



Five Great Reasons To Honeymoon In Cartagena

By Jen O'Brien

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Photo by Jen O'Brien

Strolling the rainbow-hued streets of Cartagena's old town, it comes as no surprise that this astoundingly beautiful Colombian city inspired an entire literary genre. This is the place that famously fuelled the imagination of Nobel Prize-winning Colombian author, and godfather of magical realism, Gabriel García Márquez. It is a place where he envisioned the fantastic intermingling with everyday life.

To see Cartagena in person is to realize this surreal dream. Perched on the Caribbean Sea and encircled by an elaborate stone wall built centuries ago to ward off invading pirates, the city's old town tells the story of Cartagena's history as a thriving port. Magnificent churches and colonial mansions bursting with bougainvillea appear around every corner, solidifying the city's status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Photo courtesy of Casa San Agustín

The accommodations

To experience Cartagena to the fullest, booking a stay at one of the walled city's boutique hotels is a must, and there's no spot more honeymoon-appropriate than [Casa San Agustín](#). Step through the property's ornate gates and you'll discover a tranquil escape where history meets modernity. With just 20 guest rooms and 10 suites spread across three exquisitely-restored 17th century colonial homes, Casa San Agustín has the intimacy of a luxurious family home with all the thoughtful amenities of a five-star hotel. A palm-fringed courtyard frames a pool set against an ancient aqueduct, while original frescos adorn the walls. Guest rooms feature wood beamed ceilings and modern Colombian decor along with luxe Frette linens and Ortigia toiletries. This hotel is indeed a reflection of the city, highlighting the area's rich past and exciting future as one of the most fashionable destinations in South America.



Photo courtesy of Casa San Agustín

The food

Even extremely well-travelled foodies will be astounded by the quality of cuisine in Cartagena. World-class chefs from Colombia and abroad have flocked to the city in recent years and are truly making the most of its fresh fish and local produce. Visit [Don Juan Restaurant](#) for perfectly prepared seafood in an elegant setting, or [Carmen](#) for a modern take on Colombian cuisine. [El Burlador Gastrobar](#), sister property to a restaurant of the same name in Seville, Spain, serves up some of the best tapas imaginable (the huevos rotos with truffle oil poured tableside is a must), while Alma Restaurant, nestled at the heart of [Casa San Agustín](#) and consistently rated among the best places to dine in Cartagena, offers the ultimate romantic date night experience with outstanding seafood (try the lobster empanadas), outdoor terrace seating and live music most nights.



Photo by Jen O'Brien

The architecture

Locals often refer to Cartagena's old town as "el corralito de piedra" (the little stone corral) and its stone walls built in the 17th and 18th centuries enclose some absolutely jaw-dropping colonial buildings. The best way to discover the city's architectural gems is by spending a day wandering the old town on foot. A few must-see spots include the Torre del Reloj, an iconic clock tower built in the 19th century, and the Iglesia de San Pedro Claver (pictured here), a former Jesuit monastery turned museum. Cap the day off by strolling atop the city walls to [Cafe Del Mar](#), the ideal spot to grab a cocktail while watching the sun sink into the Caribbean Sea.



Photo by Jen O'Brien

The shopping

With a burgeoning fashion and swimwear scene that's [making headlines worldwide](#) and street side kiosks bursting with colourful hand-woven bags and straw hats, Cartagena is heaven for shopaholics. Start by picking up a signature mochila, perhaps the most popular Colombian souvenir. These woven bags are created by the indigenous Wayuu tribe residing in the La Guajira desert close to the Venezuelan border and while the colourful carryalls are found on virtually every street corner, you'll find the highest quality versions in the city's boutiques. Anyone interested in Colombian fashion should pop into [St. Dom](#), which carries clothing and accessories from the nation's top designers. For swimwear, [OndadeMar](#) is the spot to score stylish Colombian suits and cover-ups, while [Loto Del Sur](#), a luxurious yet fairly under-the-radar Colombian skincare and fragrance brand, carries high-end soaps, scrubs, candles, lotions and perfumes created using ingredients sourced from around the country.



Photo via Shutterstock

The islands

One of the most interesting aspects of honeymooning in this part of the world is that you can split your time between the city and the beach. Cartagena is well-known for its incredible shopping, dining and nightlife but venture roughly 100 kilometres off shore and you'll find the Rosario Islands, which encompass all the signature pleasures of the Caribbean, from clear blue seas to white sand beaches and fresh local seafood.

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