

**THE COLOMBIAN  
AMAZON-ORINOCO**

MAGAZINE  
**No. 32**

# REGIONAL NARRATIVES

OF TOURISM

Vaupés, THE COLOMBIAN AMAZON-ORINOCO.

# VAUPÉS

• THE WINDOW ON THE JUNGLE •

**COLOMBIA** 

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## **ANCESTRAL JUNGLE**

PAGE 3

## **CULTURE THAT LIVES ON**

PAGE 5

## **DEFENDERS OF ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE**

PAGE 7

## **KEY WORDS AND CONCEPTS**

PAGE 9



Lake Vaupés, **THE COLOMBIAN AMAZON-ORINOCO.**

# 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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**PROCOLOMBIA**

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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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*PROCOLOMBIA*

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# ANCESTRAL JUNGLE

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*From the sky, a green sea interrupted only by the rivers that, like ancient serpents, meanders slowly towards some place or another.*

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This offbeat department is born out of a pure land that calls itself "the window on the jungle." Spanning an area of upwards of 54 000 km, the other-worldly Vaupés is characterised by the immensity of its inhospitable jungle and its endless rivers. It is part of the Guiana Shield, one of the world's oldest geological formations, which is why its landscapes are impregnated with tepui table-top mountains, home to a huge biological diversity.

*"Without a doubt, we are not lacking anything. These lands have absolutely everything, they are among the oldest in the world."*

As part of the Guiana Shield, the tepui table-top mountains form hills that rise up in the middle of the immensity and are perceived as the means to access the "window on the jungle," through which you can contemplate the imposing greenery and the meandering line traced by the river.

*"Rivers are not only an important source of food for forest peoples, but they have also become their most efficient means of communication. The river not only makes our land fertile, but it also feeds our cultural and commercial exchange. The river carries stories."*

It is a department with a huge wealth of water resources, with rivers such as the Apaporis, Vaupés and Querarí. It is a department that is actually relatively uncharted, given that it is difficult to access. It can only be reached by air and traversed by river or on foot through the jungle.

*"Sometimes when they say 'undiscovered' and 'difficult to access', people think it's a bad thing. On the contrary, you can find almost virgin lands, where you can feel the possibility of connecting with nature in the air."*

Mitú, the department's capital, is known to be one of the best places for bird watching. This is not only because of the upwards of 550 species that have been recognised, but also to the specific nature of the height of its trees, which makes it easy to observe and identify different species.

*"Here people can't get enough of birds. You will be taken aback at every step, with bird colours, flights and songs that you can't find anywhere else in the world."*





Vaupés River, **THE COLOMBIAN AMAZON-ORINOCO.**



River landscape, Vaupés,  
**THE COLOMBIAN AMAZON-ORINOCO.**

## — CULTURE THAT LIVES ON

*Dozens of indigenous cultures with their languages, traditions and beliefs, but which have one thing in common: a link to the anaconda, the ancestral snake that divided the ethnic groups.*

Vaupés has an endless wealth of cultures, making it the department with the largest number of indigenous groups in the country. It comprises around 27 living indigenous peoples who currently inhabit the entire department: one of the departments with the greatest living abundance of indigenous peoples in the region.

*"The department of Vaupés boasts the most languages spoken per territory, and we are made up of 27 indigenous peoples, but we are seen as a minority."*

The Cubeos, Piratapuyos, Desanas and Tucanos are some of the living communities with the biggest presence in the department. However, the Cubeos represent 37% of the indigenous population.

*"We have a wealth of ethnic diversity that is practically unique in the world. The department's indigenous groups preserve their language, their customs and are protectors of their culture."*

Each group has its own language, traditions and beliefs, but they share the same myth of the origin of the anaconda. Their ancient knowledge of the rivers and the jungle means they can identify the extent of their territory, in order to respect and honour it, and maintain healthy communication with other communities. The Vaupenses are characterised by being reserved, quiet, noble and observant, given that they are the guardians of their knowledge.

*"There are many ways in which to measure a community's value, and each culture has its own ideas. Our value is in the collective, in coming together, celebrating and supporting each other."*

They form a community that is very much based on the collective, which means that they are able to maintain cultural elements such as the oral tradition. Birds and rivers represent the ancestral origin for ethnic groups throughout the entire department. They symbolise good or bad omens, they are forecasters of the weather, and many of their ancestral stories are told through the charms and powers held by birds.

*"Cubay heeded his father-in-law's request and headed towards the place where the curassow was and he was about to pluck its feathers, but when he was getting closer he began to hear the curassow's song coming from somewhere in the forest and began to look all over until he saw where the songs were coming from."*

Music and dance are present at clan gatherings, the function of which is to celebrate, strengthen unity, traditions and recreate cosmology. The dance of the Yarumo is the celebration of the migration of fish and the dances represent the spawning fish. Thus, the abundance of fish is celebrated, while simultaneously remembering that their origins are in the fish.



The carrizo is both an instrument and a type of dance, which recalls the tradition and music created by the ancestors and is a tradition found throughout the department. It comprises the major carrizo, which leads the melody, and the minor carrizo, which is an accompaniment and recreates the music for celebratory gatherings.

*“The carrizo is a dance found at all the traditional festivals, livening up the gatherings, as groups of twenty men and women go out to dance in the middle of the maloca, or communal house.”*

The gastronomy of Vaupés is characterised by everything that the jungle and the river have to offer. The only thing that comes from outside is salt, which arrived at the time of the rubber industry. From the past to the present day, the quiñapira is the iconic dish. It comprises a fish cooked with a chilli that is left in the pot for several days. This dish is the quintessential tradition of the department’s gastronomy and is present in all the celebrations, homes and visits of the communities.

