

# REGIONAL NARRATIVES

## OF TOURISM

La Guajira, GREATER COLOMBIAN CARIBBEAN.

# LA GUAJIRA

• ALTHOUGH WE ARE DIFFERENT, WE FEEL THE SAME •

COLOMBIA 

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**MINISTRY OF COMMERCE,  
INDUSTRY AND TOURISM**

**VICE MINISTRY OF TOURISM**

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AND SANDY SEAS

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Palomino, La Guajira, **GREATER COLOMBIAN CARIBBEAN.**

# 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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Dunes of Taroa, La Guajira, **GREATER COLOMBIAN CARIBBEAN.**



# SEAS OF SAND AND SANDY SEAS

*The desert holds more life than you might think, particularly when cultures, ancestral knowledge, mountains and rivers come together to create the ideal environment for biodiversity and cultural development.*



Cabo de la Vela, La Guajira, **GREATER COLOMBIAN CARIBBEAN.**



The otherworldly department of La Guajira boasts a geography of contrasts, bound together by exotic and varied landscapes. It has seas, rivers, deserts and mountain ranges that are all interconnected, which creates contrasting and colourful landscapes.

In the far north you will find Punta Gallinas, the tip of South America, which together with Cabo de la Vela is home to bays with sheltered ecosystems including Bahia Portete, Honda, Hondita and Cocinetas.

Its waters have several junctions: the Ranchería River flows into the Caribbean Sea, where it joins it in Riohacha; the Ciénaga de Buenavista marsh also reaches the Caribbean and the waters of the Camarones River merge into an extensive lagoon that connects with the sea, offering the ideal environment for many species, including flamingos.

The sea meets the desert and the dunes with the Serranía de Macuira, thick with mountains and a dwarf forest. It is the only mountain range to provide a home to such a wealth of desert life. And in the Manaure salt flats, the sands meet flooded areas with little pools of water and hills of salt that produce reddish colours.

*"I would say that La Guajira is a living culture. La Guajira is desert, it is sea, it is mountains, it is dunes, it is mines, it is*



Cabo de la Vela, La Guajira, **GREATER COLOMBIAN CARIBBEAN.**

*salt, it is a beautiful land. La Guajira is a lady leaning out towards the Caribbean Sea, with all her grandeur, her immensity, with all her majesty."*

The breathtaking department of La Guajira is split into three sub-regions: upper, middle and lower Guajira. The first is the northern section of the department, with a geography that is especially desert-like. Its sandy landscapes are in contrast to the highlands, where there is a special space for the Wayúu communities, whose sacred places are found in this part of the department.

Middle Guajira is the central region, which is home to a majority of the population given that it includes Maicao, Riohacha and Dibulla, three major population centres in the department with substantial Wayúu communities and a strong Arab heritage. This area contains a diversity of landscapes such as the flamingo sanctuary, Palomino and the northern part of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountain range, where indigenous populations such as the Arhuakos and Koguis coexist.

Lastly, lower Guajira is the department's most humid area, including the eastern part of the mountain ranges of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta and the Serranía del Perijá, which it shares with Cesar, where there is not only an array of landscapes, but also a host of people

and traditions.

*"My grandparents used to tell me that all the plants that have manifested themselves have primarily come from the mountains, which is why nobody could get up there easily. It was a very sacred place that no one could climb, my grandparents told me that many did not return, as if they had been swallowed up."*



Manaure salt flats, La Guajira, **GREATER COLOMBIAN CARIBBEAN.**





Wayúu tribe, La Guajira, **GREATER COLOMBIAN CARIBBEAN.**

# CULTURAL DIVERSITY, CRAFTS AND COMMERCE: THE SOUL OF LA GUAJIRA

*Its location and wealth fuelled a commercial culture whose heritage of pirates, Europeans, Arabs and slaves moulded a unique culture.*

The exchange of knowledge typical of the Caribbean, which due to its geographical affluence has favoured the influx of new cultures to the region, boosted the department's development.

Due to its geographical location and richness, it was a place of attraction for pirates, Europeans, Arabs and enslaved black people who, upon their arrival, discovered a variety of ethnicities. La Guajira has a wealth of coal, salt and pearl mines which, throughout history, have been coveted by a number of different groups and cultures. Mining, in turn, has spawned the creation of ports such as Manaure (salt production) and Bolivar (coal export). There are, of course, smaller ones for transferring goods between the Caribbean islands, other countries of the world and Colombia.

The Guajiros are regarded as skilled traders, not only because of the ability of the indigenous people, especially the Wayúu, but also because of the Arabs, who entered through the ports and settled in Maicao.

