

# **REGIONAL NARRATIVES**

## **OF TOURISM**



Barrichara, Santander, EASTERN COLOMBIAN ANDES.

# **SANTANDER**

• FROM COLONIAL ARCHITECTURE TO EXTREME SPORTS, •  
IT HAS IT ALL

**COLOMBIA** 

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**MOUNTAINS,**  
RIVERS AND CANYONS

PAGE 3

**LAND OF STRENGTH,**  
FLAVOUR AND TRADITION

PAGE 5

**A DOSE**  
OF ADRENALIN

PAGE 7

**KEY WORDS**  
AND CONCEPTS

PAGE 9



Barichara, Santander, **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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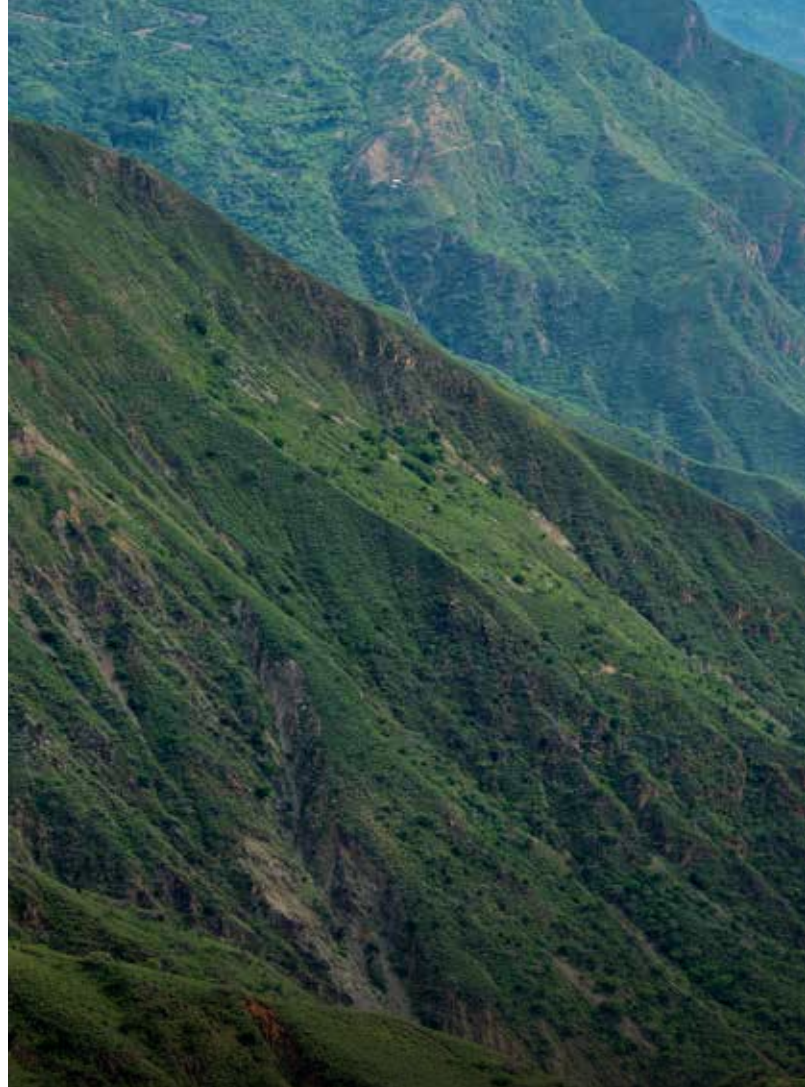


Barichara, Santander, **EASTERN COLOMBIAN ANDES.**



# MOUNTAINS, RIVERS AND CANYONS

*Rugged geography, one of the world's deepest canyons, landscapes that simply make human beings aware of how small they are. The breathtaking department of Santander has everything to surprise even the most adventure-minded travellers.*



Santander's geography is influenced by diverse natural conditions. Firstly, it boasts extremely important geographical features, and secondly, a high level of seismic activity. The department has rough terrain, rugged geography with imposing landscapes. The Chicamocha Canyon, for instance, starts in Boyacá, but the majority of it is in Santander, resulting in an awe-inspiring natural scenery that is also one of the deepest in the world and one of the department and the country's primary attractions.

*"Chicamocha is the second deepest canyon after the Grand Canyon."*

Santander, moreover, has a very high level of seismic activity, which has earned it the title of "the seismic nest of Bucaramanga and of the Mesa de Los Santos." It may seem a little chilling to an outsider, but the one thing that is clear is that the people of this area seem to have become immune to seismic activity.

