

A person with dark hair, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, white trousers, and a white conical hat, is walking away from the camera through a dense tropical jungle. They are carrying a large, light-colored woven bag over their shoulder. The jungle is filled with various green plants, including large banana leaves and palm fronds. The lighting is natural, suggesting daylight.

the
leap

GAP YEAR PROGRAMME

Leap to Colombia

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT + LOST CITY CHALLENGE + HISTORIC CITIES

Colombia *Experience*

Experience Colombia beyond the backpacker trail. Connect, support impactful projects, and immerse yourself in community life with expert guides for meaningful travel.

LOCATIONS:

CENTRAL HIGHLANDS +
CARIBBEAN

ACCOMMODATION:

MIX OF HOSTELS

ENVIRONMENTS:

CANYONS + JUNGLE + BEACH

PROJECTS:

REFORESTATION + COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT

TEAM SIZE:

16 PER DEPARTURE

SOCIAL:

BUZZY COUNTRY + BEACHES

FITNESS:

GOOD FITNESS REQUIRED
FOR CANYON AND LOST
CITY TREKS

STAY LENGTH:

4 WEEKS

Reserve your place

INFO@THELEAP.CO.UK / +44 1672 519922





Discover the real Colombia by getting off the beaten path. Immerse yourself in the culture, forge meaningful connections, and dive into an adventure that reveals the heart and soul of this vibrant country.

Guided by our expert local team, you'll uncover the why behind travel that matters - building meaningful relationships, supporting impactful projects, and immersing yourself in Colombia's most authentic corners.

Begin in Barichara, a picturesque town set among dramatic canyons. Here, spend two weeks working on vital community and environmental initiatives. Every action - whether helping locals or exploring waterfalls, coffee plantations, and the Chicamocha Canyon - deepens your understanding of the region and its people.

Next, head to Colombia's Caribbean coast, where golden beaches meet the towering Sierra Nevada mountains. Support a local children's project while tubing down jungle rivers, exploring Cartagena's vibrant streets, and conquering the iconic Lost City trek.

This journey isn't just about exploring Colombia's hidden treasures - it's about understanding why travel matters. By leaving a positive impact, expanding your horizons, and forging deep connections, you'll return home not only with unforgettable memories but with a renewed perspective on the world and your place in it.





CARIBBEAN
SEA

Palomino

Beach Chill + River Tubing,
Kids Foundation

Cartagena
Historic City

Tayrona National Park
4-Day Lost City Trek

PANAMA

VENEZUELA

NORTH
PACIFIC
OCEAN

Barichara

Family in Need Project,
Canyon Hike + Reforestation

Bogotá

Arrival / Departure

COLOMBIA

ECUADOR

BRAZIL

PERU

Colombia *Itinerary*

Day 1 Bucaramanga, Central Highlands

Arrival + Transfer

You'll touch down in Colombia's central highlands at Bucaramanga Airport, where our team will be ready to greet you. From there, you'll be transferred to your base in Barichara, a charming, UNESCO-listed town that feels like stepping back in time. Picture whitewashed houses, cobblestone streets, and a vibrant community eager to welcome you with open arms.

The scenic journey to Barichara takes around three hours, with plenty of stops along the way to soak in the breathtaking landscapes. It's the perfect introduction to this enchanting and off-grid region.

Days 2-3 Barichara

Settle in + Explore

Your first weekend is all about settling into your new home and discovering the charm of the local town. You'll also meet the dedicated team who will be your guides throughout this adventure, ensuring every moment is unforgettable.

They'll introduce you to your community projects, immerse you in authentic cultural experiences, and lead you off the beaten track to explore the dramatic canyons, roaring rivers, cascading waterfalls, and the relaxed pace of life that makes this region so special. It's the perfect start to your Colombian journey.



