



# New

# View

MELANIE D.G. KAPLAN

A bicycle is the perfect way to see the new Bogotá, a city now intent on healing, passion, food and dancing deep into the night.



MELANIE D.G. KAPLAN

Santa Clara, one of several restaurants that sit high above the city (10,300 feet) on Monserrate. In the distance is the Virgin of Guadalupe.



MELANIE D.G. KAPLAN

A mural in the Bogotá Bike Tours shop in La Candelaria

It's a weekday afternoon in Bogotá, and I'm on a mountain bike dodging potholes, a horse and a minibus—and I'm wondering if I'll survive. I'd hate to leave the country before I've had a chance to do some salsa dancing. So I jump my wheels onto a crumbling curb, giving the horse's nostrils and the bus' fender a couple inches of clearance.

Despite a few touch-and-go encounters like this one, I'm having an excellent day. Along with my new Colombian friend Stephany, three Americans and a Brit, I'm following a somewhat loco Californian named Mike through the streets of Bogotá, making my way through traffic like I'm in a game of Frogger. But the real story is that I am here, in the capital of Colombia, and—other than fearing a two-wheeled mishap—I feel safe. In case you haven't heard, it's a new day for tourists in Bogotá.

"We've had really hard times," but now Bogotá is as safe as many major American cities, says Saul Cardozo, a marketing manager with ProExport, the government agency charged with promoting tourism. It's the day before my bike adventure, and we're sitting in a traditional Pacific-region restaurant in the historic La Candelaria neighborhood. We're eating fried food and sipping *lulada*, a thick juice made from the *lulo* fruit, which looks like an orange and tastes like a sour kiwi. "These days, we're a model for other

MARCO GARAY/AMY

## WHERE TO EAT

First, ditch your apprehension about chain restaurants. When you ask a Bogotano where to eat, they often recommend a local chain, and they're worth visiting. Start at **Bagatelle** ([bagatelle.com.co](http://bagatelle.com.co)), an all-day café and bakery. You can find traditional French pastries and favorite Colombian dishes, including hot chocolate with *queso* (cheese that goes into the hot chocolate) and *arepas* (corn pancakes).



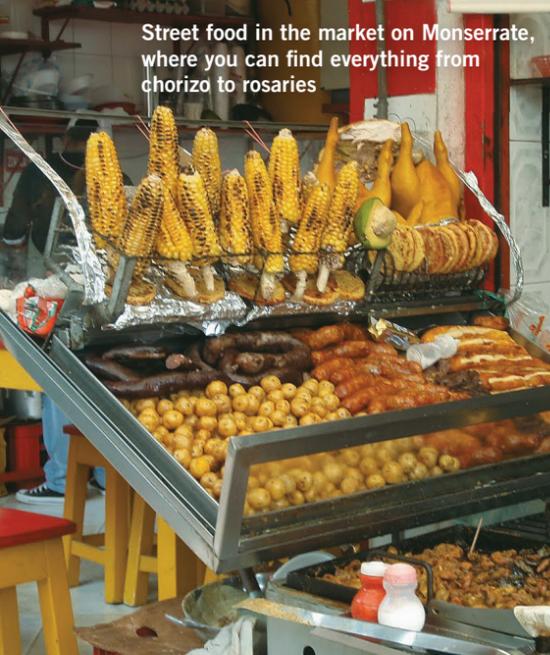
For mid-morning coffee—or really any time of day—stop by a **Juan Valdez Café** ([juanvaldezcafe.com](http://juanvaldezcafe.com)), nearly as ubiquitous as Starbucks (which you won't find here) has become in the States. Colombians tend to order *tinto*, which is black coffee, and be forewarned: It's extremely strong.

An excellent choice for brunch, and popular among young Bogotanos (who are likely to be eating their hangovers away), is **Crepes and Waffles** ([crepesywaffles.com](http://crepesywaffles.com)). Not too much traditional, meaty Colombian fare here, but excellent fresh fruit juices, waffles with *arequipe* (Colombian *dulce de leche*), salads and ice cream. The restaurant, which hires only single mothers, has a beautiful location in a restored house in the Usaquen neighborhood.