Mesa de Los Santos, Santander, **EASTERN COLOMBIAN ANDES.**



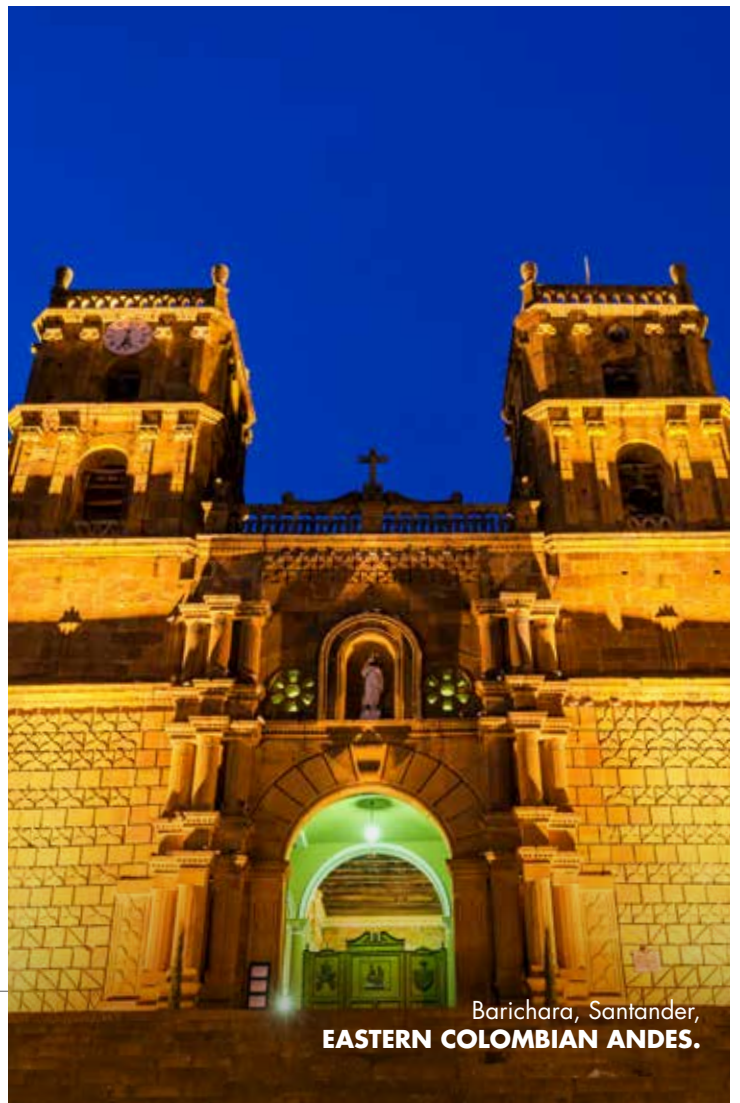


Chicamocha Canyon,  
**EASTERN COLOMBIAN ANDES.**

*"Here in Mesa de Los Santos it shakes regularly. Sometimes stronger than at others, but it seems that in the end you get used to it. Sometimes you don't even feel it."*

Its undulating and steep relief has bestowed the department with challenging roads, tracks and points of access, but such breathtaking scenery is a real challenge, and the adventure will never cease to be worthwhile.

*"Crossing Pescadero, for instance, is serious business, so many curves, it's a narrow road and with those cliffs, you have to take special care."*



Barichara, Santander,  
**EASTERN COLOMBIAN ANDES.**





Mesa de Los Santos, Santander,  
**EASTERN COLOMBIAN ANDES.**

## LAND OF STRENGTH, FLAVOUR, AND TRADITION

*The department's geographical conditions are very demanding for its inhabitants. And that is why the natives of this department have always had a strong, tough character, with exemplary courage and spirit.*

Frequently, when people talk about Santander, it is associated, in the public's imagination, with strong women, fierce people with strong accents. These elements are noteworthy in the personality of the people of Santander and make a positive contribution to their essence.

*"That strength, that struggle to try to survive is what it takes to be brave, to be wild. We are notorious for being brave, for having a tough nature, but that helps us to be stronger, it doesn't overshadow us."*

The people of Santander pride themselves on being from the department where the liberation campaign was conceived, they contributed to building the nation, they made visible the role of women in the struggle. Figures such as Antonia Santos and Manuela Beltrán are present in the historical identity, in the personality and in the essence of the people of Santander.

*"The strength and temperance that women had in the war was what sealed Colombia's freedom, because we had all these women who were the ones who led and went to war."*

Its figures and crafts come from the Guane Indians, the first settlers of the region who defied the Spanish conquest and preferred death to slavery. People from Santander also attribute this strength and personality to their ancestors, who were skilled artisans and made many works with cotton and ceiba fibres.

