



Digital Nomads Guides

# Medellin

#1

choice in South America

Bonus  
Material  
Online!

Jonas Breuer & Iris Veldwijk

# Medellín – Free Sample

## *Digital Nomads Guides*

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Writing this ebook was heaps of work. Please respect that by not copying it or passing it onto other people.

Everything in this book has been researched thoughtfully and with great care. However, things can change at anytime. We can't rule out mistakes 100%. We are not liable for any damage created by the information in this book. This book is not a substitute for thinking for yourself ;)





# Table of Contents

Why Medellín? .....	3
About this Guide .....	4
Part One: How to Get Set Up in Medellín .....	5
Money, ATMs and Prices.....	5
WiFi Speed and Availability .....	7
WiFi Vocabulary .....	7
Places to Work .....	8
Accommodation.....	9
Mobile Internet.....	10
Plugs & Power .....	11
How to Meet Other Digital Nomads .....	12
Food & Drink .....	12
Transport.....	15
Free Time.....	18
Local opportunities .....	20
Attitude .....	21
Visa .....	21
Safety .....	22
Part Two: Neighborhood Guides .....	23
Laureles-Estadio .....	24
El Poblado .....	30
Envigado .....	35
Conquistadores .....	38
La Floresta .....	40
La Candelaria / Centro .....	42
Final Words.....	43



## Why Medellín?

Not a city on Earth improved itself as well as Medellín did. From a city plagued by drugs and violent crime, to one with top-notch health and educational facilities, and a thriving business climate: the transformation has truly been phenomenal. Colombia is on a roll, and Medellín is the poster child of this dedication. If you've only ever heard before of the city from TV shows like *Narcos* - or TV in general - you'll definitely be in for a surprise.

Located in the Aburrá Valley, Medellín is the capital city of the Antioquia department and the second biggest city in Colombia. The climate is gentle, the landscapes are spectacular, and there's a ton of things to do, see and eat. Local people go by the name *Paisas*, and have a distinct culture from elsewhere in Colombia. They are friendly and proud people that love a guest. Immerse yourself in *Paisa* culture and you'll definitely find a new home - as long as you don't bring up Pablo Escobar too often.

You might get sick of hearing the words "City of Eternal Spring", but once you leave, you'll truly understand the meaning of "pleasant climate". Even if you just do a trip to Cartagena or Bogotá, you'll understand why so many seekers of the good life have chosen Medellín as their base. Add a low cost of living, high quality of goods and services, reliable internet, and high accessibility in the mix, and you've got yourself a primary digital nomad destination.

Whether your budget is tight or loose, you'll find a way to get working in Medellín. There's an established base of digital nomads who organize events on the regular and provide a good base of like-minded people to connect with. Year-round, there's an influx and efflux of new people, so don't worry about being lonely or arriving at the wrong time; there just isn't one.

While there's heaps to see and do in and around Medellín, Colombia as a whole makes for a great travel destination for all. Caribbean coasts, Andean mountains and tropical rainforests make up Colombia's diverse geographical features. Indigenous cultures, colonial history and modern society fill in the details of this complex country. It's easy to get around the country to enjoy the most of it. At the end, you'll be begging the immigration officer for another 90 days.



## About this Guide

Part One of this guide has all the tools you need to get set up in Medellín, in order of importance. We believe you should just book a flight and not worry about being underprepared. If you read Part One at the airport or on your flight, you'll be as prepared as can be in **just 45 minutes**. Important Spanish words are introduced if they're necessary vocabulary. They follow directly after their English. All prices are in United States Dollar (US\$) as it's widely understood, and immediately gives you a feeling for the pricing level in Colombia.

Part Two of this book has specific information about the districts in Medellín. The neighborhoods aren't ordered according to historical centrality like in other guides, but rather to lifestyle compatibility in terms of coworking spaces and laptop-friendly cafés. All cafés have been tried out by our writers and vouched for by expats living in Medellín at the time of writing. All cafés included mention the internet speed in Megabit (Mbit), a PowerScore and ZenScore. PowerScore is a rating of the number of charging points out of five, in which five is the best and one is the worst. People with great laptop batteries can go to a café with a low PowerScore, but energetically-challenged people should skip over these. ZenScore is about how workable a café is in terms of noise, again with a rating out of five - five being very quiet and one being very busy. It's not just decibels, it's also how many people are walking by your table causing distraction. This is of course a little more variable as it's dependent on the time of day and day of the week. Our writers visited all the cafés during a weekday before 17:00.



# Part One: How to Get Set Up in Medellín

## Money, ATMs and Prices

The currency in Colombia is the Colombian Peso, just called the peso by the people. They usually use the \$ symbol, which can be confusing when you're associating that with the US-Dollar. A juice price indicated as \$5000 is quite normal. The currency code is COP. Like most places in South America, the US\$ is used as a second currency and prices for expensive stuff and tours are often indicated in US\$ to make them look cheaper. Due to the massive difference in value, there's usually no risk of confusing the two currencies.

