



National Trust *for* Historic Preservation

National Trust Tours



Colombia's Arts, Traditions & Magical Realism Round-Trip Cartagena

Aboard AmaMelodia

February 24 – March 2, 2027

Colombia's Arts, Traditions & Magical Realism

Round-Trip Cartagena

Sailing the Magdalena is a passage into Colombia's layered history and culture, one that most travelers never glimpse. This river carried the wealth of the Spanish empire, helped to preserve towns like UNESCO-listed Santa Cruz de Mompox in exceptional architectural stasis, and nourished the imagination of the country's most renowned literary visionary, Gabriel García Márquez.

Cruising aboard one of AmaWaterways's newly christened riverboats, the luxurious 60-guest *AmaMagdalena* and 64-guest *AmaMelodia*, you will gain exclusive entry into this story: a curator will open Cartagena's Museo de Arte Moderno to works by Obregón, Grau, and Botero; conservationists will guide you through the Loros Foundation's restored tropical dry forest; and artisans will teach you the centuries-old filigree craft that made Mompox renowned. In San Basilio de Palenque, descendants of the first free African town in the Americas welcome you into their homes to share stories, music, and cuisine.

Follow the footsteps of Gabriel García Márquez through Cartagena, seeing sights that inspired his magical realism and meeting those who knew him well. Evenings bring private conversations and performances, including a farewell dinner with a friend of Márquez, giving rare insight into the Nobel laureate's world.

CRUISE HIGHLIGHTS

- Cruise round-trip from Cartagena aboard one of AmaWaterways' newly designed, boutique riverboats, *AmaMagdalena* and *AmaMelodia*, the first luxury vessels to sail Colombia's storied Magdalena River.
- Experience Gabriel García Márquez's Cartagena on a guided literary and culinary walk to 13 sites tied to his life and novels, and share dinner with a friend of the Nobel laureate.
- Spend the day in San Basilio de Palenque, the first free African town in the Americas, guided by community hosts, learning ancestral healing practices, participating in drumming and dance workshops, and visiting homes for shared meals and conversation.
- Enter Aviarío Nacional Colombia on Isla Barú with a private guide, walking through one of Latin America's largest bird sanctuaries, alive with scarlet ibis, flamingos, toucans, macaws, and the rare harpy eagle.
- During an expert-led walk through Cartagena's UNESCO-listed Old Town, join a curator at the Museo de Arte Moderno for an introduction to pivotal works by Colombian masters Obregón, Grau, and Botero.



Map of the region (above)

- Gain rare entry to a renowned sculptor's family home in Manga, an exclusive visit hosted by relatives, where personal collections and stories animate Colombia's modern artistic legacy.
- Walk the restored tropical dry forest at the Loros Foundation with an expert, observing parrots and macaws rescued from trafficking and meeting artisans whose crafts sustain families while supporting conservation.
- Venture into Reserva Natural Calamar with a local naturalist, following riverside and forest trails filled with herons, kingfishers, and toucans in one of the Magdalena's richest habitats.



Museo de Arte Moderno, Cartagena

An optional prelude in Medellín will be offered, with dates, details, and pricing to be determined.

DAY 1: DEPARTURE / CARTAGENA / EMBARK AMAMELODIA

Arrive in **Cartagena**, founded in 1533 on a peninsula home to Mocana villages dating back to 4000 B.C. The city's role as Spain's gateway to the Americas made it one of the wealthiest ports of the colonial world, and its cobblestoned streets still hold that aura of power and intrigue.

Board **AmaMelodia** and settle into your stateroom overlooking the river. Relax onboard in the pool or enjoy the riverboat's many amenities, or choose the optional **private Colombian coffee tasting**, where a master roaster explains the country's growing regions, brewing rituals, and tasting etiquette. Sample single-origin beans, compare flavor notes, and prepare a bag of coffee to take home.

This evening, after a safety briefing and opening remarks, enjoy a welcome cocktail and dinner as the riverboat sets the stage for your journey. L,R,D

DAY 2: CARTAGENA / ISLA BARÚ

This morning, choose from two optional excursions:

Option 1: At dawn, depart Cartagena for the approximately 1.5-hour drive to **Aviario Nacional Colombia** on **Isla Barú**, one of the largest and most biodiverse bird sanctuaries in Latin America. Upon arrival, join a **private guided tour** through its expansive open-air ecosystems, observing more than 190 species in their natural habitats—from striking scarlet ibis and elegant flamingos to colorful toucans and the elusive harpy eagle. Along the way, learn about the sanctuary's conservation efforts and the behaviors, migrations, and unique characteristics of the region's remarkable avian population, making this a truly immersive and unforgettable wildlife experience.

