

REGIONAL NARRATIVES

OF TOURISM

Tolima, EASTERN COLOMBIAN ANDES.

TOLIMA

● LANDSCAPES, HERITAGE AND CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE ●

COLOMBIA 

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Calle 28 # 13A - 15. Floors 35 and 36
Bogotá, Colombia
+57 601 5600100.
info@procolombia.co

**MINISTRY OF COMMERCE,
INDUSTRY AND TOURISM**

VICE MINISTRY OF TOURISM

Created by:
**FEEDBACK PROVOKERS
AND PROCOLOMBIA**

**DESIGN AND
RESEARCH TEAM:**

Claudia Medina
Account manager

Project leaders
María Alejandra Gutiérrez
Natalia Bonilla

Juliana Quecán
Analysis manager

Carol Retavisca
Project coordinator

**FIELD EXECUTION AND
ANALYSIS TEAM:**

Semiotic director
Marcia Pinzón

Anthropologists
Alejandra Ramírez
Eliana Cepeda
Julián Numpaque

Psychologists
Natalia Pastrán
Ana María Rebellón

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Centre, Tolima, **EASTERN COLOMBIAN ANDES.**

WELCOME TO A NEW WAY OF NARRATING COLOMBIA

We are delighted to take this step forwards with you during this stage of promoting the tourism of our country and, first of all, we would like to thank you for being part of this strategy geared towards the growth and strengthening of the sector. It is people like you who make it possible for increasingly more Colombians and foreigners to explore Colombia.

The Government's goal was to find innovative content associated with cultural expressions and natural attractions in our country, to enable the stakeholders of the tourism sector to publicise destinations and experiences to promote Colombia in the best possible way.

Following in-depth research into our 32 departments plus Bogotá, needs and perspectives were identified with a view to promoting the country.

This is what led to the creation of the regional narratives of tourism, which are a tool for anyone who wants to generate attractive content and benefit from this department-based research, which featured the participation of researchers, composers, writers, journalists, entrepreneurs, artisans, artists, cultural advisers, social leaders, singers, traditional cooks, indigenous communities, natural parks' representatives, tourists, chefs and other experts from all regions of the country.

So, together, we are going to take advantage of these opportunities for communication and we are going to show that Colombia is the most welcoming country in the world.

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ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

As a result of a tourism promotion initiative, we have created the regional tourism narratives and their accompanying magazine—a tool to convey them to local tourism operators. Both the toolkit and this publication are designed to complement each other and offer an outstanding opportunity to attract tourism from all corners of the world.

As a reader, you will have at your disposal **33 research modules**, broken down by region and department. Additionally, a content manual is available, a guide teaching you how to best wield this information and create content for different media that efficiently communicates destinations' offers and aligns itself with their needs. The initiative also includes the podcast series "**Sounds from the Heart of Colombia**", 33 stories that reconstruct environments, voices, songs of nature, and the cultural identities of each of our departments, as well as a series of photographs and illustrations of the main destinations.

The following pages contain articles showcasing the highlights of each department in keeping with the aforementioned narratives, as well as information providing a general summary of the research. If you were to require more in-depth information, we recommend reviewing the 33 modules comprising the regional tourism narratives.

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Lost City of Falan, Tolima, **EASTERN COLOMBIAN ANDES.**



VARIETY LIES IN THE ESSENCE

A land of contrasts, a land of extremes: snowy mountain peaks and deserts, moorlands and forests. Tolima has something for everyone.

Tolima Grande is a Colombian region comprising the departments of Tolima and Huila, which undoubtedly have a shared history and essence. It is a highly diverse land of mountain ranges, trees, deserts, rivers, valleys, moorlands and snow-capped peaks. Not to mention the Magdalena River, a common thread that runs through the two departments from south to north. It is the region of the spirits of nature who watch over all its wealth: the Mohán —the protector of the Magdalena— and the frailejón (big monk or espeletia) —the guardian of the mountain.

Tolima boasts a diverse and changing geography: a landscape full of contrasts such as deserts, moorlands and forests. It is a spectacular land of extremes, of an array of landscapes (deserts and snow-capped mountains, such as the Nevado del Ruiz, although this is also part of the department of Caldas). It is a distinct land that evokes myriad visions.

