

Come to the overwhelming natural paradise of Venezuela! Let yourself be enchanted by the diversity of the Andes Mountains, cross undiscovered rainforests and romantic cloud forests, explore the lowlands of the Llanos and find dream beaches in the Caribbean for relaxation, snorkeling or scuba diving. Let the Venezuelan adventure begin - let's climb from 0 to 4,800 m!



VENEZUELA - TRAVEL INFORMATION A-Z

Arrival

Please check the current entry and visa requirements with your embassy.

To enter the country you must exhibit a valid passport expiring 6 months after the planned date of exit. Compliance with this provision has lately been controlled more strictly; non-compliance may cause the denial of entry. Also children's passports are accepted as long as they contain a photograph.

When entering the country by air, all tourists are handed out tourist cards during the flight, usually entitling to a stay of up to 60 days; different Venezuelan customs authorities may sometimes grant longer stays. Passport holders must return the green duplicate upon exit.

Visas for entering Venezuela are now only required for arrivals by sailing boat, entrance category "Embarcaciones Deportivas".

When leaving the country by air, passengers must pay an exit tax currently totaling 62 U.S. Dollars, unless it has already been included in the airfare.

Banking

Money exchange is possible in exchange offices (casas de cambio) and banks, mostly only in major cities. Frequently hotel exchange rates are less favorable.

Banking hours: Mon-Fri 08:30 - 11:30 a.m. and 02:00 - 04:30 p.m.

Climate

Venezuela has a tropical, i. e. year round hot and, during the rain period, humid climate. The rainy season typically lasts from April through September. Rain showers occur usually around noon or in the afternoon and rarely last for more than an hour. The difference in temperature is only 4 degrees Celsius in the year! However, considerably stronger is the difference in temperature in the course of a day. And the climate varies from region to region. While the plains exhibit a tropical climate year round, its weather in the highlands is rather moderate, whereas in high regions above 2,000 m a. s. l., it may become quite cold.

Communications

Mail: Airmail to Europe and North America may take somewhat between 3 days and 5 weeks; domestic mail may take sometimes even longer. Maritime and surface to Europe and North America takes at least one month. Apart from stamps, post offices (ipostel) also provide special airmail paper already including postage. Mailboxes for mail to foreign countries are marked extranjero resp. internacional. Post office hours are Mon - Fri from 08:00 a.m. to 06:00 p.m. Always consider a lunch break of 2 to 3 hours.

Telephone: Direct Distance Dialing. International Area Code: +58. Venezuela has an extended landline and mobile telephone network. Domestic companies CANTV and TELCEL in every city maintain several communications centers (Centros de comunicaciones), from where it is quite easy to phone home. These centers usually also maintain cheap internet services. It is rather not recommended to make phone calls from hotels, since these charge elevated telephone rates. You may also ask for R calls, where the receiving party pays for the call. It is possible also without a phone card, just lift the handset and dial 0800-1001-49-0 (as an example for Germany). The area code for Venezuela is +58.

Fax: Available in all major hotels

Internet: There are internet cafés in all major cities.

Currency

1 Bolívar = 100 céntimos. Bank notes circulate in denominations of 50,000, 20,000, 10,000, 5,000, 2,000, 1,000 and 500 Bs.; coins of 500, 100, 50, 20 and 10 Bs. US\$ are generally accepted.

ec-/Maestro cards/Sparcard: Cards exhibiting the Cirrus or Maestro logo are accepted worldwide.

Credit cards: American Express, Eurocard, MasterCard, Visa and partly Diners Club are accepted.

Traveler checks: Should be issued in U.S. Dollars. Frequently travelers are asked to exhibit their proof of purchase when cashing in traveler checks. Visa and Mastercard least problematic at the moment of getting cash, or pay one's bill in expensive hotels and restaurants or buy in shops. Lines in front of ATMs may

sometimes be very long, especially on the first day of the month when many banks are closed, and the days before long weekends – then many ATMs are completely empty already in the morning

Customs

The following articles may be brought into Venezuela free of duty: 200 cigarettes and 25 cigars; 2 l of alcoholic beverages; 4 perfume flacons; new goods up to a value of 1,000 US\$.