Option 2: Enjoy a guided tour of **Cartagena's UNESCO-listed historic center**, protected by formidable walls that once made it militarily impregnable. Your private walking tour begins at the **Museo del Oro Zenú**, housed in a colonial building, where gold ornaments and pottery reveal the sophisticated Zenú civilization that flourished here more than 2,000 years ago.

Continue to the **Santuario de San Pedro Claver**, built between 1580 and 1654 in honor of Saint Peter Claver, the Jesuit missionary who dedicated his life to caring for enslaved Africans. His remains rest in an urn on the high altar.

A curator-led tour of the **Museo de Arte Moderno** completes today's cultural immersion. This 17th-century colonial building houses pivotal works, including Alejandro Obregón's vibrant *Condor* (1959), Enrique Grau's figurative drawings, and a bronze sculpture by the beloved Fernando Botero.

After lunch aboard and leisure time, both groups gather for an **exclusive rum and chocolate tasting** led by a brand ambassador. Sample Reserva Familiar and Serie Experimental rums paired with Colombian single-origin chocolates, taking home a personally engraved bottle.

Cruise Cartagena's harbor for views of the illuminated ramparts and terracotta rooftops, followed by a festive barbecue dinner on deck as you sail toward Mahates. B,L,D

DAY 3: MAHATES / LOROS FOUNDATION (VILLANUEVA)

Your morning visit to the **Loros Foundation** in Villanueva connects you directly to Colombia's most pressing conservation challenges. This non-profit organization focuses on rehabilitating and protecting psittacines—parrots, macaws, and parakeets—while restoring the country's vanishing tropical dry forest.

An expert-led tour takes you through regenerated forest habitats, where you will observe these magnificent birds in their natural environment, learning how the foundation's work combats illegal trafficking and habitat destruction. The experience extends beyond wildlife observation



Parrot, Loros Foundation, Villanueva

to community engagement. Meet local artisans whose craftwork creates sustainable livelihoods while supporting the foundation's mission, a partnership that transforms conservation into economic opportunity for rural families.

Return to the riverboat for lunch as you sail upstream along the Magdalena. The afternoon's onboard lectures provide deeper context for your morning encounters, exploring Colombia's biodiversity challenges and conservation successes.

B,L,D

DAY 4: SANTA CRUZ DE MOMPOX

Early this morning, you may rise for an optional birdwatching excursion to **Ciénaga de Pijiño**, where skiffs navigate swampy canals alive with herons, kingfishers, and toucans. Gigantic iguanas sun themselves on the banks while local fishermen work the waters in this rich ecosystem.

Later, travel by *tuk tuk* into UNESCO-listed **Santa Cruz de Mompox**, founded in 1537 by Alonso de Heredia on lands inhabited by the Malibú people. Mompox owes its exceptional preservation to a 19th-century geological shift: When the Magdalena River changed course, commerce bypassed the town, leaving its colonial architecture frozen in time.

On a guided town tour, visit the **Casa de la Cultura**, housed in the historic Residencia Peñas Alvarado, which preserves local traditions including the town's renowned filigree craft. At the **Iglesia de Santa Bárbara**, completed sometime between 1630 and 1733, admire the octagonal bell tower with its second-story balcony—the only church in Colombia featuring this architectural element.

Stop at the **Cementerio Central**, established in 1829, which houses the tombs of General Hermógenes Maza, hero of the Independence Wars, and poet Candelario Obeso, pioneer of Afro-Colombian literature. Then, enjoy a private tour of **Casa Frank**, guided by its owner. This late 16th- or early 17th-century mansion was one of only two houses in Mompox with its own private port on the Magdalena River.

After lunch, join a **filigree silver workshop** with local



Filigree silver workshop, Mompox

artisans, learning the delicate technique of twisting and soldering fine threads that has defined Mompox craftsmanship for centuries. Create your own piece while master silversmiths share skills passed down through generations.

This evening, attend a folkloric performance in the plaza, attended by distinguished local guests.

B,L,D

DAY 5: CALAMAR / SAN BASILIO DE PALENQUE

Dawn offers optional birdwatching at **Reserva Natural Calamar**, where a local naturalist leads you through riverside and forest trails. Herons, kingfishers, and toucans inhabit this ecosystem, one of the region's richest avian habitats along the Magdalena.

Later, arrive in **Calamar**, a 19th-century riverside town whose colonial architecture reflects the river's former commercial importance. Join a local guide for a tour by *bicitaxi* (cycle rickshaw) through streets that once bustled with merchants and travelers.