*"It is a department in which trade has been the cornerstone of development and is what has allowed the ongoing interaction of people of such diverse faiths and cultures. Here we can witness, as in few other areas, a melting pot of cultures as different as the Wayúu, Europeans, settlers, Asians and others, which has resulted in a place of contrasts and cultural affluence."*

This stunning department has a large and diverse mix of cultures: Syrian-Lebanese, Afro-descendants and Europeans who entered and encountered the Wayúu, Kogui and others, with the former being the most predominant group in the department.

The Wayúu natives managed to preserve their culture because of the extensive desert area of La Guajira, where it was difficult for the settlers to reach, which is why they are regarded as strong and warrior-like. These days, the rancherías (small, rural settlements) have begun to welcome tourists and have helped the Wayúu children to feel more deeply rooted in their culture, which is a way of preserving it.

Within the Wayúu culture, it is worth emphasising the goat, which demonstrates families' power in their communities, being also an animal that is bred, given as a dowry and eaten.

They also display similarities with the Syrian-Lebanese, who arrived in the department and with whom they were able to identify in their commercial personality, respect for one's word, dowry and polygamy.





Wayú shoulder bags, **GREATER COLOMBIAN CARIBBEAN.**

*“In the department of La Guajira, the main story or element that sets it apart from other tourist destinations is the culture, in particular the Wayúu, particularly considering that they are the most populous indigenous ethnic group in Colombia.”*

## CRAFTS AND ARCHITECTURE

Crafts and weavings are of great importance to the indigenous people. Shoulder bags, chinchorros (hammocks), blankets (Wayúu), and protection bracelets have their history and meaning depending on the culture. The Wayúu shoulder bag is renowned and has an ancestral origin: the wale'kerü' spider, who taught them to weave, is related to the stories of the women and each of their actions in life, where openness to other cultures has led to the development of new techniques: susuchon, susuainiakajatu, kapatera, maikisia, piula or kattowi, susu uttiakajamatu,

each of them utilised by men or women as the case may be and which come in varieties of sizes to carry the chinchorros or everyday items. The blankets are woven by Wayúu women for their day-to-day use. They were once a representation of the women's caste and rank, and provide beauty and inspiration.

Architecturally, it is worth highlighting the Mosque, which is a World Heritage Site and highlights the importance of the Arab culture to the department.

*“Weaving is divided between men and women. There are weavings that are made by men and there are weavings that are produced by women. We Westerners have intervened and made other products, but there is a mythology there, the story of the spider, the woman who at night became a spider and wove, and during the day she was a Wayúu, there is a lot of symbolism there.”*





# DISCOVERY, TASTES AND SOUNDS

*Traditions are blended and give rise to new flavours that taste better with an accordion.*

The intercultural mingling of which we speak so much has created mystical knowledge that merges into a single identity. To arrive in La Guajira is to step into a diverse land, with large families coming together to share. La Guajira shares with other Caribbean departments a love of vallenato (a blend of European, indigenous and Afro-Colombian music), with the heritage of juglares (legendary performers) and great composers known throughout the region, and the festivals that celebrate this musical genre.

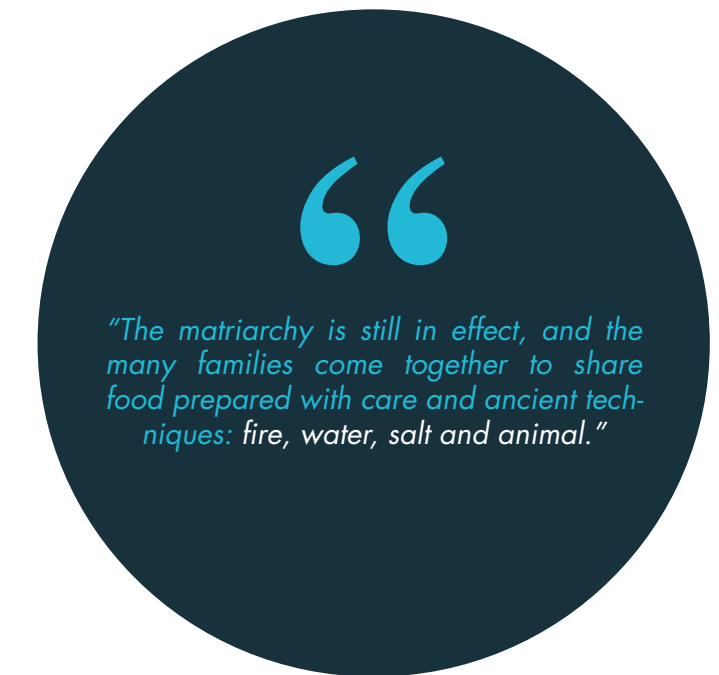
## MUSIC

Musically, La Guajira shares with other departments its love for vallenato music, and several well-known names are prominent: Jorge Celedón, Silvestre Dangond, Nicolás Elías Mendoza, Beto Murgas and Emiliano Zuleta, among others. And there is no shortage of vallenato events, of course: these include the Festival de la Cuna de Acordeones, the Festival Francisco el Hombre and the Festival Nacional de Compositores de Música Vallenata.