Latin Americans love their beef, so when they say **El Corral** ([elcorral.com](http://elcorral.com)) serves amazing burgers, you listen. But it's still fast food, so don't say we didn't warn you.

**Bogotá Beer Company** ([bogotabeercompany.com](http://bogotabeercompany.com)) is a brewery that serves mostly pub food, but it's a good place to sample the local brews: *Aguila* and *Club Colombia*. Again, try the Usaquen location, with a giant patio, heat lamps and a fine view.

Street food in the market on Monserrate, where you can find everything from chorizo to rosaries



Latin American countries," he says.

According to the Ministry of National Defense, homicides and kidnappings have decreased drastically since 2002, and the country—which celebrates its bicentennial this year—is a few years into a giant marketing campaign to change its reputation. But Saul knows that won't happen overnight, or even in a few years—especially when pop culture continues to reinforce it. “Soap operas, sitcoms, movies—there’s usually a guy named Pablo or Pedro, and he’s Colombian, and he’s a drug dealer,” Saul says. “We’re trying to change more than 20 years of bad images, and we’re trying to change the stereotype from Colombia is Cocaine to Colombia is Passion. We have a big task.”

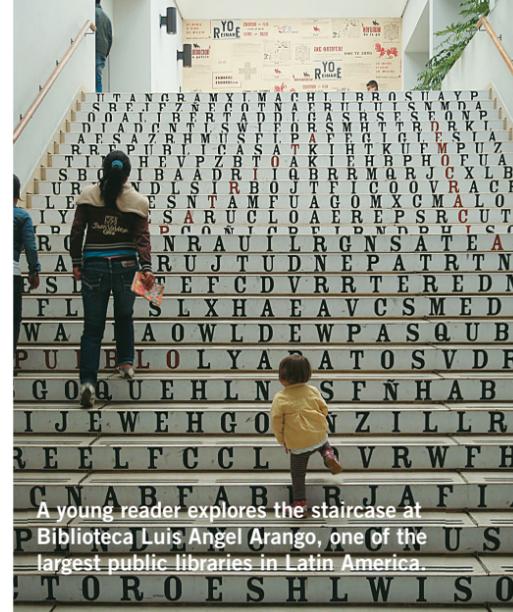
## Wheeling for Change

People like Mike Ceaser are helping change that perception by showing us that Bogotá’s ugly history is, well, history. A former journalist who came to Latin America to learn Spanish, Ceaser made Colombia his home and opened **Bogotá Bike Tours** ([bogotabiketours.com](http://bogotabiketours.com); \$14 for a half-day tour) two years ago. His tours start from colonial La Candelaria, where narrow streets are lined with colorful houses that have wood balconies and red tile roofs. Ceaser’s shop is filled with old bikes, maps, murals and shelves of used books (for sale or exchange) in English, Spanish, French and German.

“It’s a nice city, with nice people,” Ceaser tells us at our first stop, **Plaza Bolívar**, home to City Hall, Congress, the Cathedral and the Palace of Justice, rebuilt after a guerrilla attack on the Supreme Court in 1985. “The country has changed a lot in the past 10 years.” We pass the famous **Museo del Oro**, the gold museum ([banrep.gov.co/museo](http://banrep.gov.co/museo)), and several street markets, filled with handmade crafts and endless opportunities to bargain.

Ceaser stops every five or 10 minutes and peppers his commentary with historical anecdotes, several of which involve Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar. We pass the Emerald District, where men in jeans and leather jackets stand on the sidewalk and sell precious stones out of folded pieces of paper. We weave in and out of traffic, around motorcycles and past stray dogs and pedestrians on narrow sidewalks.

The weather is mild, in the 60s, and it’s like this year-round: no snow, no heat waves, no seasons and no air conditioning. At 8,660 feet above sea level, Bogotá sits adjacent to an Andean mountain range, one of three that run through the country. The city is broken into sections: north, central



A young reader explores the staircase at Biblioteca Luis Angel Arango, one of the largest public libraries in Latin America.

