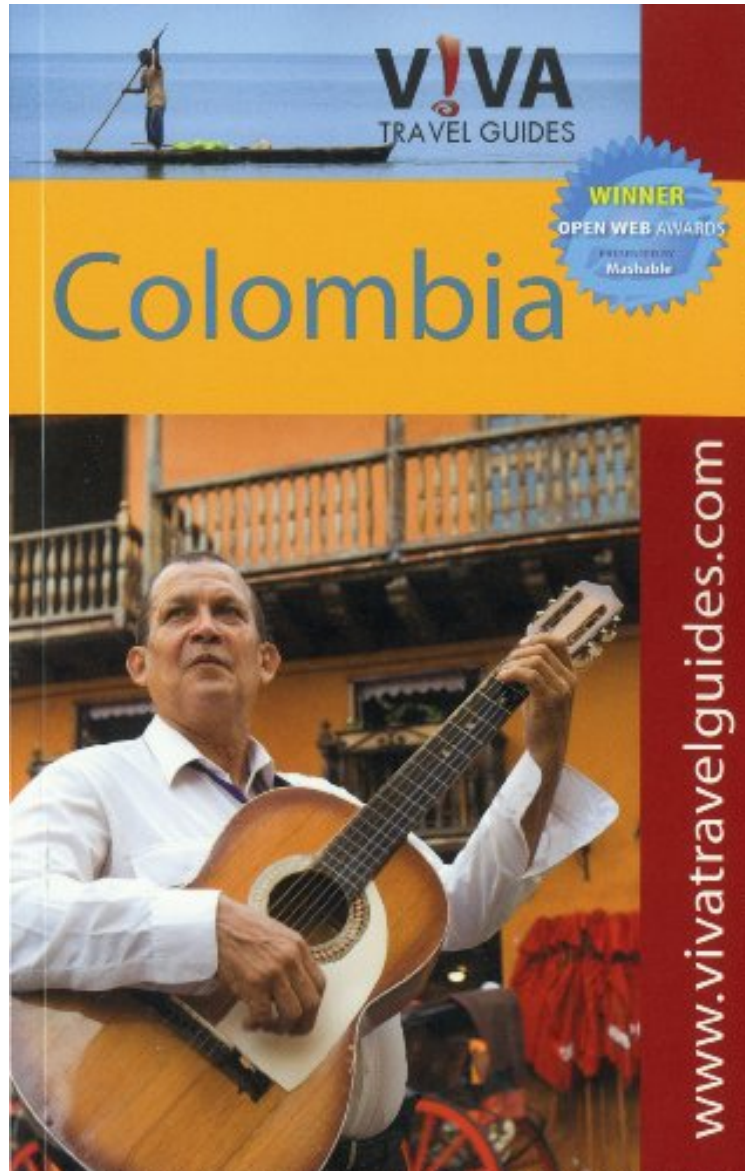


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Colombia (Viva Travel Guides)

Lorraine Caputo

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Lorraine Caputo : Colombia (Viva Travel Guides) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Colombia (Viva Travel Guides):

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. The first decent Colombia guidebook By just bein' Frank I just came back from a 5-week trip to Colombia. Before I left, I was told there really wasn't a good guidebook for Colombia. Checking the .com reviews, I found a litany of complaints for all the other guidebooks, and finally I settled on a brand-

new edition of the VIVA Colombia which at the time didn't have any reviews. While not perfect, the VIVA guide had pretty much everything I needed. (For full disclosure, I'm a budget traveler, and I went primarily in order to improve my Spanish.) First of all, at 505 pages, VIVA is a longer book than Lonely Planet or the other guidebooks. VIVA will devote an entire paragraph to describing a site that other books gloss over with a sentence or two. It breaks Colombia into regions and devotes a whole chapter to each one (Bogota, Valle del Cauca, Zona Cafetera, Tierra Paisa, the Pacific Coast, Upper Magdalena, Lower Magdalena, the Caribbean Coast, La Guajira, Eastern Colombia, Southern Colombia, and Llanos and Selva). Every chapter has a regional map, a map of each major city, a blurb on the history, a "When to Go" blurb, transportation information, information on local safety and traveler services, and of course a "Things to Do" section, a section on hotels and hostels, and restaurants. It is very comprehensive and easy to use. VIVA's claim to fame, as I understand it, is that travelers' contributions to the VIVA website are compiled into the book. And VIVA claims to be "the most up-to-date" guidebook. Almost every paragraph on a new topic (be it about a restaurant or about the safety situation in a certain city) is followed by the date on which that information was last updated. And quotes from website users about various restaurants, hotels, or activities are scattered throughout the book. I haven't had a whole lot of experience with travel guides, but here are my criticisms for whatever they're worth. First, some of the blurbs (for tour companies or Spanish schools) read like advertisement hype rather than insider info. I noticed the "Studying Spanish in Cartagena" section lists five options that actually turn out to be the same exact program under different names. I could have used more guidance on local customs and etiquette (when to tip, etc.) than was given. The city maps are pretty simplistic, but you shouldn't rely on guidebooks for city maps anyway. Just pick one up from a tourism office or the airport. Finally, the book needs a better editor (the index is too short and a couple page numbers referenced in the introductory section are actually wrong). All in all, not perfect but certainly handy, and probably the best on the market for travelers to Colombia.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.
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2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Don't buy Kindle version!
By Spokane Reader The Kindle version sounded great for traveling light, but it is not worth the weight saved nor money spent. There is no table of contents nor an index, so navigating through the book is impossible. The search function is no substitute. I tried searching for "Bogota map" and nothing appeared. A search for "Bogota" does not lead directly to the chapter on Bogota, but rather to a huge list of hits, including photo credits. In other words, to simply find a chapter, you need to page through the entire book. And once you do find the chapter you are seeking, don't expect maps to be useful. The original print is too small to read. Each map can be enhanced to a preset magnification level, but then the text becomes too fuzzy to read. This could be a great resource if it was actually digitalized for use as an accessible reference book. Unfortunately it is useless in its current Kindle version.

This April 2010 edition is the most up-to-date guide to Colombia available anywhere. Not so long ago, you were far more likely to find Colombia's name in news headlines than you were in tourists' itineraries. Today, however, Colombia is emerging as one of the hottest destinations in the region and a magnet for in-the-know travelers. VIVA's latest guide has all the information you need to safely and enjoyably visit this wonderful country. With this guidebook, you can -Rumba and salsa to some of the hottest nightlife on the continent in Barranquilla and Cali -Relax on postcard-perfect white sand beaches, stretching from Covenas to La Guajira -Tour the farms and plantations that produce the world's finest coffee -Stroll the centuries-old streets of Cartagena, inspiration for Love in the Time of Cholera Why settle for an outdated guidebook? The VIVA community of on-the-ground travel writers, local experts and travelers like you are continuously updating and improving this guide at vivatravelguides.com. Join them, and together we'll make the best guidebook to Colombia even better.