Colombia *Itinerary*

Days 4-5 Barichara

Reforestation

Join a legacy of impact as you dive into a hands-on project that every Leap team has contributed to, with over 1000 trees planted so far. Partnering with the local community, you'll help reforest community lands by planting and nurturing young trees. This is your chance to take part in an initiative that's restoring the environment and protecting the stunning landscapes of this region.

But this project is more than just planting trees - it's about forging connections. As you work alongside the community, you'll share informal English lessons, creating meaningful cultural exchanges and gaining insight into their life. It's a rewarding, unforgettable way to leave your mark and be part of something bigger.





The lost city trek was amazing, loved all aspects of it and really enjoyed the trekking and team aspect. Very helpful when we had an issue with a lost bag before the programme had even started, thank you - that was much appreciated

Colombia *Itinerary*

Days 6-8 Barichara

Enriching Education + Community Connections

After getting your hands dirty with reforestation, it's time to switch gears and bring your creativity to the classroom. You'll dive into the local rural-schools programme, another cornerstone of every Leap team's experience. Welcomed by the local mayor and community, you'll spend three days helping with English, art, and sports lessons.

Sports are a huge passion here - especially rugby and football - with Brendan, our Director of Operations, heavily involved in the local rugby club. Whether you're leading an engaging English session, sparking creativity in art class, or refereeing a football match, you'll be fully immersed in the community spirit.



Colombia *Itinerary*

Days 9-10 Barichara

Weekend Downtime + Adventure Awaits

After a busy week of volunteering, it's time to recharge and explore. This weekend is all yours to hang out, soak up the local vibes, or dive into some adrenaline-fueled adventures. Just 30 minutes away lies San Gil, Colombia's adventure capital.

Whether you're white-water rafting, bungee jumping, or paragliding, San Gil is the perfect place to let loose and satisfy your adventurous spirit.



Adventure options

Here's a guide to some of the top activities to help you plan:

Mountain biking (full day):

\$80 USD

White-water rafting (Grade 3):

\$30 USD

White-water rafting (Grade 5):

\$75 USD (full day)

Bungee jumping:

\$85 USD

Please note

Weekends are yours to make the most of, so any travel or activities are at your own expense. We just ask that you double-check your travel insurance covers the adventure-packed options you might choose.

Colombia *Itinerary*

Day 11 El Camino Real

Unforgettable Historic Hike

You'll kick off your week with an unforgettable hike along El Camino Real, a 300-year-old colonial trail steeped in history and natural beauty. This iconic path weaves through a series of picturesque villages and awe-inspiring viewpoints - a perfect mix of adventure and cultural immersion, offering a unique glimpse into the heart of the Central Highlands.

Day 12 Coffee plantation

Hands-On Experience

Today you'll dive into Colombia's world-famous coffee culture with a visit to a traditional coffee plantation. This region is renowned for its high-quality beans, cultivated with time-honoured methods passed down through generations.

You'll learn the art of coffee production, from planting and harvesting to roasting and tasting, as you wander through lush coffee fields. It's a hands-on experience with a great family.



Colombia *Itinerary*

Days 13-14 Chicamocha Canyon Challenge

Hike A Natural Wonder

Next up is an epic two-day adventure in the breathtaking Chicamocha Canyon, a 120-million-year-old natural wonder that promises awe and exhilaration.

Your adventure begins by hiking along the canyon's dramatic crest, where sweeping vistas stretch as far as the eye can see. Passing through rustic tobacco and goat farms, immersing yourself in the timeless rhythms of rural Colombian life. As the day unfolds, you'll descend into the heart of the canyon, rewarded with a refreshing swim in the crystal-clear river. Your evening will be spent under a blanket of stars, camping in hammocks and soaking in the serene sounds of nature - it's an experience that's as grounding as it is unforgettable.

However, the real challenge awaits as you take on the hike out of the canyon. You'll start early in the cool of the early morning and take it gently. The pace is relaxed, allowing you to fully absorb the canyon's beauty and reflect on the journey you've conquered.





