colombian citizenship must present a valid U.S. passport to enter and depart Colombia.
- **Visa not required for stays less than 90 days**
- 10,000 USD maximum currency restriction for entry and exit

Travelers entering Colombia are sometimes asked to present evidence of return or onward travel, usually in the form of a plane ticket. The length of stay granted to travelers is determined by the Colombian immigration officer at the point of entry and will be stamped in your passport. **Before the visa expires, travelers may request an extension of up to 90 days.** Extensions may be requested by visiting an office of the Colombian immigration authority (Migración Colombia) after arrival in Colombia. Fines are levied if a traveler remains in Colombia longer than authorized, and the traveler cannot leave Colombia until the fine is paid. Website: <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country/colombia.html>



IMMUNIZATIONS

Before departing, it is required for you to visit your physician to complete your health clearance forms. To protect your health in Colombia, you may need certain pre-departure immunizations followed by reasonable health precautions while in the country. Vaccinations are not required, but recommended against hepatitis A, hepatitis B, rabies, and typhoid. Influenza, yellow fever, tetanus and diphtheria vaccinations should also be up to date.

Local mosquito transmission of Zika virus infection (Zika) has recently been reported in Colombia. Local mosquito transmission means that mosquitoes in the area are infected with Zika virus and are spreading it to people. According to CDC, there is no vaccine or medicine for Zika. Travelers can protect themselves by preventing mosquito bites. It is important to follow the health recommendations from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov/travel).³

LANGUAGE LEARNING

The official language, Spanish, is spoken by all but a few Amerindian tribes. Spanish as spoken and written by educated Colombians is generally considered the closest to Castilian in Latin America.

- **Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana (UPB):** <http://espanolparaextranjeros.upb.edu.co/>
- **Universidad EAFIT:** <http://medellinliving.com/spanish-classes-universidad-eafit/>
- **Blacksheep hostel/language school:** <http://blacksheepmedellin.com/spanishinmedellin.html>
[Yadira Casas, Spanish teacher]

“We offer the best price at 25.000 (28.000 for those not staying in the hostel) pesos per hour in private classes and from \$17.500 pesos in group and the most flexibility. You chose your own start times and we fit around your schedule. You can take one hour of classes and if not satisfied you can end it at that.”

- **ABC Spanish:**
<http://www.spanishmedellin.com>) near Parque Lleras in El Poblado.
- **Nuevalengua Language School:**
<http://www.nuevalengua.com/>
- **Colombia Immersion:**
<http://www.colombiaimmersion.com/>



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HOST FAMILY

Students are required to live with a host family for at least two months of their GLT. Host families support cultural integration and understanding, language learning, and local relationship formation. The role of the site facilitator is to assist student-host family placements. Once students have identified their host families, they are encouraged to communicate with their host families prior to departure in order to know the expectations their host family has for them. Room and board payments are estimated to be \$250-\$300 a month, but will vary depending on the location and family.



EXCURSIONS

All excursions and recreational travel should be postponed until after you have completed all academic work. Sites that may be visited include museums, parks, plazas, Guatapé, Santa Fe de Antioquia, Botero Plaza & Museum of Antioquia, Botanical Gardens, Biblioteca España, Parque Arvi & Piedras Blancas. Or take a free walking tour around the city.

<http://www.realcitytours.com/> [“The guide is super knowledgeable and

passionate about his home city, and you leave the tour with an understanding of what Medellín, and Colombia, has gone through over the last several terrifying decades, and where they are now.”] Walking in the city: <http://www.a0n.com/medellin/walking.htm>

VISITORS

Parents or friends may wish to visit you while they are on GLT. This can be a wonderful experience; however, GLT strongly discourages and will not provide support for any visitors during the term, due to the rigorous nature of the program and the disruption that such visits cause in program flow and can interrupt your academic research process. You should be sure that relatives and friends are aware of this policy and you will not be excused from program components to attend to visitors. Visitors are also not allowed to stay with the host family that you are living with. Even if the host family seems ok with it, it is not allowed due to the fact that it could cause economic strain on the family, as well as it may violate cultural taboos within the community.