“The virtues of our department most notably include: bird watching, the wax palm forest, water sources, waterfalls, lagoons, rivers, thermal springs, snow-capped mountains.”

Tolima is the navel of Colombia, and is also identified with the idea of being home to a huge amount of breathtaking natural wealth. It is part of two spectacular mountain ranges, and has an abundance of water and crops (rice, fruit, coffee, avocado, etc.). Its capital, Honda, was for many years the country's most important river port, connecting Colombia's interior with the Caribbean. It played an instrumental role in the importation of various items (necessities and luxury goods) during the colonial period.

"Rivers have been part of Tolima's archetypal value because they supply a large part of the department and of Colombia."

Thanks to its climate, soil and natural wealth, the department of Tolima hosts a broad array of key crops for the region's economy: rice, plantain, cotton, fruit, coffee, avocado, among others.

"We are very rich in cotton, coffee, and rice crops. We have the certification of rice of origin, the same with coffee, since we host the Cafés Especiales brand and we make good use of plantations, and the cultivation of cotton in Espinal and Saldaña."

Its strategic geographical location makes it a crucial hub, as it is an obligatory destination on the route of trade and economic development from one end of the country to the other.

"We are the navel of Colombia, all the goods coming and going to the ports pass through here, all the wealth of southern Colombia, Huila, Caquetá, Putumayo, the goods heading to and from the port of Buenaventura pass through here, we are like the crossing point, like a go-between city."



Nevado del Tolima, **EASTERN COLOMBIAN ANDES.**

GUARDIANS OF THE LAND

The mythology of Tolima is steeped in the spirituality of the indigenous Pijaos and Panches, with mysterious beings representing the conservation and protection of nature.



The Pijaos and Panches fought bravely against the Spaniards to exercise territorial power over the Magdalena River. Hence, part of its mythology is associated with spirits of the forest, the water, the earth, and lives on to this day in fishermen and rural folk residing near the river.

"They are warriors who, with endurance, energy, love for their land and territoriality, watch over the rivers — especially the Magdalena. The Mohán is the mythical creature who looks after the river. For fishermen, this being is truly alive."

Another representation is how plants and animals are attributed mythological roles, and according to their shapes and songs, they can foretell certain situations and protect nature from danger.

"In the moorlands that proudly house seas of espeletia, a tree that is 300 years old has an entire history. Whenever I see espeletia I see an indigenous person, I feel that they are guardians of the mountain, and they are guardians because of their commitment to preserve this mystic environment in nature."

Similarly, the territory has supernatural figures who are attributed with powers to watch over nature and safeguard its inhabitants in case of danger. For instance, gods such as Dulima protect the snowy peak or the river of snow, as it is known.

"Mother Dulima opens up this land, and when you come by plane on your approach to land, you see the plain and you see how Mother Dulima opens up her mountains and gives people the possibility to live, to plant; how the goddess cares for and nourishes the Magdalena River, she is a generator of life and she watches over it, she gives us water and the possibility to nourish the entire agricultural sector."

There is also the goddess of the wind or snow, Ibanasca, who defended the territory and the people who lived near the Machín volcano. And there are the guardians of Cumanday (Nevado del Ruíz volcano), who are responsible for preserving and protecting its summit.

"The Cumanday (Nevado del Ruíz) is the wise man with the smoking nose. This gave rise to the tales of Juan Páramo, the spirit of the snowy mountain, who comes down to warn the rural folk when it is about to erupt and safeguards the kind and those who care for nature. Men who are greedy or who take advantage of him are burned."



Bearded helmetcrest, Tolima, **EASTERN COLOMBIAN ANDES.**

Typical Tolima cuisine has a tradition that is known beyond the boundaries of the department, which in itself is a source of pride that its people intend to maintain and which, in turn, is shared with neighbouring departments such as Huila, chiefly featuring dishes that derive from the Magdalena River. In addition, one of the favourite places to find the best gastronomy is the "gallery" or arcade of some municipalities in the department.

"The squares, the best places to eat are in the galleries. In Cajamarca, when I go up on my bike, I head for the market square and you are served a delicious and economic breakfast. These galleries are excellent culture-preserving places. We are rich in agricultural production, you can find everything there."