Electric power

220 V, 60 Hz, American flat plugs are required.

Geography

Venezuela is situated in the northern part of South America and has a total surface of 916,445 km². In the north, it borders the Caribbean Sea, in the east Guyana and the Atlantic Ocean, in the south Brazil and in the west and southwest Colombia. The country is divided in four regions: the Western Highlands, the Northwestern Maracaibo Basin, the extensive Orinoco Lowlands and the Llanos, and the Mountainous Region of Guyana, which makes up for almost 50% of the country's surface. Venezuela's capital city is Caracas, with 1,808,940 inhabitants (2006) and approx. 3,4m inhabitants considering the periphery.

Government

Presidential democracy; President is elected for a term of six years, one possibility of reelection.

Holidays

01.01. New Year's Eve
Feb. Carnival
Easter: Holy Thursday & Good Friday
19.04. Day of the Declaration of Independence
01.05. Labor Day
24.06. Battle of Carabobo
05.07. Día de la Independencia (Independence Day)
24.07. Birthday of Simón Bolívar
12.10. Columbus Day
24./ 25.12. Christmas
31.12. New Year's Eve

These are the public holidays. In addition there are various regional holidays.

Language

Venezuela's official language is Spanish. Indian languages are regionally used. English, French, German and Portuguese are also partially spoken.

Photographing and Filming

South America is ideal for taking pictures. Both landscapes and persons provide marvelous motifs. However, as everywhere in the world, it is a sign of respect to ask people for their permission before taking photos of them (unless you can shoot discretely). Nonetheless, especially with large crowds and poor neighborhoods caution may be indicated. Refineries, government buildings, policemen, security personnel and soldiers must not be photographed. It is advisable to bring along films and batteries from home, since they are relatively expensive in Venezuela. In Caracas, caution is advised not to get pick pocketed while shooting pictures. Generally speaking, one should not carry cameras very evidently.

Population

Venezuela has approximately 26 million inhabitants. Of these, 75 - 80 % are mestizos, 15 - 20 % of European, 3 - 5 % of African and 2 % of indigenous descent.

Shopping

Among the shopping suggestions for Venezuela are gems, jewelry, Cacique coins, gold, pearls, shoes, hand bags, Indian bow and arrows, mats, pipes, baskets, alpargatas (traditional local footwear of campesinos) and chinchorros (hammocks).

Shopping hours: Mon-Sat 09:00 a.m. - 01:00 p.m. and 03:00 – 07:00 p.m.

Time zones

There is no daylight saving time in Venezuela. The time difference with GMT is -4:30 hours.

Tips

The amounts are at the guest's discretion. Most bars and restaurants include 10% official tips, another 10% are customary. Hotel personnel also expect tips; taxi drivers get tips if they help with the luggage. In Caracas more tips are given than in other parts of the country. In the case of excursions or activities tips can/should be given of max. 5 US\$ per participant.

Vaccines

No mandatory vaccines are required to enter Venezuela. Due to the occurrence of yellow fever in rural areas, however, vaccination against Yellow Fever prior to travel is urgently advised, especially when planning a visit to the inland.

Although in contrast with official provisions, occasionally a cholera vaccination certificate may be demanded, especially where there are cases of Cholera in the country of origin or if entering the country at checkpoints different from the capital city's international airport. There are occasional cholera cases; however, tourists are usually not affected.

For a short stay in the country vaccination against Hepatitis A, Tetanus and Diphtheria are recommended. For longer stays, additionally vaccination against Hepatitis B, Typhoid, and Rabies may be recommendable.

There is an all-year high risk of Malaria, especially in the rainforest areas. For this reason, protection against mosquito bites by means of mosquito nets and / or anti-mosquito sprays or liquids (e. g. Autan, NoBite) is strongly advised. For medicated malaria prophylaxis, several prescription medicines are commercially available (e. g. Malarone, Doxycycline, Lariam). Their personal choice and dose, as well as possible side effects or intolerances as a result of the intake of other drugs should in any case be discussed prior to traveling with a specialist for tropical or travel medicine. The insect-borne so-called dengue fever occurs frequently and especially during the rain period epidemically.