

VALIDATE ANNUAL MEETING 2026

Travel and Safety Guide

The VALIDATE Team looks forward to welcoming you to Cartagena, Colombia, for the Annual Meeting 2026. Cartagena is a vibrant coastal city known for its rich history, colourful colonial architecture, and lively Caribbean atmosphere. It will be a fantastic setting in which to exchange cutting-edge science and continue building the growing VALIDATE community.

Colombia in general, and Cartagena in particular, have made significant strides in reducing crime and improving safety for visitors, though some risks remain, particularly outside the main tourist areas. We expect all delegates to have a safe and enjoyable trip. As in any busy tourist destination, the main risks are likely to come from scams, petty theft, drink tampering, and inadvertently entering less safe areas of the city. It is therefore sensible to take common-sense precautions: stay aware of your surroundings, avoid displaying valuables, don't leave drinks unattended, and use reputable transport options, particularly at night. Taking these simple steps will help ensure a smooth and enjoyable visit. This guide provides essential travel and safety information for all delegates attending the Annual Meeting. We encourage you to print a copy and bring it with you.

Contents

VALIDATE ANNUAL MEETING 2026	1
Travel and Safety Guide	1
Travel	2
Getting from Rafael Nunez International Airport to Hyatt Regency	2
Airport Transfer Options:	2
Getting Around Cartagena	2
Visas	2
Currency and Payments	2
Nearby Places to Visit	3
Phones and eSIMs	3
Safety	3
Personal Safety & Crime Prevention	3
2026 Election Period	3
Safety in and around Cartagena	4
Hassle, Scams, and How to Avoid Them	4
Common scams and common sources of hassle include:	4
Insurance	5
Carrying Identification	5
Health & Medical Precautions	5
Weather Conditions	5
Yellow Fever	5
Earthquakes	5
Useful Contacts	6
Embassy Contacts	7

Travel

The venue for the Annual Meeting is the Hyatt Regency, Cartagena – located in Bocagrande, near the beach and historic sites. Delegate accommodation will also be at the Hyatt Regency.

Getting from Rafael Nunez International Airport to Hyatt Regency

Airport Transfer Options:

Delegates are to make own transfer arrangements and can claim the costs back.

- **Official Airport Taxis:** Use the **official airport taxi service**. Upon arrival, head to the authorized taxi counters inside the terminal and provide your destination address. Always ensure the meter is on or agree on a price in advance.
- **Ride-hailing Apps: Uber** operates in Cartagena and are often safer and more convenient than street taxis. Ensure you have mobile internet access to use these apps.
 - During a previous trip to Colombia, the VALIDATE team made extensive use of Uber, which was both safe and convenient.
- **Pre-Booked airport transfer:** You can hire an airport transfer before you leave and they will meet you at the airport.
 - Affordable options for this can be found on [Get Your Guide](#) and [Viator](#) (VALIDATE cannot speak to the quality of these services).
 - The Hyatt Regency recommends [Alondra Express](#) (WhatsApp: +57 324 3691905)
- If your trip to Colombia is supported by VALIDATE, please keep all invoices and proof of payment for reimbursement purposes.

Getting Around Cartagena

- **Taxis & Ride-Hailing Apps:** Avoid hailing taxis from the street; instead, use apps such as **Cabify, Uber, or DiDi**. These offer door to door service and there is no awkward price negotiation.
- **Public Transport:** Cartagena's **TransCaribe** bus system is an affordable and efficient way to get around. It runs along the main artery, Avenida Pedro de Heredia. Be mindful of pickpockets.
- **Walking:** Certain areas of Cartagena are walkable during the day, but it is advisable to avoid walking alone at night.

Visas

Some nationalities require a visa for short stays in Colombia. **Check your country's visa requirements well in advance at <https://www.cancilleria.gov.co>**. VALIDATE will forward a visa letter that you can use when you apply.

For a conference in Colombia, many foreign nationals who are not visa-exempt will need to apply for a **Visitor Visa (Type V)** for attendance at an academic, scientific, or business event. Applications can usually be submitted online.

Currency and Payments

- The local currency is **Colombian Pesos (COP)**.
- Credit/debit cards are widely accepted in hotels, restaurants, and large businesses.
- **ATMs** are available, but use those inside banks or malls for safety.
- **Cash:** It is advisable to carry some **small cash** for taxis, street vendors, and markets.