*"What we know from that history is that rather than being colonised and enslaved by the Spanish, they preferred death."*

The weavings of Curití are made from fique (agave), which has been part of the municipality's culture since colonial times. Today it is used extensively in handicrafts such as bags, belts, rugs, curtains, placemats and other products. The inhabitants also attribute part of their origin to the Guane indigenous people.

*"They also say that they were very well dressed, that they wove their blankets and hats in cotton and fique."*





Leafcutter ants, Santander, **EASTERN COLOMBIAN ANDES.**

Barichara, one of Santander's most tourist-oriented municipalities, has forged its identity on stone carving, an art that has been passed down the generations, as a way of preserving the cultural and artistic legacy of the region, through figures and various creations.

*"It is a very prominent trade in the region that is well-known in various parts of the world."*

Santander's gastronomy is extremely wide-ranging; ants, kid, pepitoria (bird stew), arepa (corn patty), mute (meat and vegetable soup), meats and other delicacies blend together its pre-Columbian and European roots. Kid, for instance, symbolises this conquest, the adaptation to the difficult geographical conditions of the area. Pepitoria is associated with strength and the benefits it provides for energy. The leafcutter ants on the other hand, are a tradition of the Guane culture. The sun-dried meat comes from an indigenous solution to survive in times of scarcity, whereby they decided to preserve the meat in this way in the absence of refrigeration.

*"The Santander arepa was traditionally made by milling*

*corn with cassava, pork rinds, and pork fat. When the Guane were there, they used to use the ants for certain ceremonial matters."*

Other iconic flavours include bocadillo veleño (guava jelly), named after the municipality (Vélez) that made it famous. It is made from the pulp of ripe guava and is wrapped in a leaf that gives it its distinctive flavour, and is one of the region's most emblematic products. Guarapo (cane syrup drink) has also been attributed to the hardy disposition of the region's inhabitants, which included the heroes of the Independence era, and is a drink for long days of physical exertion.

*"Here we are very good eaters, there is no shortage of corn arepas, meat, soup at breakfast with two eggs often fried with tomato and pepper, then more arepas, cassava, chilli, pork, for lunch sancocho with all kinds of meats, dry rice, guarapo, and salted potatoes with sun-dried meat."*

Santander is a department of contrasts and flavours, of bold characters and handicrafts that hold within them the essence of the department, its people, its culture and its heritage.

# A DOSE OF ADRENALIN

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*The diverse department of Santander welcomes you to experience a challenging nature, to challenge yourself, to take risks and conquer your fears.*

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It is one of the most popular destinations for all kinds of activities and extreme sports, as the people of Santander capitalised and took advantage of the relief to appropriate a new type of entertainment, comparable with the world's most visited places. While there are places and activities to enjoy adventure sports throughout the department, San Gil has established itself as the hub for this type of sport, one of the preferred destinations to experience the risk and feel all the adrenaline that the region has to offer.

For daring visitors who take the plunge, there is never a moment's fear. The leap into the void, the thrill, the adrenaline, the fear all ensue at that instant. And all this comes alongside the satisfaction of overcoming fears and realising a purpose.



“

*“It is only natural that before daring to take the plunge, they are afraid. More than one has even regretted it at the last second. Of course, when they do it is very rewarding to see them afterwards with success and joy on their faces. That speaks for itself.”*

The department's most iconic places are linked to its rugged terrain, which is ideal for practising extreme and adventure sports. But you can also admire gems of colonial architecture that never cease to amaze even the most experienced connoisseurs.

Places like Barichara, Rionegro, San Juan de Girón, Vélez and others are just a few of the sites that are definitely not to be missed. As if that were not enough, you can also find tobacco plantations, naturally linked to the indigenous culture. Although its consumption has declined considerably, it is still regarded by the villagers as a symbol of tradition.

*“I see a tobacco plantation, it's not like it used to be, but then it's like I want to go back there, to smell the peculiar aroma of the plant again.”*

Cocoa, another of the region's spectacular flavours, is also found in several municipalities and is internationally renowned for its flavour.

*“The smell and taste of cocoa from San Vicente is distinctive of Santander, it is one of the department's treasures.”*

Additionally, while there are not so many celebrations, there are some fairs and festivals that commemorate and represent the essence of its inhabitants, such as the Suárez River Festival, the Fairs and Festivals of Cotidianity and Homecoming, the Day of All Things Santander and the Tiple and Bocadillo Festivities. In terms of sounds and music, torbellino and guabina claim the distinction of being the region's most relevant genres. However, some of its inhabitants maintain that its tones have been fading away, making way for new genres.

