

COLOMBIA

TAKE A COFFEE BREAK

Colombia is the destination in South America that everyone is talking about. **Lisa Johnson** gives you the lowdown on the best way to see it. Illustrations by **Robert Littleford**

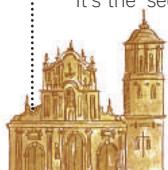


WHO TO KNOW

Julian Baker, the founder of **Colombia Direct**. 'Working in Colombia is very word of mouth,' says Baker, an ex-headhunter married to well-connected Colombian artist Juliana Bravo. His luxury travel company offers access to colonial houses, haciendas and island properties, including the fine **Casa Tropical** in the **Rosario Islands**. www.travelcolombiadirect.com



Harry Hastings, the founder of **PlanBA**. From spring 2012, this Buenos Aires-based travel concierge service is extending its area of operation to Colombia. '**Popayán**, below, is one of my favourite places,' says Hastings, son of erstwhile *Daily Telegraph* editor Max. 'It's the second best preserved colonial city in Colombia, with hardly a tourist.' www.planba.com



WHERE TO GO

Long popular with indigenous tourists, the **Coffee Triangle** was recently made a UNESCO World Heritage sites. The British-run **Colombia57** has introduced tours of the Manizales-Pereira-Armenia area, including a coffee masterclass developed with the **Hacienda San Alberto**, and accommodation at the **Hacienda Bambusa**. www.colombia57.com

Bordering Venezuela in north-east Colombia, the **Guajira Peninsula** is a surreal region of bone-dry desert and empty beaches, sparsely



populated by the Wayuu Indians. Colombia Direct has just introduced a **three-night eco tour** of this remote area. www.travelcolombiadirect.com

WHERE TO STAY



Deep Blue, Providencia. This luxe 14-room island hotel is a good base for diving the world's third longest reef. www.hoteldeepblue.com; doubles from 310,000 Colombian pesos (about £110)

Karmairi Hotel Spa, near Cartagena. At this Balinese-inspired 14-room hotel, the swimming pool overlooks the beach. www.karmairi.com; doubles from US\$120

The Charlee, Medellin. A new 'lifestyle hotel' with 42 rooms in a city once best known for its dangers. www.thecharlee.com; doubles from US\$215



WHEN TO PARTY

Latin American and international writers and intellectuals gather every January at the **Hay Festival Cartagena** (26–29 January 2012). www.hayfestival.com/cartagena



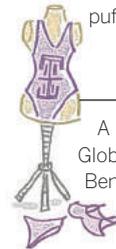
Colombia Direct is offering trips to the next **Barranquilla Carnival** on **18–21 February 2012**, a celebration of **cumbia** music held in Shakira's native city. www.travelcolombiadirect.com

WHAT TO BUY

Filigree jewellery from **Mompox**. Once an important port on the **Magdalena River**, the island of



Mompox is known for its gold- and silver jewellery. Juliana Bravo designs modern limited-edition pieces in the same tradition (silver puffer fish, US\$150). julianabravo@hotmail.co.uk



A **Pitahaya bikini**. Globetrotter Chechy Benedetti's Pitahaya swimwear incorporates **molas** (geometric crochet appliqués) hand-stitched by Ole-Tule Kuna Indian women. She has a boutique in the old-town district of Cartagena. www.pitahaya.swimsuits.com