Nearby Places to Visit

Cartagena has many attractions. Some of these are:

- **The Walled City**
- **Castillo San Felipe de Barajas**
- **Getsemane Neighbourhood**
- **Rosario Islands**

Phones and eSIMs

If your phone supports eSIMs, they're a convenient way to get mobile data in Cartagena without needing a physical SIM card. You can buy and activate a plan online before you travel or upon arrival—ideal for staying connected as soon as you land.

Check out these providers for Colombia eSIMs:

- [Airalo](#)
- [Holafly](#)
- [Nomad](#)

Make sure your phone is unlocked and eSIM-compatible.

Safety

Personal Safety & Crime Prevention

Cartagena is a welcoming city, but like many large urban destinations it has some safety considerations. The most common risks for visitors are petty theft, opportunistic robbery, drink tampering, and scams rather than serious violence. UK government travel advice for Colombia also warns about street crime, drug-assisted robbery, and problems linked to unlicensed taxis.

- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash.
- Do not display valuable items such as phones, cameras, jewellery, or watches openly.
- Stay in well-lit and populated areas, especially at night.
- Avoid walking alone late at night where possible.
- Keep food and drinks with you at all times, and do not accept drinks, cigarettes, or other items from strangers.
- Use reputable transport options, ideally arranged through the hotel or restaurant, airport taxi desk, or a trusted ride-hailing app, rather than hailing taxis on the street.

2026 Election Period

Colombia's congressional elections took place on 8 March 2026, and the first round of the presidential election is scheduled for 31 May 2026. If no candidate wins outright, a second round is scheduled for 21 June 2026, immediately before the VALIDATE Annual Meeting begins in Cartagena on 22 June 2026. Delegates may therefore arrive during or just after a politically active period, when polling places, campaign activity, and election-related gatherings may still be taking place.

This is unlikely to affect the Annual Meeting directly, but delegates should avoid polling stations, campaign events, political rallies, protests, and other large public gatherings. UK travel advice notes that demonstrations in Colombia can happen at short notice, may turn violent, and can cause road closures and transport disruption. Delegates should monitor local news, allow extra time for journeys around arrival dates, and follow any advice from the hotel, local organisers, or local authorities.

Safety in and around Cartagena

Cartagena's main tourist areas are generally the safest places for visitors to spend time, particularly during the day and early evening when they are busy and well lit. As in any major city, the main risks are petty theft and opportunistic street crime rather than serious violence against tourists, so the key is to stay in the busier central areas, avoid quieter streets and unfamiliar neighbourhoods, and after dark arrange a taxi back to the hotel rather than walking between areas such as the Walled City, Getsemaní, and Bocagrande.

Safer areas for visitors:

- Walled City / Centro Histórico
- Bocagrande
- The busier central parts of Getsemaní
- Well-lit tourist areas with plenty of people around

Areas to avoid or be more careful in, especially at night:

- Matuna, particularly the quieter stretch between Getsemaní and the Walled City
- Dark or empty side streets on the edges of Getsemaní
- Quiet in-between areas outside the main tourist zones
- Unfamiliar residential neighbourhoods away from the centre, especially if walking late at night

Hassle, Scams, and How to Avoid Them

As in many busy tourist destinations, delegates in Cartagena may encounter persistent street vendors, unofficial guides, and people offering unsolicited services or entertainment. These situations are not always scams in the strict sense, but they can be uncomfortable and may lead to disputes about payment if expectations are not made clear in advance. To reduce the risk of problems, delegates should feel comfortable saying "No, gracias, no quiero" politely but firmly and continuing to walk away if they do not wish to engage. It is best not to allow anyone to begin a service, performance, or photo opportunity unless you genuinely want it and **you have agreed a price beforehand**. Delegates should also remain alert in busy tourist areas, where distraction techniques, overcharging, and unofficial offers of help or transport can occur.

Common scams and common sources of hassle include:

- Rappers or performers approaching tourists and then demanding payment after an unsolicited performance.
- People offering shoulder massages or similar services and then expecting payment afterwards.
- Photographs with iconic "Palenqueras" – traditional Afro-Colombian fruit sellers, where a charge may be expected.
 - This is not necessarily a scam, but you should agree a price first.
- Street vendors pressing tourists to buy goods or services they did not ask for.
- Distraction techniques used to create an opportunity for pickpocketing or theft.
- Unofficial taxi offers, which may lead to overcharging or more serious safety risks.
- Individuals claiming to be police or officials and asking to inspect money or documents.
- Drink tampering or offers of food or drink from strangers.

If you do choose to accept a rap, massage, photograph, or any similar street service, make sure you agree the price clearly in advance.