Despite the low value, the Colombian Peso is quite stable if you compare it with other currencies in South America. As of October 2018:

10000 COP = 3.20 USD = 2.80 EUR

Note that the dot is used as a thousand separator in Colombia. A price indicated as \$10.000 means \$10000. Since the value of the peso is so low, you'll never see prices with cents indicated. If you pay in cash, prices are rounded to the next 50 COP, since it's the smallest coin.

ATMs accepting VISA and MasterCard are widely available in Medellín and surrounding towns. Ask for *cajero automático* if you can't find one. To be on the safe side, bring multiple credit cards. Depending on the bank, you can withdraw the equivalent of US\$100 and US\$200 per transaction. Some ATMs charge about US\$3 per transaction, which is on top of any charges from your own bank. These fees differ from bank to bank. It's worth trying out a few banks, since some don't charge fees. The authors had good experiences with the ATMs of *Bancolombia* and *BBVA*.

Exchanging money is easy everywhere, especially in the touristy areas in the center and in El Poblado. As usual, don't exchange your money at the airport because the exchange rates are better in the city. Exchange offices are called *casa de cambio*. Banks also offer money exchange, but usually offer less-competitive rates.

Medellín is well developed in terms of credit card payments. Most restaurants and cafés accept them without a minimum amount or a fee, and it's usually fast and reliable. In some places, people might ask to see your *cédula* when paying by card, which is the Colombian ID you obviously don't possess. Just show a copy of your passport or your national ID card and it should be fine. Many credit card readers offer to charge your card in your home currency, which usually comes with a 3.5% exchange fee. Depending on your bank, you're likely better off declining that offer, get charged in pesos and let your bank handle the currency exchange.

Leaving a tip of 10% is standard in restaurants, especially in fancier ones. When getting the bill, people will often ask if you want to include the service, which means adding 10%. It's also not uncommon that the tip is already showing up on the receipt and if you don't explicitly say that



you don't want to add the tip, it's assumed that you're fine with it. Check your receipt to avoid tipping twice. Credit card readers also have a function to add a tip.

Colombia is a relatively cheap country, but fancy apartments and restaurants can quickly add up. Some pricing examples:

Half liter bottle of Coke - US\$0.70  
Fruit juice - US\$1.50  
Cappuccino - US\$1.50  
200 g of white cheese - US\$0.80  
1 liter of milk - US\$0.60  
Mozzarella stick - US\$0.50  
Cheap restaurant meal - US\$3  
Beer in a bar - US\$1.50  
Liter of wine in a shop - from US\$5  
Hostel bed - US\$7  
Airbnb room - from US\$15  
Airbnb apartment - from US\$25  
Metro fare - US\$0.80  
5 km by taxi - US\$4  
Coworking space day pass - US\$8

So, how expensive is it to live in Medellín for a week? Let's say you're on a budget. You stay in a hostel dorm and cook for yourself or eat street food. You have two beers per week and use the metro/bus system a few times per week. You are working from the hostel. That sums up to a weekly budget of about US\$100 per week, approximately US\$430 per month.

If money isn't that tight, you might opt for your own apartment, go to a restaurant every day and have a proper night out twice per week. You explore the city by taxi, since you can't be bothered to figure out the buses. You are working in a coworking space. That comes to about US\$380 per week, or US\$1650 per month.

That's about the range you can expect. The biggest factor is obviously your choice of accommodation.

Here's some helpful finance vocabulary:

Is it possible to pay by credit card? - *¿Es posible de pagar con tarjeta de crédito?*

