

## Venezuela Travel Guide



Los Roques archipelago at Venezuela

Come to Venezuela, a land of epic proportions. Venezuela has South America's largest lake and third-longest river, the highest waterfall in the world, and the longest of all snakes. It also has jaguars, armadillos, and spectacular landscapes.

The dry season in Venezuela is certainly more pleasant for traveling, particularly for hiking, or other outdoor activities. Sightseeing in cities or towns won't be greatly disturbed by rain because some sights, such as waterfalls, are actually more impressive in the wet season. The very famous Angel Falls is marvelous after heavy rains in the wet months. However, it is a thin ribbon of water in the dry season. Furthermore, the falls can be inaccessible by boat in dry months.

Normally, the Venezuelans are mad about traveling to visit friends, family, and the beach during Christmas that is till mid-January, the Carnival, which comes several days prior to Ash Wednesday and Semana Santa, that is the Holy Week before Easter Sunday. These periods are colorful and alive with a host of festivities, but you must plan ahead for accommodation and transport, especially for the new ones. Venezuela is a land of myriad landscapes and full of tropical beaches, immense plains, enormous rivers, forests, jungle, waterfalls and great mountains. The clear, warm waters of its Caribbean coastline are ideal for tourists, mainly for those who enjoy snorkeling and diving. Numerous islands off the coast invite visitors to explore.

The tropical lowlands boast an array of wildlife, lush vegetation, and dramatic waterfalls. You can also brave the high Andean peaks that is a challenge to trekkers and mountaineers.

The main attraction of the country is the "Angel Falls", which is about 16 times higher than the Niagara Falls. Venezuela also has the world's longest and highest cable car taking tourists from the university town of Mérida to the 4,765m-(15,629ft-) high Pico Espejo. The capital, Caracas, boasts of fine historical monuments, an excellent collection of museums and art galleries, and some excellent pieces of old and new architecture. Thus, visitors paying a visit to this country have the choice of a relaxing in resort experience, a cultural city break, or a wealth of adventurous activities.

### **Getting In and around**

Venezuela is a cherished tourist destination because of plethora of attractions present here. Reaching Venezuela is very easy due to the presence of the international airports as well as land and sea routes.

#### **Airways**

The major hub for international airlines is the Simon Bolivar International Airport (popularly known as Maiquetia airport) situated in the Vargas state. There are direct flight from the US and other major European cities. Various airlines operate here like Continental Airlines connecting Caracas to Houston daily and to Newark weekly. American Airlines operate daily flights from Miami, San Juan, Dallas, and New York. Delta Airlines provides one daily flight from Atlanta. Air Canada also provides a non-stop flight from Toronto twice a week. You also have flights from Europe, like non stop flights from Paris (Air France), Rome, and Milan (Alitalia), Madrid (Iberia, Air Europa, CONVIASA), Frankfurt (Lufthansa) and Lisbon, and Oporto (TAP). While the airlines like Avianca, Copa Airlines, TACA, Lloyd, LAN Chile and Aerolineas Argentinas link to the rest of Central America and South America.

All the major towns of Venezuela are connected to each other with scheduled services operated by domestic airlines,

such as Aeropostale, Aerotuy, Avensa, and Servivensa. Various discount tickets are offered by Avensa and Servivensa including special student and family offers to make it especially convenient for tourists.

#### **Car**

Venezuela is linked by road route to Colombia and Brazil. You also have here the road crossing to Brazil, not very far from Santa Elena de Uairén. This country is connected with Colombia from Cúcuta to Venezuela's frontier town of San Antonio del Táchira. Also, no visa is required if you for a day visit to Cúcuta. You can very conveniently come here by car though the border controls are quite strict.

#### **Bus**

There are bus services from Colombia, but the buses are not in exactly good condition. There are long-distance, international bus services from Caracas. The buses are very cheap over here. The quality of the different buses varies a lot. Self-drive cars are also available in Venezuela though at the airport and in major city centers they are quite expensive.

#### **Boat**

You can also choose to reach Venezuela by boats. There is a weekly service between Venezuela and Trinidad. In fact, the most secure and popular route is the coastal route between Maicao and Maracaibo and from Cúcuta and San Antonio del Táchira. Ferries in Venezuela link Puerto La Cruz with the Margarita Island. The journey takes approximately 2 hours and 45 minutes.

#### **Railways**

The East-West Railway transports both the passengers and cars from Acarigua and Maturin. Caracas itself has a 35-station metro rail service. Metro is comfortable and inexpensive.

#### **Taxis**

Share taxis are also used for traveling in Venezuela. These are operated by minibus companies and tend to serve as the main form of public transport in Caracas and major cities. The charges are similar to those of the buses and increase during the evenings and weekends. Tourists must always take the white taxis with yellow number plates or the Black Explorers from the airport. Thus, transportation in Venezuela is not at all a problem for tourists.

#### **Leisure**

The country has various nightclubs spread all over. These are found in the major cities of Venezuela. Besides, the National and Municipal Theatres offer a variety of concerts, ballet, plays, operas, and operettas. Theatres are seen mainly in Caracas. Tourists can also enjoy movies in a number of cinema halls in the country. The nightlife in Altamira – a posh neighborhood of Venezuela, situated near the hills, is something that should not be missed. Las Mercedes is a popular night hot spot. It is the night district of Caracas, a meeting point of people. It is also known for the best caraqueños and wine bars.

If you are an avid shopper, you would love to shop Venezuela handicrafts that are made by local Indian tribes. Some other items are gems and jewelry, cacique coins, gold, pearls, pompom slippers, seed necklaces, shoes and handbags, Indian bows, arrows, mats, pipes and baskets, alpargatas (traditional local footwear of the Campesinos), chinchorros (local hammocks), and many other Indian goods. Venezuela has 42 national parks ideal for hiking and trekking and around 20 nature reserves (monumentos naturales). The visitors can enjoy water sports here. Jakera Lodge multi-sport camp is the best place for all these activities of leisure. The Mochima 'abundant waters', a marvelous Caribbean coastline is a paradise for kayaking. You can also spot dolphins here. Overnight camping and dining are allowed over here.

Orinoco Delta, Los Roques, and the Amazonas are ideal for kayaking and other activities. White water kayaking opportunities are ample in Venezuela. Mountain biking can also be enjoyed in these areas.

#### **Places to see**

Venezuela has gobs of touristy places:

Morrocoy National Park

Mochima National Park

Canaima National Park

Altamira

Mount Roraima

Llovizna Falls

Playa El AguaMiraflores Palace

Miraflores Palace

#### **Tips**

In this country, the traffic is towards the right. All types of vehicles in Venezuela carry spare tires, wheel block, jack wrench, and special reflector triangle for emergencies. The roads are of different kinds though the main roads in Caracas are of good quality. Tourists may find some routes with potholes. On such roads, a 4-wheel drive is recommended. The petrol pump attendants on the roads do expect a tip. Tourists must have driving licenses for cars which remain valid for a year. International Driving Permits are also valid. Insurance certificates should also be possessed.

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