Insurance

It is required by law to carry official identification in Colombia. A photocopy of your passport, including the photo page and relevant visa or entry stamp page, is generally acceptable in most day-to-day situations, though delegates may wish to keep the original passport securely stored in their hotel safe unless it is specifically needed.

Carrying Identification

Officially, it is required by law to carry official identification. A photocopy of your passport (with visa stamp) is acceptable in most situations.

Health & Medical Precautions

Vaccines: Yellow fever vaccination is recommended if you plan to visit rural areas after the workshop.

Mosquito Protection: In Cartagena, mosquitoes are common—especially in warm, humid areas—so it's best to protect yourself by using insect repellent, wearing long sleeves in the evenings, and sleeping in air-conditioned or screened rooms where possible.

Weather Conditions

In Cartagena, June is typically **hot, humid, and part of the rainy season**, but still very manageable for travel. Daytime temperatures usually range between **30–32°C**, with warm nights around **25–27°C**.

Although June sees **regular rainfall**, it usually comes in **short, heavy showers rather than all-day rain**, often followed by sunshine. Humidity is high (around 75–80%), making it feel hotter, and the “feels like” temperature can reach close to **40°C**.

Overall, you can expect **tropical, beach-friendly weather with a mix of sun and brief rain showers**, so lightweight clothing and a small umbrella are ideal.

Yellow Fever

Colombia is currently experiencing a **significant yellow fever outbreak** that began in 2024 and has continued into 2026, with sustained transmission in several regions. The outbreak is concentrated mainly in rural and forested areas—particularly the Tolima department—but cases have also appeared in multiple other regions, suggesting a widening geographic spread. Current advice is that you don't need a vaccine for trips to Bogota and Cartagena, but this is subject to change and you should monitor the situation.

- **Important:** Some countries may require proof of yellow fever vaccination for entry into Colombia, so please **check current vaccination requirements before you travel**.

Earthquakes

Colombia is situated in a seismically active region due to its location along the Pacific Ring of Fire. While major earthquakes are infrequent, tremors can occur and it's essential to be prepared. Cartagena is a low risk area compared to the rest of the country, but it might be helpful to read through the following tips

- **During an Earthquake:**

- If indoors, **Drop, Cover, and Hold On**: Get down on your hands and knees, cover your head and neck, and hold on to sturdy furniture.
- Stay away from windows, mirrors, and heavy objects that could fall.
- Avoid doorways; they are not safer than other parts of the building.
[Cartagenastic.com+1World Nomads+1](https://www.cartagenastic.com/1World-Nomads/1)
- If outdoors, move to an open area away from buildings, trees, and power lines.
[Nearshore Americas+1World Nomads+1](https://www.nearshoreamericas.com/1World-Nomads/1)
- **After an Earthquake:**
 - Be prepared for aftershocks.[World Nomads](https://www.worldnomads.com/)
 - Check yourself and others for injuries.
 - Avoid using elevators.
 - Listen to local authorities for updates and instructions.

You can find information on earthquake safety in Colombia on UK Foreign Office's travel advice page: [Safety and security - Colombia travel advice - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/colombia/safety-and-security).

Additionally, the World Nomads website offers practical tips for travelers on how to survive an earthquake: [Earthquake Survival: Essential Travel Safety Tips - World Nomads](https://www.worldnomads.com/blog/earthquake-survival-essential-travel-safety-tips).

For real-time information on seismic activity in Colombia, consult the Colombian Geological Service: [Servicio Geológico Colombiano](https://www.servicio-geologico.gov.co/).

Remember to familiarise yourself with your accommodation's emergency procedures and identify safe spots both inside and outside your lodging.

Useful Contacts

Emergency Contacts

Main Emergency Numbers (Most Important)

- General Emergency (Police, Ambulance, Fire): 123
 - Works nationwide (like 911/999)

Police & Security

- Police: 112
- Tourist Police: +57 601 337 4413
- Anti-kidnapping hotline (GAULA): 165

Medical Emergencies

- Ambulance: 119
- Red Cross (24h): 132
- Cartagena-specific ambulance numbers:
- Ambulance (local): 667 5244 / 667 5344

Fire & Rescue

- Fire Department: 119 or 125

Other Useful Contacts

- Coastguard (Cartagena): 665 0316
- Civil Defense: 144

- Road emergencies / highway patrol: 767

Important Tip





If calling from a foreign phone, add Colombia's country code: +57 (e.g. +57 123).

Operators may primarily speak Spanish, so having your hotel address written down helps.