(La Candelaria) and south, with the most upscale businesses and residences on the north end. Streets and avenues are numbered, and I quickly learn that the best way to orient myself is to find the mountains, always to the east.

“I can’t believe we got here on bike,” Stephany says with a laugh as we pull up to **Paloquemao**, the city’s largest meat, fish, flower and produce market. She’s there to keep me company, but she reminds me that a Colombian would otherwise never be caught riding a bike through the city like we are. Even children turn to stare. However, Bogotanos aren’t strangers to cycling. Every Sunday from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., more than 70 miles of streets are closed to cars for *Ciclovía*. Cyclists, runners and skaters seem to take over the city. But in the middle of the weekday on a bike? *Loco*.

In the market, Ceaser stops at a half-dozen vendors, who all seem to adore him, handing him local fruits for us to sample. There’s the *granadilla*, passion fruit, *lulo* and *mangostino*, a tender, sweet fruit that looks like garlic.

We pedal through an industrial neighborhood and down to Central Cemetery. We pass the **National Museum**, a gorgeous building lined with hardwood floors that was once a jail, and the Moorish-style bullfighting stadium (also used for other events, such as the Davis Cup in September). Ceaser, whose hands seem to be permanently stained with bike grease, stops a few times to buy street food for us to taste—fruit juices and strips of coconut that look like French fries.

We head back to La Candelaria, which means pedaling up steep cobblestone streets. We pass Plaza del Chorro del Quevedo, a bohemian spot filled with students from the city’s many universities. It’s also known as the best spot for *chicha*, the country’s fa-

mous fermented corn drink. On one of our last stretches of the tour, I look down at the pavement and laugh: Finally, after nearly five hours of braving precarious city streets, lo and behold, I see a designated bike lane.

## Bookish Colombia

The next day, I head out with my friend Francisco for a less adventurous and more literary tour of the city. We visit **Biblioteca Virgilio Barco**, a wonderful round, brick library designed by the Colombian architect Rogelio Salmona. Not only is this a prized spot for schoolchildren, Francisco says when he was growing up, there was only one library in all of Bogotá), but it’s a fun build-



Colorful houses and cobblestone streets are common in historic La Candelaria neighborhood.

ing, filled with maze-like ramps, beautiful hardwood floors, skylights, an amphitheater, water features and an open-air lobby. We check out the photography exhibits, walk on the roof, look east and enjoy a fantastic view of the city.

Salmona also designed the **Gabriel García Márquez Cultural Center** ([fce.com.co](http://fce.com.co)) in La Candelaria, which was a gift to Bogotá from Mexico. The center has an impressive, donut-shaped bookstore with a courtyard and fountain in the center. Up the street is **Biblioteca Luis Angel Arango**, one of the largest public libraries in Latin America. It hosts world-class musicians (and a cool music room with old instruments) and features a full calendar of other public programs. Across the street, the **Botero Museum** showcases the personal collection of the Colombian painter and sculptor Fernando Botero, including pieces by Monet and Picasso, plus works featuring Botero’s own plump figures.

packed dance floor with Juan at what seems like the biggest party in town.

After about six hours, I consider my morning flight and decide to head back to the hotel. By that time, I feel like everyone else at the party is my friend—the Colombian soap-opera star that Stephany is ogling, the guy dancing on the table next to us and the DJs behind us, playing everything from Culture Club to reggae to salsa. Leaving before 3 a.m. seems like a cop-out.

But the beat of the music is so intense that it’s still in my veins the next day as my plane heads home. I close my eyes and am thankful—for the sake of a night of dancing—and that I made it off my bike alive. 🚲



### WebExtra

To see more gorgeous photos of this trip, visit [WashingtonFlyer.com](http://WashingtonFlyer.com) and go to “Photos.”

## GETTING THERE

Nonstop flights on Avianca to Bogotá from Washington Dulles International Airport five times per week.