Colombia *Itinerary*


Day 15 Barichara

Relax + Unwind

After two weeks of adventure, impact, and exploration, this day is your time to unwind and soak in the memories of your Central Highlands experience. Spend the day at a relaxed pace—enjoying the charm of Barichara one last time, and packing up for the next phase of your journey.

As the evening approaches, you'll board an overnight bus to the Caribbean coast, trading dramatic canyons and colonial towns for golden beaches, lush jungles, and vibrant coastal vibes. This move marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter in your adventure, filled with fresh challenges.



A group of five young adults, four women and one man, are sitting on a dark, wet rock in front of a large, cascading waterfall. They are all wearing swimwear. The women are wearing bikinis, and the man is wearing swim trunks. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a lush, green forest with trees and foliage. The waterfall is the central focus of the background, with water cascading down a rocky ledge. The overall atmosphere is tropical and adventurous.

My daughter booked her trip to Colombia and met her fellow Leapers for the first time at Heathrow. OMG what fun she had, so much so she booked on to the Costa Rica trip too. She has made friends and memories of a lifetime. Massive thank you to Milly and Zoë – your pre-departure Zoom chat, your email confirming arrival, weekly reports and fab pics. What more can we ask for as anxious parents? Truly spoilt and worth every penny. We can't thank you enough.

Colombia *Itinerary*

Days 16–20 Palomino

Welcome to the Caribbean

Palomino will be your stunning coastal base, nestled between the turquoise waters of the Caribbean Sea and the Sierra Nevada mountains – the perfect introduction to this vibrant region.

Here you'll start off with a day of downtime to explore the golden beaches, and dive into the laid-back vibe of this great beach side town.

Kids' Foundation

Then its time to roll up your sleeves to give back and help make a lasting impact at the local kids' foundation.

This vibrant community hub is dedicated to supporting and empowering children, and your involvement (and every Leap team) is a vital part of their mission.



Colombia *Itinerary*



Giving back at the Kids' Foundation

Classroom activities

Dive into the day-to-day rhythms of the foundation by assisting with classroom lessons. From helping the kids with their homework to leading creative sessions in art or teaching basic English, your role will be hands-on and rewarding. The children's enthusiasm and curiosity are contagious, and their joy will make every moment unforgettable.

Maintenance projects

Roll up your sleeves and help with upkeep projects around the foundation. Whether it's sprucing up the space with a fresh coat of paint, organising learning materials, or tending to the outdoor areas, your contributions will leave a tangible, lasting legacy.

But this experience is about more than just the tasks - you'll forge real connections with the children and the wider community. Through shared laughter, stories, and games, you'll become a part of their world, creating memories that stay with you long after your time in Palomino ends.

Colombia *Itinerary*

Days 21-22 Palomino

Relaxation + Gateway to Adventure

Two days of downtime to bridge the gap between your impactful volunteer work and the epic adventure that awaits. You'll have time to go tubing down the Palomino River, where you'll drift through the jungle framed by the towering Sierra Nevada mountains - a peaceful escape, whilst you get ready for the iconic 4-day Lost City Trek - the unforgettable adventure waiting just around the corner.





“ Everything was amazing. Thank you for such an incredible experience.