Hospitals





Major Hospitals

1. Hospital Serena del Mar

-  Km 8 Vía al Mar, Cartagena
-  +57 605 693 1501
-  [Official website](#)
-  One of the most modern, high-complexity hospitals in the region, with 24/7 emergency services




2. Hospital Universitario del Caribe

University hospital

-  Calle 29 #50-50, Zaragocilla
-  +57 5 651 7190
-  [Hospital website](#)
-  Largest public referral hospital in Cartagena, with advanced specialist care

3. Nuevo Hospital de Bocagrande

3.1 • Hospital •

-  Calle 5 #6-49, Castillogrande
-  +57 5 650 2800
-  Well-known private hospital in a central tourist area

Embassy Contacts

Consulates in Cartagena are often **honorary**, meaning:

Limited hours (sometimes by appointment only)

Limited services (basic assistance, emergencies, guidance)

For **full consular services (lost passport, evacuations, etc.)**, you may be referred to your country's embassy in Bogotá.

Below are some key embassies in Bogotá:

Argentina

- **Address:** Carrera 11 No. 93-12, Bogotá, Colombia
- **Phone:** +57 1 288 0900 / +57 315 899 4435
- **Fax:** +57 1 384 9488
- **Email:** ecolo@cancilleria.gov.ar
- **Website:** colombia.embajada.gob.ar

Australia

- **Note:** Australia does not have an embassy in Bogotá. The Australian Embassy responsible for Colombia is located in Santiago, Chile.
- **Address:** Isidora Goyenechea 3621, Piso 13, Las Condes, Santiago, Chile
- **Phone:** +56 2 2550 3500
- **Website:** chile.embassy.gov.au

Bangladesh

- **Note:** Bangladesh does not have a resident embassy in Bogotá. The nearest embassy is in Brasília, Brazil.
- **Address:** SHIS QI 09, Conjunto 16, Casa 15, Lago Sul, Brasília - DF, 71625-160, Brazil
- **Phone:** +55 61 3365 1917
- **Website:** bdembassybrazil.org

Belgium

- **Address:** Carrera 7 No. 71-21, Torre B, Piso 9, Bogotá, Colombia
- **Phone:** +57 1 326 4483
- **Email:** Cartagena@diplobel.fed.be
- **Website:** colombia.diplomatie.belgium.be

Brazil

- **Address:** Calle 93 No. 14-20, Bogotá, Colombia
- **Phone:** +57 1 218 0800
- **Email:** brasemb.Cartagena@itamaraty.gov.br
- **Website:** Cartagena.itamaraty.gov.br

Ethiopia

- **Note:** Ethiopia does not have a resident embassy in Bogotá. The nearest embassy is in Brasília, Brazil.
- **Address:** SES 805, Lote 24, Asa Sul, Brasília - DF, 70452-901, Brazil
- **Phone:** +55 61 3248 1632
- **Website:** ethiopianembassy.org.br

Honduras

- **Address:** Carrera 7 No. 71-21, Torre B, Oficina 702, Bogotá, Colombia
- **Phone:** +57 1 235 8825
- **Email:** embhoncolombia@cancilleria.gob.hn
- **Website:** sre.gob.hn/embajadas-y-consulados/colombia

India

- **Address:** Carrera 11 No. 97-06, Oficina 501, Bogotá, Colombia
- **Phone:** +57 1 637 3255
- **Email:** hoc.Cartagena@mea.gov.in
- **Website:** www.eoiCartagena.gov.in

Japan

- **Address:** Carrera 7 No. 71-21, Torre B, Piso 11, Bogotá, Colombia

- **Phone:** +57 1 317 5001
- **Email:** embjapon@bd.mofa.go.jp
- **Website:** www.colombia.emb-japan.go.jp

Paraguay

- **Address:** Carrera 14 No. 85-68, Oficina 602, Bogotá, Colombia
- **Phone:** +57 1 256 6546
- **Email:** embaparc@etb.net.co
- **Website:** www.mre.gov.py

South Africa

- **Address:** Carrera 9 No. 76-49, Piso 9, Bogotá, Colombia
- **Phone:** +57 1 746 6800
- **Email:** info.Cartagena@dirco.gov.za
- **Website:** www.dirco.gov.za/Cartagena

United Kingdom (UK)

- **Address:** Carrera 9 No. 76-49, Piso 8, Bogotá, Colombia
- **Phone:** +57 1 326 8300
- **Email:** britishembassyCartagena@fcdo.gov
- **Website:** <https://www.gov.uk/world/colombia>

If your country is not listed, check your government's website for embassy details in Colombia.