ACCOMODATIONS

1. WANDERING PAISA BACKPACKERS HOSTEL

<http://www.wanderingpaisahostel.com/>

Calle 44 A No. 68 A 76 | Laureles, Medellin, Colombia

The Wandering Paisa” is located in the Laureles neighborhood, one of the safest and well-known areas within Medellin. Just a stones throw away from the hostel is the bustling culture street life of La Setenta, which boasts one of the most popular local night scenes within the city. (See tourism info section) Also close are the City Sports Stadium, The Bull Ring and La 33 club district. Best of all, the hostel is conveniently located only a 5 min, direct walk from the “El Estadio” metro system, which can quickly and efficiently connect travelers to downtown Medellin and other important sights within the city.

2. Blacksheep hostel (has Spanish program):

3. Urban Buddha Hostel <http://buddhahostel.com/en/>

3. Palm Tree Hostel (Suramericana) <http://www.palmtree Medellin.com/>

4. Yellow House Hostel: <http://www.yellowhousehostel.com/>

SITE FACILITATORS- *GLT COLOMBIA*

Jhon Janner & Mayra Alejandra



Jhon Janner and Mayra Alejandra have a happy family that is honest and loving of the truth. Both received Bachelor’s degrees from the University of Antioquia; Janner in English-French-Spanish Translation and Alejandra in Industrial Engineering. With their son, Jhonner, they serve as Pastors of RedMI-Casa de Dios Ministry, and APU GLT Site Facilitators. They spend their life helping to make life better for children and their families in Santo Domingo, Medellin, Colombia.

** GLT Student Development Mentor and GLT Alumni*

If you have any further questions, please contact your GLT coordinator for information on how to contact a GLT alumnus and get tips or advice in living in Uganda. There will also be a GLT representative available in the Center for Global Learning and Engagement (CGLE) office to answer questions relating to GLT and how to participate upon return from GLT in becoming an alumni mentor on APU campus.⁴

⁴ [Return to Table of Contents](#)



Potential GSP Topics

- *Urban Transformation*
- *From Violence to Prosperity*
- *Effects and Potential of Micro-finance*
- *Economic Development*
- *Social exclusion/inclusion*
- *Role of Art in Medellin*
- *Community Identity*
- *Cultural Transformation*

Potential Internship Sectors:

- *Urban Planning*
- *Youth Development*
- *Juvenile Justice*
- *Micro-finance*
- *Economic Development*
- *Art*
- *Education*

RESOURCES

Alonso Salazar, *Born to Die in Medellín*.

Colombia: *Fragmented Land, Divided Society*.

Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America*. Monthly Review Press, 2009 (1973).

Dávila, Julio D (ed), 2013, *Urban mobility and poverty: Lessons from Medellín and Soacha, Colombia*. London: DPU, UCL and Universidad Nacional de Colombia. (The English version of the book is now available for purchase from the DPU at £10 per copy plus P&P. Please email your order to the **DPU**.)

Owen, David. *Green Metropolis: Why Living Smaller, Living Closer, and Driving Less Are the Keys to Sustainability*. Riverhead Books, 2009

Planning & Design for Future Informal Settlements. <https://www.design.upenn.edu/interdisciplinary-programs/research/planning-and-design-future-informal-settlements>

Cities From Scratch: Poverty and Informality in Urban Latin America

http://www.amazon.com/Cities-From-Scratch-Poverty-Informality/dp/0822355337/ref=pd_sim_sbs_b_3?ie=UTF8&refRID=12T9ZVPVVE2FBF7ZTN2D

Stephen Armet, “Christian Mission in Colombia: Protestant paradox and Catholic ___” [Avail on Web]. [Stephen Armet is Professor of Missiology and Intercultural Studies at the Universidad Evangélica de las Américas (UNELA) in Bogotá, Colombia.]

Hylton, Forrest. "Medellín's Makeover." *New Left Review*, no. 44 (Mar/Apr 2007): 70-89.

Medina, Carlos, et al. "Quality of Life in Urban Neighborhoods in Colombia: The Cases of Bogotá and Medellín." [Online Source](#).