Colombia *Itinerary*

Days 23-26 The Lost City Trek

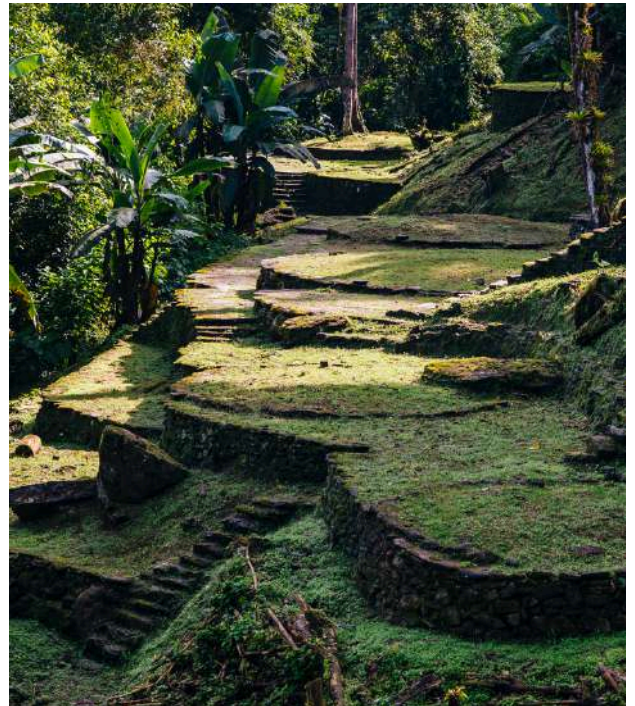
Bucket List Moment

Prepare to push your boundaries and embrace the adventure of a lifetime as you take on the legendary Lost City Trek, one of South America's most iconic challenges. This 4-day journey through the mystical Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta combines physical endurance, breathtaking landscapes, and a deep dive into Colombia's ancient history.

The Challenge Ahead

Led by experienced local guides, this trek is both challenging and achievable, designed for those with a moderate level of fitness. Each day involves 5-6 hours of hiking through lush jungle trails, crossing the pristine Buritaca River, and cooling off in natural waterfalls. Along the way, you'll encounter incredible biodiversity, from vibrant tropical plants to the occasional glimpse of wildlife hidden in the dense forest.

However, this is more than just a trek - it's a journey into the past. You'll walk paths that connect you with the traditions of the Kogi people, direct descendants of the ancient Tayrona civilization. Their deep respect for the land and their spiritual connection to the mountains offer a unique perspective on this sacred region.



Colombia *Itinerary*

Days 23-26 The Lost City Trek

continued...

Bucket List Moment

The Lost City

The ultimate reward awaits on Day 4: ascending 1,200 stone steps to reach the legendary Ciudad Perdida (Lost City). This sprawling archaeological site, with 169 terraces spread over 30 hectares, is a testament to the ingenuity and spirituality of the Tayrona people. Perched high above the jungle, the views are nothing short of breathtaking, offering a profound sense of achievement and connection to Colombia's rich history.

Rest and refuel

Each evening, you'll rest in jungle camps equipped with hammocks, beds, or tents, complete with mosquito nets and cosy blankets. Enjoy hearty meals and camaraderie with your group as you recharge for the next day's adventure.

Why it's worth it

The Lost City Trek is the perfect blend of challenge and reward. It's physically demanding yet deeply fulfilling, with every step offering a new perspective on Colombia's stunning landscapes and vibrant culture. By the end of this challenge, you'll not only have conquered a world-renowned trek but also have created memories and connections that will last a lifetime.

This is an achievement, an exploration, and an experience that will leave you in awe of nature's beauty and humanity's history.



Outstanding organisation, support and flexibility.
Great experience had, and would thoroughly
recommend.



Colombia *Itinerary*

Days 26-28 Santa Marta + Cartagena + Island Option *Celebrate Your Achievements*



Your adventure will end with four unforgettable days exploring the vibrant coastal cities of Santa Marta and Cartagena.

In Santa Marta, you'll dive into the local culture as you explore bustling markets before heading into Cartagena, a city that blends colonial beauty with a modern, dynamic vibe. Stroll through its cobblestone streets, marvel at the colourful architecture, and immerse yourself in its lively energy. You will love it.



For the ultimate tropical finale, we can arrange an optional boat trip to the nearby islands, where turquoise waters and pristine white-sand beaches await. Snorkel, swim, or simply relax under the Caribbean sun - it's the perfect way to soak up the magic of Colombia's stunning coastline.

This final chapter is all about celebration, relaxation, and enjoying the best of Colombia's Caribbean paradise.

Colombia *Itinerary*

Day 29 Cartagena

Departure

You'll have a relaxed morning before heading back to the airport for your flight home, taking with you memories of a truly unforgettable journey through Colombia's rich culture, stunning landscapes, and meaningful connections.



Colombia *Staying & Food*

Accommodation

Accommodation: handpicked by our team – expect dormitory style accommodation with shared bathrooms – an example being:

La Juanita, Barichara: www.facebook.com/lajuanitabarichara/

Tiki Huts, Palomino: <http://es.tikihutpalomino.co/>

Cartagena: <https://www.viajerohostels.com/en/destinations-colombia/cartagena/>

When on the canyon and Lost City treks you will sleep in hammocks, in the campsites. Your mozzie net and bedding are provided.

Food

You'll be provided with two meals a day. However, on all overnight camping expeditions, three meals a day are included. Expect a lot of rice or beans with plenty of fresh fruit, vegetables, chicken or fish, tempered to western tastes. If you have any special dietary requirements, please let us know.

Good to Know

Dinner will be extra, out and about – please budget about \$10 – \$15 per meal. Safe drinking water, tea, coffee, squash etc. will be provided throughout. However, you'll have to pay for other soft drinks and beers, etc.

Project *Background*

Brendan and Josi Topp, founders of *Jakera Colombia*, have been our trusted partners for over 15 years, offering unparalleled access to Colombia's authentic heart.



Their deep-rooted connections and commitment to sustainable travel provide travelers with immersive experiences that reveal the country's rich traditions and genuine people.

Our programmes, crafted in collaboration with Jakera Colombia, invite you to explore Colombia's great outdoors—trekking diverse terrains, camping in pristine wilderness, and volunteering on impactful social and environmental projects. This journey traverses the nation, offering firsthand cultural encounters with pre-conquest indigenous rituals, colonial heritage, and the vibrant, modern-day Colombia.

With Brendan and Josi's guidance, you'll venture off the typical tourist path, engaging deeply with local communities and landscapes. Their dedication to creating life-changing programmes ensures that your adventure is not only unique but also leaves a positive impact on the places and people you visit.

Colombia *Dates & Costs 2026*

22ND JANUARY 2026	4 WEEKS	£3320
5TH MARCH 2026	4 WEEKS	£3320

Good to Know

We recommend bringing a combination of a debit card and a Revolut (or similar) card for convenience and security.

ATMs are widely available across Colombia, making it easy to withdraw money as needed.

For extra spending, we suggest budgeting around £200 per week, though this may vary based on your weekend activities and dining choices.


Colombia *Nitty Gritty*

INCLUDED:

- Pre-departure briefing
- Leap t-shirt
- Airport pick-up and return transfers for team flight
- Safety and induction briefing on arrival
- 24-hour emergency back-up, management and support by UK and in-country team
- All volunteering projects as described
- Project-to-project transport
- Accommodation as described
- Entrance fees to all activities
- Breakfast and lunch
- 2-day trek and camping expedition in Chicamocha Canyon
- Cross country bus journey to Caribbean coast
- Tubing down Palomino River
- 4-day Lost City trek

NOT INCLUDED:

- International and internal flights
- Private transfers to and from the airport if you do not arrive on the main team flight
- Travel insurance
- Medical expenses
- Food and accommodation if away from the programme
- Alcoholic drinks and some soft drinks
- Laundry fees
- Any excursions not listed above
- Suppers throughout, apart from on the treks when it is included



I think the programmes you are offering may well change the course of their lives not only for the future of the planet but also by giving them opportunities to work hard together at the same time as having fun. Huge thanks and congratulations, I'm telling everyone how fantastic you are.

Colombia *Nitty Gritty*

What to Pack?

Clothes

Prepare for both warm days and cooler evenings in the Central Highlands.