EL BUQUE

El buque es un medio de transporte tradicional que se utiliza en los ríos de la zona. Está formado por una estructura de bambú que soporta una plataforma de madera. En ella se cargan los productos que se quieren transportar. Los buques son utilizados por los campesinos para llevar sus productos a los centros de comercialización. Este tipo de transporte es muy económico y permite llegar a zonas remotas. El buque es un símbolo de la cultura campesina y del comercio tradicional de la zona.



MUSIC AND CULTURE ARE JOY

Tolima is noteworthy nationwide for its music-based cultural events, which showcase and represent the identity and roots of its people.

The department is deeply rooted in and proud of its rural past, holding great respect for its legacies, traditions and customs. In Tolima and Huila, dance and festivities are crucial because they are manifestations of the pride that stems from their ancestors. Through music and dance, Tolima has managed to preserve its pre-Columbian folklore. It is not in vain that Ibagué has been tabled since 1886 as the Colombia's capital of music, and enjoys this trademark worldwide.

The Ibagué Conservatory of Music has been a nerve centre for training great and renowned masters since its foundation in 1906 and its declaration as a national monument in 1994. Furthermore, although they share with the department of Huila rhythms and dances such as the pasillo, the bambuco and the sanjuanero, "La Caña" is a local musical genre that evokes feelings of love for work in the fields.

"There is a house museum, the Casa Museo Sonora, which showcases the importance of music in the city."

The festivals became necessary because people were labouring very hard on the large estates and this began to cause stress. It is a way of easing the tension brought on by the workload. It is breathtaking when they tell of how, after the daily chores in the fields, the people would sit around a campfire, set up tiples and bandolas and start to sing songs about the goings on in their daily lives. This stems from Tolima's ideology as a musical area, and it shares its qualities with Colombia and the world.



KEY WORDS
AND CONCEPTS





La Cabaña thermal springs, Tolima, **EASTERN COLOMBIAN ANDES.**

STORIES AND LEGENDS

The guardians of nature, of the land and of the moorlands are figures that live on in the imagination.



Craftspeople, Tolima, **EASTERN COLOMBIAN ANDES.**

MUSIC AND DANCE

Tools that preserve both culture and tradition and are also a source of joy.



Honda, Tolima, **EASTERN COLOMBIAN ANDES.**

CHANGING GEOGRAPHY

From the Nevado del Ruiz volcano, where temperatures are below freezing, to Honda, renowned for its heat.

