

Indagare

MAGAZINE

**WHY
GO
NOW**

**MARRAKECH
PARIS
LONDON
EGYPT
ETHIOPIA
FRENCH ALPS
AND MORE...**

FALL/WINTER 2018

CARTAGENA IN 4 DAYS

Indagare's Therese Mueller shares Indagare's easy four-day itinerary. It's all you need to know about where to stay, shop and eat in Colombia's historic city.

BORDERED BY THE Caribbean Sea and reachable by frequent direct flights from New York and Miami, Cartagena is ideal for a long weekend away. The 16th-century port city, graced with beautiful Spanish colonial architecture, world-class restaurants and chic hotels and shops, offers a unique mix of Colombian and Caribbean flavors, evident especially in its food. Get lost in the Old City, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with its curious maze of cobbled alleys and balconies overflowing with bougainvillea and streets lined by gorgeous churches, monasteries and brightly colored mansions. Although the city is small and manageable, we suggest staying for at least four days to enjoy the eternal summer weather and the nearby islands. Here is our ideal itinerary.

Day 1: Explore the Old City

Cartagena's main attraction is its historic Old City, which is surrounded by walls that stand 65 feet high and extend for almost seven miles. The quarter, bursting with vibrant colors and charm, is home to the lovely hotel **Casa San Agustín**, a perfect base for your visit. Composed of three connected 17th-century whitewashed mansions, it has 30 guest rooms and

suites and features original frescoes, wood-beamed ceilings and colorful tiles, as well as a breathtaking pool, situated in a pretty courtyard, that wraps around the remnants of a 400-year-old aqueduct. After settling in, take a tour of the city and its intimate squares with your guide, strolling around the Old City and taking in the colonial churches, monasteries, plazas, mansions and nearby **Plaza de Bolívar** (also known as the Parque de Bolívar), where local dancers take over after 6 p.m.

Spend the afternoon by the pool, grabbing a snack at **Alma**, which serves handmade lobster empanadas. Or pop into **El Boliche**, a 16-table gem located a few blocks away. The restaurant puts an upscale spin on South American classics, infusing its ceviches (the best in the city) with ingredients like tamarind and coconut and also serves such elevated dishes as grilled octopus with a light potato foam.

In the evening, head to **El Baluarte**, a bar on the fortified wall, or to the **Moyich Hotel** rooftop to watch the sun set over the clear blue water, casting a glow on the Old City cupolas. For dinner, go to **Carmen**. The cuisine is contemporary, inspired by

local flavors—the *pez negro* is delicious—the atmosphere serene, and the service personalized.

Day 2: Historical Tour of Cartagena

Begin your second day with a visit to the whitewashed fortress **Castillo San Felipe de Barajas**, which dominates the cityscape. Built in the 1600s, it is Cartagena's largest historical landmark and still looks impenetrable. With your private guide, explore the interior corridors and tunnels. End the tour with lunch at **Vera**, an Italian restaurant located in the fashionable **Tcherassi** hotel, which is owned by a local designer. Try the risotto with portobello mushrooms or tuna carpaccio and chopped asparagus tossed in olive oil and parmesan.

You might also want to visit the **Palacio de la Inquisición**, a museum showcasing the city's history, with displays of pre-Columbian pottery, torture instruments, armor, paintings, furniture and maps from the colonial and independence eras. Also worth checking out is **Getsemani**, an up-and-coming neighborhood where local families have lived for generations and where you'll find street art and chic eateries, such as **Café del Mural**. Before dinner, enjoy a private



Therese Mueller
Indagare Trip Designer

The best thing I drank in Cartagea was... coconut lemonade with a splash of rum at Casa San Agustín



A drink at
Carmen in
Cartagena's
Old City



“

Cartagena's Casa San Agustín is one of the prettiest hotels we've ever stayed in and I would highly recommend it. The blend of old and new architecture is breathtaking and our room was lovely."

—HALLIE FERGUSON, MEMBER
SINCE 2014

rum tasting at the intimate cocktail bar **El Barón**, which is great for small groups. Larger groups should head to **Alquimico**—the newest and hippest bar in the city, housed in a two-story 1910 mansion—for drinks on the roof.

Have dinner at **Donjuán**, which draws a crowd of smartly dressed locals. We recommend ordering the grilled grouper on lemon parmesan risotto or pork chops with fried yucca and artichoke aioli. After dinner, you might go out for a mojito at an authentic bar with salsa or champeta

dancing, such as **Bazurto Social Club**, which can get crowded, or **Donde Fidel** and **Quiebra Canto**, where you'll find plenty of people-watching opportunities.

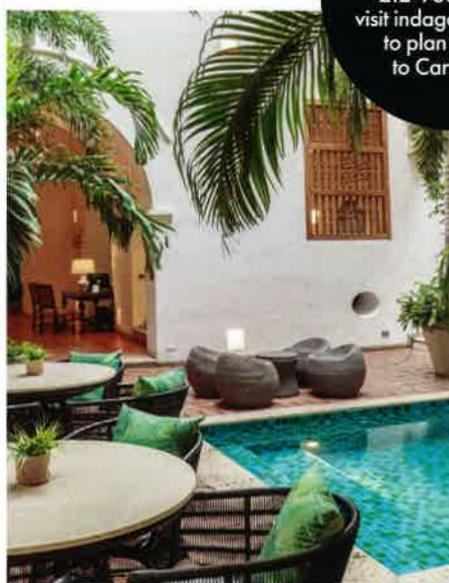
Day 3: Day Trip to Rosario Islands

The beaches in and around Cartagena are not the best for sunbathing or swimming, so take a break from the city and spend a day in the Colombian Caribbean National Park of **Islas del Rosario** (also known as Rosario Islands). A private boat will carry you



BOOK NOW

Call us at
212-988-2611 or
visit indagare.com/go
to plan your trip
to Cartagena.



Clockwise from above: Alma Bar and the pool at Casa San Agustín; a city scenic; the bar and daybeds at Casa San Agustín in Cartagena.

to the 30-island archipelago, which lies an hour off the coast of Cartagena. There, you can sunbathe and snorkel and swim around the coral reef and have lunch at **Matimbá**, a private beach club. We recommend returning around 3 or 4 p.m., before high tide and the high waves that accompany it. Return to your hotel to freshen up for dinner at **Marea by Rausch**. Located on the water, with views of the Bahía de Animas and the charming Old Town, this seafood restaurant serves dishes highlighting Mediterranean and Caribbean flavors.

Day 4: Coffee Tasting, Shopping & Cooking Class

On your last day, spend the morning browsing the chic boutiques that line the colorful streets near Casa San Agustín. Don't miss **St. Dom**, a concept shop selling clothing, accessories and home décor by Colombian designers. Then stop in next door at **Mercedes Salazar** for some lavish costume earrings. **Casa Chiqui** offers incredible home furnishings and accessories from Bali, Thailand and Morocco.

In the afternoon, take a cooking class in a colonial mansion to learn more about Colombian culture and local specialties like ceviche. Or participate in a coffee tasting and learn why Colombian beans make some of the highest-quality brews in the world. End your trip on a high note with dinner at the elegant **María**, enjoying Bogotá-born chef Alejandro Ramirez's carefully crafted cocktails and inventive seafood dishes like cured salmon served with a jalapeño infusion and grilled sea bass with bacon succotash. ■