“Quality of Life in Urban Neighborhoods in Colombia” Contact Dr David Keeling; (270) 745-4555; david.keeling@wku.edu

“Medellin: The Peace of the Pacifiers” [Key article on local economic-political history]

John Betancur, “Medellin and the Limits of Governance” (Ch 9 in *Governing Cities in a Global Era*)

http://books.google.com/books?id=IZCFZ_MBnRQC&pg=PA125&lpg=PA125&dq=John+J.+Betancur&source=bl&ots=RzsGD_qWgL&sig=waSgYvONCv4xqIEZNU6iMymC0NE&hl=en&ei=CfoXTILMD8LtnQfOndTBCg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=9&ved=0CD8Q6AEwCA#v=onepage&q=John%20J.%20Betancur&f=false

Donna Murdock, *When Women Have Wings: Feminism and Development in Medellín, Colombia*. Univ

of Michigan Press, 2008.

National Geographic Biblio.: <http://www.amegeog.org/bowman/medellin/bibliography.htm>

Evil Hour in Colombia by Forrest Hylton

http://www.amazon.com/Evil-Hour-Colombia-Forrest-Hylton/dp/1844675513/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1241206947&sr=1-2

The Dispossessed: Chronicles of the Desterrados of Colombia by Alfredo Molano

http://www.amazon.com/Dispossessed-Chronicles-Desterrados-Colombia/dp/1931859175/ref=pd_sim_b_3

Living in Colombia: A Guide for Foreigners by William R. Hutchison, Cynthia A. Poznanski, Laura Todt-Stockman

http://www.amazon.com/Living-Colombia-Foreigners-William-Hutchison/dp/0933662645/ref=pd_ts_b_43?ie=UTF8&s=books

Ricardo Aricapa, Comuna 13: Cronica de una Guerra urbana (Universidad de Antioquia)

Yoni Alexander Rendon, Comuna 13 de Medellin: El drama del conflicto armado (Hombre Nuevo Editorio)

Riano, Alcala & Pilar, Dwellers of memory (Transaction Publishers, 2006).

Ralph Rozema, Fractured cities [See chapter on Medellin, pp. 57-70).

Resources on Medellin:

<http://www.globalurban.org/GUDMag07Vol3Iss1/Betancur.htm>

<http://www.ciponline.org/colombia/blog/archives/000296.htm>

<http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?cid=2450&catid=5&typeid=6&subMenuId=0>

<http://www.nextbillion.net/blog/medellins-promising-transformation-cultura-e-as-in-entrepreneurs>

<http://www.newsweek.com/2007/11/10/the-mathematician-of-medell-n.html>

<http://www.americasquarterly.org/node/1310/>

<http://www.comminit.com/en/node/274811/bbc>

<http://favelissues.com/2010/02/01/medellin-%E2%80%9Csocial-urbanism%E2%80%9D/>

http://www.archinect.com/features/article.php?id=87153_0_23_0_C

Medellin's Comunas

Map: <http://www.a0n.com/medellin/index.htm>

Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AzYGHlBKNs>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RAMLwfoUxjc&feature=related>

Photos: <http://www.travelpod.com/travel-photo/jdswed/2/1264794937/up-into-the-slums.jpg/tpod.html>

Medellin's innovative infrastructure

<http://www.dac.dk/en/dac-cities/sustainable-cities/all-cases/transport/medellins-innovative-infrastructure/>

<http://dirt.asla.org/2014/04/17/medellins-metamorphosis/>

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/04/25/half_a_miracle

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/09/medellin-colombia-worlds-most-dangerous-city>

Rebirth of Comuna 13: <http://www.wku.edu/geoweb/documents/medellin.pdf>

Transportation: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=1006&menu=1348&nr=2246>

Architecture: <http://www.utne.com/politics/how-architecture-transformed-a-violent-city-medellin-6481.aspx#axzz3HBIXB1lt>

Politics (participatory budgeting/planning): See *Strategic Plan Housing in Medellin 2020*, an instrument of public policy which seeks to transform the territory through participative improvement with habitat quality commitment from all stakeholders in the housing system.

Social development (youth programs, health centers, gender equality, balanced territorial development; strengthened resilience to climate change/natural disasters, upgrading of comunas, redevelopment of public spaces)

Tomas Cipriano (Associate Director, Department of Urban Planning, Medellín):

<http://online.wsj.com/ad/cityoftheyear>

Colombian family:

<https://whsresearch.wikispaces.com/file/view/Ch.+14+Colombian+Families.pdf>

<http://latinfamilyvalues.com/colombia/>