KEY CONCEPTS



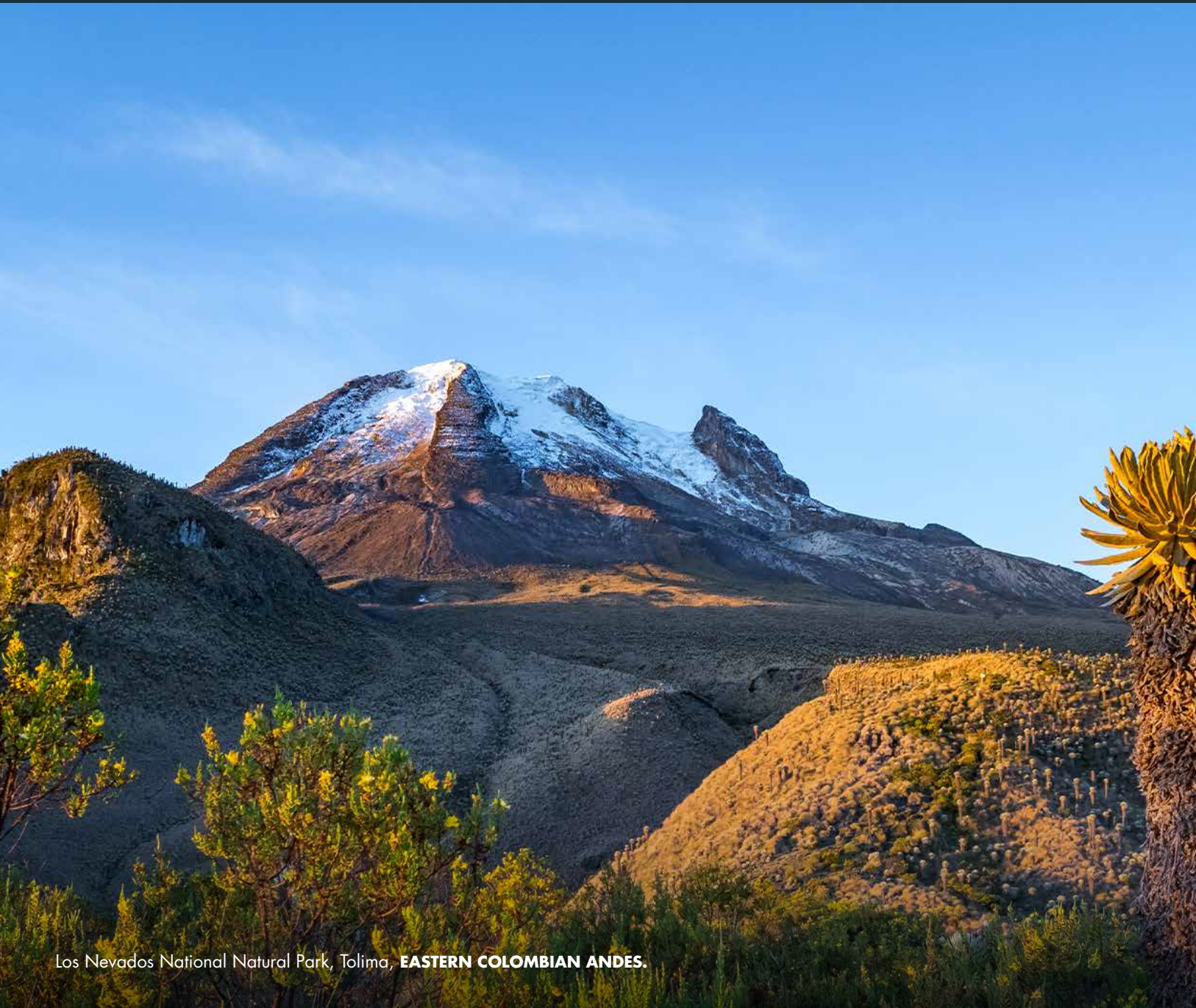
SOME MUNICIPALITIES

- Honda
- Murillo
- Prado
- El Espinal
- Flandes
- Melgar
- Ambalema
- Mariquita
- Fresno
- Cajamarca
- Carmen de Apicalá
- Anzoátegui
among others.



EMBLEMATIC PLACES

- Nevado del Tolima volcano
- Edén caves
- Magdalena River
- Tuluñ caves
- Combeimba Canyon
- Ciudad Reptilia Ecological Park
- San Jorge Botanical Garden
- Entreguas Nature Reserve
among others.





FAIRS AND FESTIVITIES

- Colombian Folk Festival
- La Chamba Festival
- Colombian Folk Music Festival
- Mangostino de Oro Festival
- Magdalena Fest
- Ibagué Ciudad Rock
- Bunde Festival
- Hip-Hop Festival
- SENA Gastronomy Festival
- San Bernardo Film Festival
- among others.



MUSICAL GENRES

- Pasillo
- Sanjuanero
- Bambuco
- Caña
- among others.



LEGENDARY FIGURES AND PLACES

- Dulima
- Ibanasca
- Cumanday
- Tolima Mythological Tourist Route
- Armero and its ruins
- Supernatural figures: frailejones (big monks or espeletia) on the moorlands
- Lost City (Falan)
- among others.



GASTRONOMY

- Lechona (suckling pig)
- Tamal tolimense (boiled meat and vegetables in banana leaf)
- Viudo de Capaz (fish stew)
- Viudo de bocachico (fish stew)
- among others.



CRAFTS

- Chamba pottery
- Royal palm and pindo headgear
- Wickerwork
- among others.



La Cabaña thermal springs, Tolima,
EASTERN COLOMBIAN ANDES.

COLOMBIAN EASTERN ANDES

We sincerely hope that all these tools will serve as a point of departure to offer better services, optimise promotion and strengthen our tourism industry, which will be prepared for the golden future that awaits it.



Scan this code and view the 33 modules of the regional narratives of tourism.

Nevado del Ruiz, Tolima, EASTERN COLOMBIAN ANDES.

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