*“Torbellino music was conceived in Vélez, it has a very nice rhythm, faster than bambuco, with shorter and more playful verses. Although in music we are not particularly distinguished by one sound, we older people do remember string music.”*

The department offers paragliding, hiking, canoeing, pot-holing, caving, white-water rafting, climbing, spectacular flavours and rhythms that live on in the memory of its inhabitants. All this makes it the ideal place for those who appreciate challenges, adrenaline and a rich cultural heritage.



**KEY WORDS**  
AND CONCEPTS



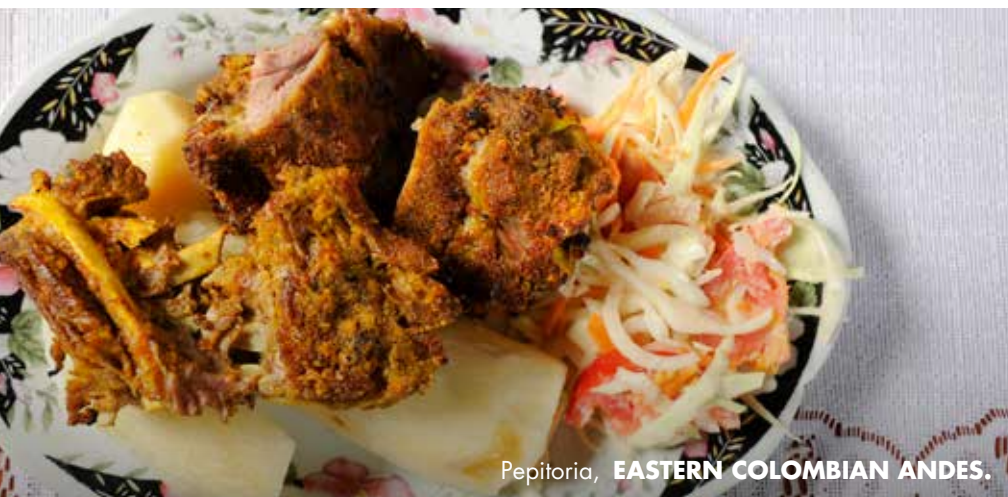




San Gil, Santander, **EASTERN COLOMBIAN ANDES.**

## FEARLESS

I dare and I do. I can overcome my fears.



Pepitoria, **EASTERN COLOMBIAN ANDES.**

## FOOD OF CHAMPIONS

Many foods are closely linked to the adaptation and strength of its people.



Chicamocha Canyon, **EASTERN COLOMBIAN ANDES.**

## CHICAMOCHA CANYON

Santander has mountainous conditions that encourage risk-taking and adrenaline. Abysses that conjure up risk and adventure, roads with steep curves and awe inspiring landscapes.



Monumento a la santandereanidad (monument to all things Santander), Chicamocha National Park, **EASTERN COLOMBIAN ANDES.**



## ACTIVITIES

- Paragliding
- Hiking
- Trekking
- Canoeing
- Caving
- Canopy
- White-water rafting
- Bungee jumping
- Climbing
- Cable bungee
- Downhill
- Family canyoning circuit among others.



## CRAFTS

- Textiles
- Fique (agave) weavings
- Cotton weavings among others.



## FAIRS AND FESTIVALS

- Suárez River Festival
- Ferias y Fiestas de la Cordialidad y del Retorno (Fairs and Festivals of Cotidianity and Homecoming)
- Día de la Santandereanidad (Day of All Things Santander)
- Tiple and Bocado Festival among others.



# KEY CONCEPTS



## GASTRONOMY

- Kid
- Pepitoria (bird stew)
- Leafcutter ants
- Sun-dried meat
- Mute de maíz (meat and vegetable stew)
- Arepa santandereana (Santander arepa)
- Bocado veleno (guava jelly)
- Guarapo de maíz (corn and cane syrup drink) among others.



Mute santandereano, **EASTERN COLOMBIAN ANDES.**



## PARKS

- Chicamocha National Park
- Cerro del Santísimo Ecopark
- El Gallineral Nature Park among others.



## SOME MUNICIPALITIES

- Barichara
- Guane
- Rionegro
- San Juan de Girón
- Zapatoca
- El Socorro
- San Gil
- Vélez
- Guadalupe
- Florián
- Gámbita
- Betulia among others.

## EASTERN COLOMBIAN 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.

Ara, El Gallineral | Nature Park, EASTERN COLOMBIAN ANDES.

• REGIONAL NARRATIVES OF TOURISM •

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