## GETTING AROUND

The diesel-powered TransMilenio bus system is a vast improvement from Bogotá’s traditional minibuses. But the minibuses are still in use, and traffic is intense in this city of 6.8 million. So, on any given day, only 60 percent of residents are permitted to drive, based on their license plate numbers. Call a yellow taxi, which are plentiful—except for Friday nights—and inexpensive. (A 45-minute ride cost \$7.)

## WHERE TO STAY

**Grand House Hotel** ([suitesgrandhouse.com](http://suitesgrandhouse.com); standard double is about \$180, including continental breakfast) is located on the posh north side of the city. It’s within walking distance of Parque de la 93, a cherished green space filled with children and dogs; restaurants also circle the park. The hotel has 64 suites, modern and minimal, all with king-sized beds, some with a spiral staircase and terrace.

**Hotel Casa de la Botica** ([hotelcasadelabotica.com](http://hotelcasadelabotica.com); standard room for 2010 is about \$140, including breakfast) is in La Candelaria. The hotel was converted from two colonial homes and today feels bohemian and artsy, a peaceful respite from the loud city on the other side of the lobby. There are 32 rooms (about half are brand new), some with lofts, overlooking two tranquil courtyards with fountains; don’t miss the new spa.



**Hotel de la Opera** ([hoteloopera.com.co](http://hoteloopera.com.co); standard room about \$185, including breakfast and access to the Turkish bath; about \$270 for a junior suite) is also in La Candelaria, across from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This upscale hotel was renovated from two homes that once housed the personal guard of the South American liberation hero Simón Bolívar. Filled with natural light, the hotel has 42 rooms decorated in a classic Italian style and two restaurants, including one on the top floor that has perhaps the city’s best view of red tile rooftops (and a private dining room that is traditionally where men propose to their brides). You’ll be in good company here; it’s where the president stays the night before he takes office.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

[colombia.travel](http://colombia.travel)



"Grand Illumination" kicks off the holiday celebration in Williamsburg.

By Michael McCarthy

# Splendor on the James

Williamsburg's Kingsmill Resort & Spa offers stately perks without the 'tude.

**M**y girls are no hothouse flowers. They cavort with creatures large and small in the insect kingdom, make shoestring tackles in football and generally pummel their older brother when he forgets his place in the offspring hierarchy.

Which is why I find it improbable that my girls, ages 12 and 9, would even consider a day at the spa. But this is **Kingsmill Resort & Spa** (kingsmill.com), and the treatments for kids have names like the Just 4 U Facial and the BFF Mani Pedi, so it's clear why my tomboys sit in reclining spa chairs with cucumber slices covering their eyes while getting a pedicure: It's eminently cool.

It also speaks volumes about the affability of Kingsmill, which sits along the James River in Williamsburg, Va., that two shin-kicking children feel comfortable letting

strangers tuck cotton between their toes. This is a resort that manages to straddle the high-end world of resort golf (three championship courses designed by Pete Dye, Arnold Palmer, Tom Clark and Curtis Strange) with the bring-the-family mentality of getaways that feature half the amenities. It's a formula that allows guests the relief of not feeling buttoned up when they retreat for a long weekend.

Even during the chilly months, Kingsmill can keep families occupied. Interior spaces include a racquetball/basketball court, game room, gym and pool. Full disclosure: We have no idea what the rules are for racquetball, but the friendly staff member at the gym hands us racquets, goggles and balls, and sends us on our way—where we slam the high walls in the echo chamber for two hours of intensity only broken by fits of

laughter. Play doubles; you won't regret it.