During lunch aboard the riverboat, sail to **San Basilio de Palenque**, founded in 1603 by Captain Benkos Biohó and escaped enslaved Africans. When the Spanish Crown granted its inhabitants freedom in 1691, Palenque became the first free African town in the Americas. In 2005, UNESCO declared it a Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage.

Accompanied by local community hosts, learn traditional herbal medicine practices, participate in drumming and dance workshops rooted in West African traditions, and discover *Palenquero*, the only Spanish-based creole language spoken in South America. Home visits provide glimpses into daily life, traditional cooking, and storytelling traditions.

B,L,D



Iglesia de Santa Bárbara, Mompox



Hotel Sofitel Legend Santa Clara Cartagena

DAY 6: CARTAGENA

Upon return to Cartagena, choose from two morning options:

Morning Option 1: Trace the footsteps of **Gabriel García Márquez** on a literary and culinary walking tour through the cobblestone streets that inspired his magical realism.

Visit 13 sites connected to the 1982 Nobel Prize winner, including the **Hotel Sofitel Legend Santa Clara Cartagena**, the former convent that inspired *Of Love and Other Demons*, and the **Claustro de la Merced**, where his ashes rest.

You will also taste nine traditional Caribbean dishes from Márquez's novels while hearing stories from locals who knew the master personally.

Morning Option 2: Enjoy a guided exploration of the **Cartagena Botanical Garden**, which houses over 350 species of tropical flora in 33 acres. Wander themed collections of orchids, palms, and medicinal plants that preserve Colombia's botanical diversity.

After lunch aboard the riverboat, choose from two afternoon options:

Afternoon Option 1: El Colegio del Cuerpo welcomes you for a guided tour and cocktail reception, followed by a special performance of Afro-Colombian music and dance. This innovative school, founded in 1997, transforms young lives through artistic expression. Meet the founders and participate in an optional dance workshop.

Afternoon Option 2: Delight in a **VIP private visit** to a renowned sculptor's family home in Manga, access unavailable to the public. Family members will present personal collections and artworks in their residence.

This evening, all guests will reconvene for cocktails and a festive farewell dinner aboard the riverboat. A highlight will be an exclusive conversation with a special guest connected to Gabriel García Márquez's legacy, providing personal perspectives on the Nobel laureate's life and creative process. B,L,R,D

DAY 7: CARTAGENA / DISEMBARK / RETURN

After breakfast, disembark and transfer to the airport for your flight home. B

An optional postlude in Bogotá will be offered, with dates, details, and pricing to be determined.



Cartagena

Activity Level:
Intermediate

Pace Level:
Vivace



CRUISE RATES

Cabins	Decks	Double	Single
111-114	Salsa	\$5,999	\$8,699
Twin Balcony, 237 sq. ft.			
103-110	Salsa	\$6,999	\$10,499
Twin Balcony, 237 sq. ft.			
203-216	Cumbia	\$7,999	\$12,399
Twin Balcony, 237 sq. ft.			
201 & 202	Cumbia	\$11,999	Inquire
Luxury Suites, Twin Balcony, 306 sq. ft.			
101 & 102	Salsa	\$13,999	Inquire
Grand Suites, Twin Balcony, 516 sq. ft.			

Luna Deck



Cumbia Deck



Salsa Deck



AmaMelodia

Newly designed and nearly identical, the 60-guest *AmaMagdalena* and 64-guest *AmaMelodia* are the first luxury vessels to cruise Colombia's principal waterway, with twin-balcony staterooms providing panoramic views of riverside life. A sun deck pool and a fitness room complement the main dining room, where chefs prepare regional Latin American dishes and various other Western cuisines.

Dine outdoors in the evening as river towns and wetland forests drift past your table. Your French balcony and full outdoor balcony offer dual vantage points for observing daily life along one of South America's greatest rivers, from fishing villages to colonial ports.



Luxury Suite (top) and Lounge

RATES INCLUDE

- Six nights cabin accommodations aboard *AmaMelodia* as per itinerary
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, R=Reception, D=Dinner). Bottled water, soft drinks, juices, and coffee/tea with all meals; house wine and beer at all included lunches and dinners
- Enrichment program of lectures and talks
- Escorted sightseeing, transportation, and entrance fees for all included visits
- Airport/pier/airport group transfers for participants on arrival and departure days
- Taxes, service, and portage charges; gratuities to local guides and drivers; customary shipboard gratuities

NOT INCLUDED IN RATES International airfare; passport/visa fees; meals not specified; alcoholic beverages other than what is noted in inclusions; personal items and expenses; airport transfers other than for those on suggested flights; excess baggage; trip insurance; optional prelude in Medellín; optional postlude in Bogotá; any other items not specifically mentioned as included.

Call 888.484.8785 for more details