Is there an ATM? - *¿Hay un cajero automático?*

How much? - *¿Cuanto cuesta?*

The bill - *La cuenta*

Tip - *Propina*

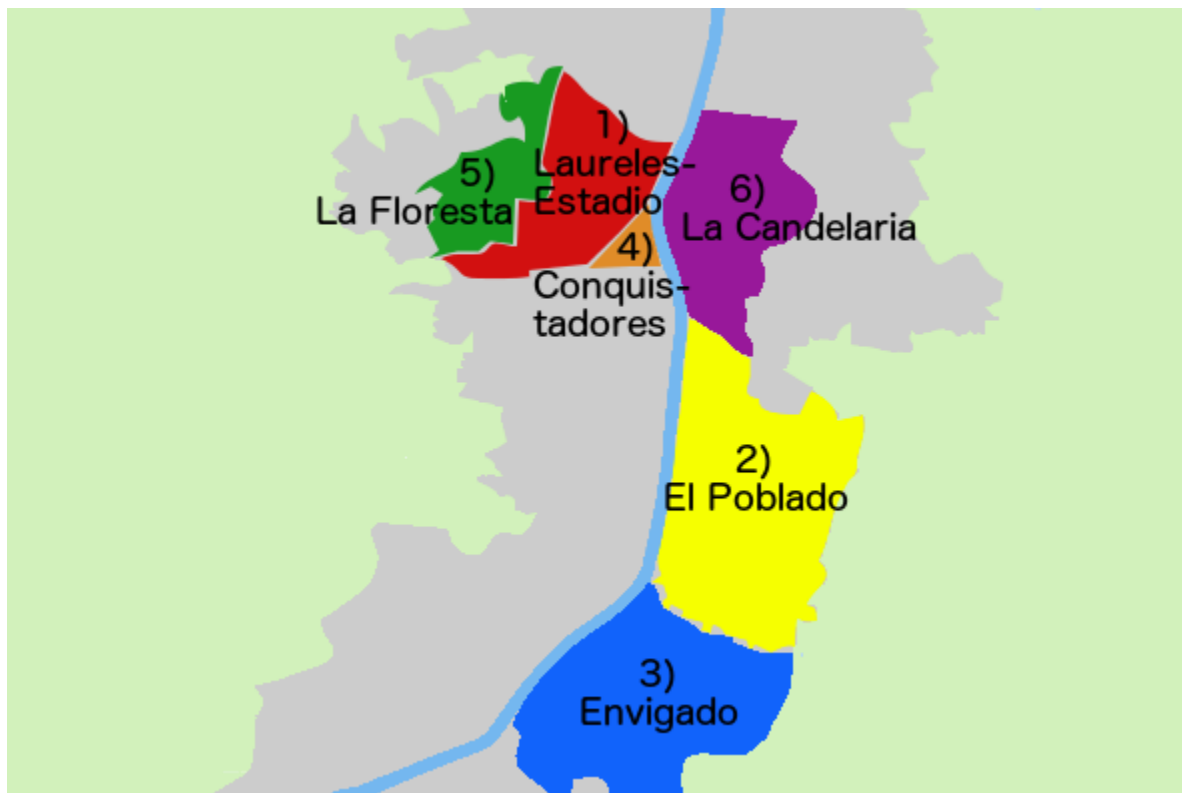
Signature - *Firma*



## Part Two: Neighborhood Guides

*Bonus material unlocked! In the full version of the guide, you'll find the access to the online area here, to find an interactive map and more goodies to use in the city!*

Medellín is made up of six zones, further divided up into 16 communes (*comunas*), made up by a total of 249 neighborhoods (*barrios*). We will mostly refer to the name of the communes, but sometimes split up single neighborhoods if they deserve a special mention or their name is more commonly used. The Medellín river running south to north splits the city in two halves. Next to the river is also the main city highway. The richer areas of the city tend to be close to the river and in the south of the city. Every neighborhood in Colombia has an official level of social class called *estrato*, with 1 being the lowest and 6 being the highest. People living in low class areas pay less for their utilities and often get free or discounted entry into museums and the sort.







## Laureles-Estadio

Laureles is a great mix of local Colombian feel and upscale cafés and restaurants. Here you can have food from all over the world, while still being able to go to proper supermarkets and local eateries. The stadium features a lot of sporting facilities including a swimming pool, which is completely free to use. The streets are a lot calmer than in touristy El Poblado and rental prices are a lot more reasonable. Laureles has by far the most passionate business owners of all of Medellín; nearly everyone will happily have a chat with you about their craft - whether it's vegan food, baked goods, or curing meats.

### Work

*Our free sample only shows one coworking space and one working friendly café. The full guide has 13 places in Laureles and 37 in total.*

#### La Casa Redonda

*Circular 75 #38-09*

*Mon - Fri 08:00 - 20:00, Saturday 08:00 - 12:00, Sunday closed*

*16 Mbit*

This is the most famous coworking space in Laureles, loved by many nomads. And this isn't without reason. The space is super artsy and sort of semi outdoors, with many plants and little gardens built right next to the desks. It's a huge space spreading over three floors, featuring many cozy areas with hammocks and cool graffiti, a workout area, and a workshop room. Of course, the basics like a kitchen, with included tea and coffee or meeting rooms, are here as well. A monthly pass will cost you about US\$150 and shorter deals are available on request as well.

#### Café Revolución

*Carrera 73 #4-10*

*Every day 08:30 - 19:00*

*9 Mbit*

*PowerScore* ★★☆☆☆

*ZenScore* ★★☆☆☆

A favorite of many a digital nomad, and one of the few places reliably open on Sundays and holidays, Revolución will definitely be on your to-visit list in Medellín. You can pretty much be certain that you won't be the only one popping up your laptop. The staff is super friendly and you'll quickly feel part of the crowd. It's a very small place, so make sure to arrive early to secure one of the few tables inside. Apart from excellent coffee and smoothies, you can have a selection of epic sandwiches. Make sure to check out the place while you're in Laureles.



## Final Words

Did you like this free sample? In the full guide, you'll find so much more, including a total of 37 coworking and café reviews. Head to [digitalnomadsguides.com/medellin/](https://digitalnomadsguides.com/medellin/) for more information.