*"The lower Guajira, in the southern area of the department, has the accordion. You find it everywhere. These vallenato composers create, for me, magical music."*

## GASTRONOMY

In terms of gastronomy, there is a very varied offer. Friche, for instance, is goat with garlic, onion, lemon and salt. Goat is also prepared in a stew with coconut milk. The frijolito capisulla bean is also used in different preparations, in addition to stewed iguana, boiled chicken with malanga (a tuber that resembles potato or cassava), certain Arabic flavours and, in general, food made in the simplest way: animal, water, salt and fire. The personality of the Guajiros is earnest, tough, warri-



or-like, and simultaneously given to trusting others with their word alone, to being a blood merchant who forges solid communities, welcomes, consents, and builds a family with them.

It is, therefore, the story of a department that is steeped in cultures with ancestral and mystical histories that encompass the geography and the exotic flavours of the region, a place with myriad colours and contrasts that beckons to be explored, cared for and admired.





**KEY WORDS**  
AND CONCEPTS





Wayú indigenous girl, **GREATER COLOMBIAN CARIBBEAN.**

## DIVERSITY

A department with a wide spectrum of indigenous cultures, where the Wayú people are distinguished by their strength, mysticism and ancestral customs.



Los Flamencos Fauna and Flora Sanctuary, La Guajira, **GREATER COLOMBIAN CARIBBEAN.**

## LANDSCAPES OF CONTRASTS

A land steeped in wealth due to the seas, rivers, mountains and deserts it is home to.



Wayú shoulder bag, **GREATER COLOMBIAN CARIBBEAN.**

## MUSIC, CRAFTS AND CULTURE

Weaving and its symbolism, the shoulder bag and the chinchorro. A deep-rooted passion for vallenato and a gastronomy that is steeped in tradition and cultural blends.





La Guajira, **GREATER COLOMBIAN CARIBBEAN.**



## GEOGRAPHY

- Cabo de la Vela
- Camarones Marsh
- Buenavista Marsh
- Los Flamencos Sanctuary
- Manaure salt flats
- Dune of Taroa
- Ranchería River
- Camarones River
- Palomino River
- Serranía de Macuira mountain range
- Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta
- Serranía de Perijá mountain range
- Oca Mountains
- Bahía de Portete
- Bahía Honda
- Bahía Hondita
- Bahía Cocineta
- Cerro La Teta
- Punta Coco
- Punta Aguja
- Punta Gallinas
- Boca de Camarones
- Jarrará
- among others.



## CRAFTS

- Shoulder bags
- Hammocks
- Chinchorros (hammocks)
- Blankets (Wayúu)
- Protection bracelets
- among others.



## REPRESENTATIVE FIGURES

- Jorge Celedón
- Silvestre Dangond
- Nicolás Elías Mendoza
- Beto Murgas
- Emiliano Zuleta
- The Zuleta brothers
- among others.



# KEY CONCEPTS



## GASTRONOMY

- Friche (fried meat dish)
- Goat
- Frijolito Capisulla bean
- Iguana stewed in coconut milk
- Malangada (chicken and malanga stew)
- Burgers, and shark cocktail
- Sea bass, red snapper, fried ray fish among others.



Wayúu shoulder bag, **GREATER COLOMBIAN CARIBBEAN.**



## PLACES OF INTEREST

- Maicao
- Dibulla
- Riohacha
- Rancherías
- Cerro Pílon de Azúcar (The Sugar Pylon)
- Cabo de la Vela lighthouse
- Uribia
- Palomino
- Albania
- La Macuira National Natural Park among others.



## MUNICIPALITIES

- Riohacha
- Uribia
- Maicao
- Manaure
- San Juan del Cesar
- Fonseca
- Barrancas
- Villanueva
- Dibulla
- Albania
- Hatonuevo
- Urumita
- Distracción
- El Molino
- La Jagua del Pilar

## GREATER COLOMBIAN CARIBBEAN

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.

Dunes of Taroo, La Guajira, **GREATER COLOMBIAN CARIBBEAN.**

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