*“The quiñapira never runs out, the quiñapira keeps coming, and when it runs out they add chilli and the process carries on. Traditionally there should be a quiñapira in every house, because it is also the focal point for neighbours, travellers, friends and family. So, when you arrive at someone’s house, they always serve Quiñapira.”*



Vaupés River, **THE COLOMBIAN AMAZON-ORINOCO.**



# DEFENDERS OF ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE

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*The people of Vaupés have managed to preserve their ancestral knowledge and a harmonious relationship with their surroundings with a view to conserving the environment.*

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The Vaupés region was confronted with the rubber industry, in a period in which the communities were subjected to exploitation and the system of indebtedness. The missions arrived in the department, crushed the expression of identity of the peoples of Vaupés, as Catholicism was imposed on them and they were forbidden from speaking in their own tongue.

This is reflected to this day in their names in Spanish, and even in the names of places and certain communities in the Yeral language. This roused a rebellion, which gave way to communities organising themselves to take charge and become established through different means, such as their own education.

*“When they explored, they baptised the sites of Vaupés, Piramiri, Mitú with their own name and language.”*

The communities of Vaupés see themselves as guardians of their community and their environment, living in complete harmony and aware that it is from Mother Earth that life emerges and develops. After all, their ancestors and gods were also animals and plants. The chagra system is a farming system in which the forest is left to regenerate, respecting its cycles and avoiding deforestation.

*“In the communities it can't be said that they go hungry, no one can go hungry. And if someone lacks something, someone else helps them, by giving.”*

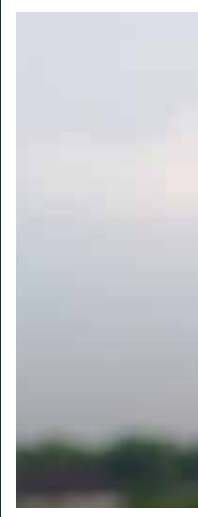
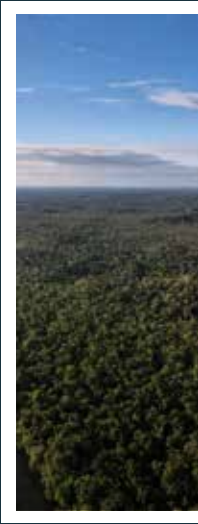
Although Vaupés has internally organised tourism, it boasts a wide range of opportunities to get back to basics, to disconnect from civilisation, to connect with nature, with the interior and with the values that come from the indigenous communities.

Experiencing these organic adventures of travelling down the outlandish river, climbing the striking hills and observing the colourful jungle, identifying, listening to and observing birds, contributes to your self-recognition and that of others, while strengthening the communities in the proclamation and recreation of their knowledge.

It is thus a land that prides itself on preserving its living communities and biodiversity, and which encourages you to disconnect in order to reconnect with the elements, through the environment and the outside.



**KEY WORDS**  
AND CONCEPTS





Vaupés, **THE COLOMBIAN AMAZON-ORINOCO.**

## THE WINDOW ON THE JUNGLE

It can be seen from the hills and encourages you to get back to basics.



Ara, **THE COLOMBIAN AMAZON-ORINOCO.**

## BIODIVERSITY

Countless birds, land animals and water sources in the vastness of the jungle.



Anaconda, **THE COLOMBIAN AMAZON-ORINOCO.**

## MUSICA, CELEBRATION AND CULTURE

Symbols such as the carrizo, for music and celebration, and the anaconda as the connection to ancestral cultures, are at the core of the department's heritage.



# KEY CONCEPTS



## CRAFTS

- Canasto (woven basket)
- Balay (woven bowl)
- Bancos (wooden benches) among others.



## ETHNIC AND INDIGENOUS GROUPS

- Pamiwa
  - Tucano
  - Desana
  - Cubeos
  - Yurutí
  - Siriano
  - Bara
  - Barasana
  - Karapana
  - Piratapuyo
  - Makuna
  - Miritu Tapuya
  - Siriano
  - Tuyuca
  - Kotiria
  - Arapazo
  - Tatuyo
  - Tariana
  - Taiwano
  - Guanano
  - Pizamirá
  - Kabiwarí
  - Yukuna
  - Curripaco
  - Baniva
  - Makú
  - Carijona
- among others.



## GEOGRAPHY

- Streams
  - Cachiveras (torrents)
  - Vaupés River
  - Rio Negro
  - Apaporis River
- among others.



## EMBLEMATIC PLACES

- Urania
  - Torrent of Jirijirimo
  - Cerro Guacamayo hill
  - Cachivera of Santa Cruz
  - Caño Sangre
- among others.



## GASTRONOMY

- Quiñapira (fish stew)
  - Casabe y Fariña (cassava bread)
  - Carne de lapa (paca meat)
  - Chive de Patavá (pataua palm drink)
  - Pescado moqueado (roasted fish in banana leaf)
  - Manicuera (dish made from cassava juice)
  - Mojoy larvae
- among others.

## THE COLOMBIAN AMAZON-ORINOCO

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.

Yauipés, THE COLOMBIAN AMAZON-ORINOCO.

• REGIONAL NARRATIVES OF TOURISM •

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