Golf, of course, infuses the place with civility, and it's the reason to venture here—even in winter. (The courses are open; military and first-responders can play the Plantation and Woods courses for \$40 a person through Nov. 15; normal fees are \$100 and \$120, respectively.) Want to lose the duffer moniker for next spring and summer? The resort offers a year-round golf academy that delves into the biomechanics of the game, in addition to the back-to-basics tweaking of how to strike the ball. They'll also assess balance and flexibility. And the golf team here has a killer app: kinesthetic training via a K-vest, a 3-D wireless-motion tool that captures data about range of motion and spits out a cold, hard conclusion: The PGA is light years away. But improvement is possible, especially when the kids are deep into the rigors of a pedicure. ☺



## COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG

Williamsburg is big on tradition, and the holidays deliver:

**Foods & Feasts of Colonial Virginia, Nov. 25–27.** Learn how colonists in the Jamestown settlement gathered and preserved food, and explore the culinary differences between the Powhatan Indians and English colonists.

**Busch Gardens Christmas Town, Nov. 26 through Dec. 31.** It was a big hit in its first season last year, so it's back with Germany's Mistletoe Marketplace (handmade gifts from local artisans), Santa's Fireside Feast (grub in the grand dining room of Ireland's Castle O'Sullivan) and the head rush of the new ride, Europe in the Air.

**Grand Illumination, Dec. 5.** This kicks off the holiday season in Colonial Williamsburg on Duke of Gloucester Street with fife-and-drum-corps music, lighting of window candles, and fireworks launched from the Palace, the Magazine and the Capitol.

**A Colonial Christmas, Dec. 1–31.** See the holidays through the eyes of a Revolutionary War soldier or colonial farmer at Jamestown Settlement and Yorktown Victory Center. Check out colonial residences dressed for the holidays and sip hot apple cider on the steps of Charlton's Coffee House.

More details: [visitwilliamsburg.com](http://visitwilliamsburg.com)

## KINGSMILL FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Rooms at Kingsmill—one-, two- and three-bedroom options—are flexible enough for family gatherings. Some options in the months ahead:



**Thanksgiving Package** includes two nights, breakfast for four each morning, Thanksgiving buffet dinner for four and complimentary transportation to Colonial Williamsburg (\$569 for four people).

**Christmas Town Package** includes one night, breakfast and complimentary shuttle service to Busch Gardens and Colonial Williamsburg (\$99 per person per night).

**Holiday Traditions Package** includes two nights in a two-bedroom suite, lighted Christmas tree, breakfast, Christmas buffet dinner, a holiday family photo taken by the resort's on-site photographer and complimentary transportation to nearby Colonial Williamsburg (\$979 for four people).

## GETTING THERE

Nonstop flights on US Airways to Norfolk from Reagan National and on United Airlines from Dulles International.

# Be inspired.

## Visit Washington National Cathedral



From performances of Handel's *Messiah*, to special candlelit carol services, nativity scenes, and Christmas shopping, Washington National Cathedral offers something for everyone to discover this holiday season.

Visit and be inspired.

Plan your visit today at [www.nationalcathedral.org](http://www.nationalcathedral.org) or (202) 537-6200.

## REACH THE HISPANIC MARKET

### Speak to them in SPANISH

TRANSLATIONS all kinds / EDITING / LINGUISTS  
PRESS KITS / RESEARCH / BROCHURES

MARKETING—ADVERTISING—PUBLICITY—SPEECHES—  
WRITTEN COMMUNICATION—COPYWRITING—all CREATIVE needs

[hispanic.market@yahoo.com](mailto:hispanic.market@yahoo.com) / 301-438-7120 / 301-728-7171

## AMERICANA HOTEL

*Hospitality is Our Business*



- Five Minutes to Downtown Washington, D.C.
- 1 Block to Crystal City Underground and Metro
- 2 Blocks to The Fashion Centre at Pentagon City
- Friendly, Helpful and Experienced Staff
- Free Continental Breakfast
- Free Wireless Internet
- Free Shuttle Service
- Free Parking

**\$65 single / \$85 double\***

Specializing in Small Group Accommodations

1400 JEFFERSON DAVIS HIGHWAY  
ARLINGTON, VA 22202

Family Owned & Operated

703-979-3772

[www.americanahotel.com](http://www.americanahotel.com)

\*Rate does not include tax. First time guests only. Must present ad at check-in. Based on availability.