

Medellín 90-Day Survival Guide

Long-stay city guide for budget nomads.

For The Lean Nomad — Built 2026-07-19

0. City Overview & Quick Facts

Medellín is a premier hub for budget digital nomads, offering a high quality of life at a fraction of Western costs. The city is divided into distinct neighborhoods, with El Poblado serving as the tourist and nightlife center, Laureles offering a more traditional residential feel with wide walkable streets, and Envigado providing a quieter, local atmosphere. For those on a budget, focusing your search for housing in Laureles or Envigado often yields better value than the premium prices of Poblado.

The city is renowned for its “Eternal Spring” climate, meaning you can pack light with layers rather than heavy winter gear. While the city is generally welcoming, safety is neighborhood-dependent; stick to the established nomad zones (Poblado, Laureles, Envigado) and follow the local mantra “*No dar pa-paya*” (don’t put yourself in a position to be taken advantage of) by avoiding flashing expensive jewelry or electronics in public.

Quick Facts

- **Population:** ~2.6M (City) / ~4M (Metro)
- **Elevation:** 1,495m
- **Climate:** “Eternal Spring” (15-28°C / 59-82°F)
- **Currency:** Colombian Peso (COP) | Approx. 3,260 COP per 1 USD
- **Time Zone:** UTC-5
- **Power:** 110V (US standard plugs)
- **Visa:** Visa-free for 90 days (extendable up to 180 days per calendar year)
- **Airports:** MDE (José María Córdova in Rionegro) and EOH (Olaya Herrera in the city)
- **Safe Nomad Areas:** El Poblado, Laureles, Envigado

1. Landing — First 72 Hours

Step 1: Arrival at MDE (José María Córdova)

You will land in Rionegro, approximately 45–60 minutes outside Medellín.

- **Budget Option (Airport Bus):** Follow signs for the airport bus. Cost is ~20,000 COP (~\$5 USD). These run frequently and drop you at the San Diego terminal or designated stops.
- **Comfort Option (Taxi/Private):** Use the official taxi stand inside the terminal. Expect to pay 80,000–120,000 COP (~\$20–\$30 USD). Confirm the price before entering the vehicle.

Step 2: Connectivity & Cash

Do not rely on airport Wi-Fi for long-term planning.

- **SIM Card:** Look for Claro, Movistar, or Tigo kiosks in the arrivals hall. Claro generally has the best coverage. Buy a prepaid SIM and a basic data package (~\$10–\$15 USD).
- **Cash:** Use an ATM at the airport to withdraw Colombian Pesos (COP). While cards are accepted in malls and hotels, you will need cash for buses, street food, and small shops.

Step 3: Checking In

Head to your pre-booked accommodation.

- **El Poblado:** Best for those wanting a high concentration of cafes, nightlife, and other nomads. High walkability but more expensive.
- **Laureles:** Best for a more “local” feel, flatter streets, and a slightly more budget-friendly atmosphere.

Step 4: First Meal

Avoid the overpriced airport food. Once in the city, find a local “Menú del Día” (Menu of the Day).

- **Recommendation:** Look for a local *estancia* or small restaurant offering a soup, main course (protein, rice, beans, salad), and a natural juice.
- **Budget:** Expect to pay between \$4–\$7 USD for a complete, filling lunch.

2. Visa & Immigration

Tourist Entry & Duration

Citizens of the US, Canada, EU, and Australia typically receive a **90-day visa-free entry** stamp upon arrival. This is a tourist permit (Permiso de Ingreso y Permanencia - PIP).

The maximum stay allowed per calendar year is **180 days**. This means you can stay for 90 days, extend for another 90, or leave and return later in the year, provided the total days do not exceed 180.

Extending Your Stay

To extend your stay for an additional 90 days without leaving the country:

1. **Timeline:** Apply at least 15 days before your current stamp expires.
2. **Process:** Visit a **Migración Colombia** office. In Medellín, this is typically handled at the office located in the city center or at the airport.
3. **Requirements:** Bring your valid passport and proof of payment for the extension fee (approximately \$20–\$50 USD, paid via PSE or at authorized banks).
4. **Digital**

Option: Extensions can often be requested via the official Migración Colombia website, though in-person visits are more reliable for immediate processing.

Digital Nomad Visa (V Nómada Digital)

For those planning to stay longer than 180 days, Colombia offers a specific Digital Nomad Visa. * **Duration:** Valid for up to 2 years. * **Requirements:** