

TRUTH IN TRAVEL

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LIST

Colombian designer Phillip Lim, seen here in Bogotá, says he's looking for ways to bring his designs to life.



▶ "The world opened up to me as a designer going to these fabulous places," says New York-based Phillip Lim, and he does, because he's respected fashion cities—London, Milan, Paris, again, and again. (By the way, the point was to get a uniquely predictable? "Which is why last season at Lanvin spontaneously I shipped to Cambodia and the retail area is all over the place," he says. "Two weeks later he returned re-inspired by the things of a place like the bus, the car, or immediately started plotting a response with my friends for the look. "We were looking for a place that was "over-plugged but also not too bright," he recalls. "We wanted some culture, but I wasn't into it." Another friend suggested Colombia. It had that "retro-cool steel and tropical landscape shifts—Andean peaks, dense rain forests, tropical beaches—Café and a cool, then

SOMEWHERE NEW
HOW DESIGNER
PHILIP LIM GOT OUT
OF HIS TRAVEL
RUT IN COLOMBIA



Days 1 and 2: Museo Botero and Street Food

"I thought you'd know what to expect from Bogotá," says Lim about the capital, where they stayed at the [Four Seasons Hotel](#) in the city. In Bogotá, "I'm thinking I've got to make some food, steel the gutsy ends of this gas, it's even more you sense if it's pink, the people have a rich culture." Much of their time was spent in La Candelaria, the old-world town of colorful Spanish Colonial houses, a wedge between the modern city and the old. "I don't give me a thing, it's everywhere," he says. "I had most of the glass you can see, to see the



They also took a trip to the highlands to visit a traditional coffee farm, to see the traditional architecture of the town of Bogotá.



17th-century main square Plaza de Bolívar, the Museo Roque (known for its robust collection of the Colombian artist's works as well as pieces by Dalí, Chagall, and de Kooning), and the Museo del Oro, which has one of the world's largest collections of pre-Columbian gold objects. They also stopped the San Alejo flea market for alpaca ponchos and woven mariposa bags, pausing at food carts when they got hungry. "I couldn't stop with the almojábana, a sort of cheesy corn bread, and I was obsessed with the carne desvalada, a beef stew, the locals swear cures any hangover."

Days 3 and 4: Birds, Hikes, and Hammocks

From Bogotá, Lim and his friends took a four-hour flight to Armenia in the coffee-growing region where many affluent Colombians have second homes. They used the farmhouse-turned hotel Hacienda Bambusa, about 12 miles outside of the city, as their base. One day they hired a jeep and a driver and went to the Cocora Valley to hike and bird watch. "It's a nature lover's dream—you're in the rain forest, birds everywhere, and it's like the plants are on steroids." They spent another day wandering around Salento, a colonial village with the Andes jutting up in the background. The group packed a lot in two days but still had time to relax in the hotel's hammocks with a drink. "Actually, everywhere I found people were like, 'Beer? I'd have breakfast and then a beer!'"

Days 5-8: Beach and Bikes

Finally they made their way to Cartagena, the 16th-century port town that faces the Caribbean and is divided into two parts: the historic walled city and a cluster of new high-rise heavy neighborhoods. "Immediately you sense the Afro-Caribbean influence in the food and music," says Lim. "It's so different from Bogotá—so try and vibrant, and there's that crazy tropical blue water." They booked three nights at the 20-room Casa San Agustín (wood-paneled ceilings, bougainvillea in the courtyard), in the center of the old city, which feels like a toucan-colored medieval tower where horses still pull carts teeming with fruit. They chartered a boat to go snorkeling off the Rosario Islands and ducked in to the Bazo, a market for just-catch-of-the-day. Lim especially loved hiking around the city. "It was our last day and we rode for hours, like when you're a kid, and then it was dusk and the public squares became communal living rooms—people dancing, drinking, even exercising. We had reservations at a 'must try' restaurant but we blew it off," he says. "We ended up eating delicious charcoal chicken from a street vendor instead." **KAREN A. ROYNER**