- A selection of light weight trousers and shorts
- A selection of nice clothes for going out in the evenings
- T- shirts – long and short sleeved
- Warm hoody/fleece for cooler evenings
- A lightweight waterproof jacket
- 1 pair trail shoes for the hikes
- 1 pair flip-flops
- 1 pair casual shoes
- 1 pair water shoes – useful, not essential – good for walking in the rivers
- Beach wear: sun hat, swimmers etc

Toiletries & Medical

- Basic everyday toiletries
- Sun cream/after sun
- Travel wash
- Hand sanitiser
- Insect repellent
- Antibacterial spray/cream for open wounds.
- Rehydration powders
- Savlon
- Antihistamines
- E45/Sudocream
- Immodium
- Mediplasters
- Personal Medication: Bring extra supplies, know the generic names of your medication, and ensure you can manage allergies (e.g. carry an epipen if necessary)

Colombia *Nitty Gritty*

What to Pack?

Equipment

- 80 litre rucksack – NO hard-shell SUITCASES
- 20-30 litre day rucksack – make sure this has comfortable straps and a waist belt to take the weight. You will need it for all the hikes.
- Thin sleeping bag or liner – only needed for the overnight bus journey – personal choice
- Plug adapter – American style required
- Packing cubes – useful to manage our rucksack
- Towel/sarong x 2. The microfibre towels are great as they dry quickly
- 1 pair of working gloves – a pair of sturdy gardening gloves will do the job
- Head torch
- Spanish dictionary / phrase book
- Water bottle x 2 – so you can carry 3 litres at a time
- Spare, cheap phone – just in case you lose/break your mobile
- Portable phone charger

Good to Know

No hard suitcases allowed – they are a nightmare to travel with.

Go for a rucksack or a duffle bag.

Colombia *Nitty Gritty*

Communication

We will provide you with the emergency numbers for both The Leap and our overseas team. Expect Wifi and phone reception to be patchy on the treks. If you have any issues or concerns at any point, please talk to your guides who will do all they can to resolve any issues or contact us.

Your Health

Each location will have first aid on site. For more serious emergencies: Volunteers need to pay for minor medical expenses on their credit card and then reclaim these expenses back through their travel insurance. This includes the cost of the host driving a volunteer to and from hospital. In an emergency, and where evacuation by air is necessary, the insurers will settle bills directly.

Your Team

Maximum of 16 and a minimum of 6 volunteers per departure. The programme cannot run with fewer than this. 5 to 6 weeks prior to departure, if the minimum group size hasn't been met, you will be offered an alternative placement or a postponement, depending on availability and preference. Anyone aged 18- 22 can participate.

Colombia *Nitty Gritty*

Behaviour

This is a team experience and looking out and being respectful to one another is vital to create a positive experience for all. However, if anyone puts themselves or others at risk, does not listen to safety advice and is being disrespectful to the team and staff then we have to revert to our discipline procedures. These involve: a verbal warning, followed by a written warning, followed by a dismissal from the program – with no refund. Please do not be that person who ruins it for everyone else.

Managing Expectations

We do our best to describe our programme as accurately as we can so that you have realistic expectations. It's important that you read this document carefully, and listen to the pre-departure zoom, so you are fully prepared with what lies ahead. Please remain flexible, as tasks and projects may change, depending on the needs of the communities, projects on the ground and weather.

Your Safety

We prioritise safety in our gap year programs through detailed risk assessments, safety audits, and adherence to industry standards such as BS8848, Trading Standards, the Year Out Group, and the Gap Year Association. On arrival, teams receive thorough safety briefings and are provided with secure accommodation, risk-assessed vehicles, medical evacuation access, and reliable emergency communications.

Accreditations

We're a member of the Year Out Group and the first UK company accredited by the Gap Year Association.



Reserve your place

INFO@THELEAP.CO.UK

+44 1672 519922

WWW.THELEAP.CO.UK/GAPYEAR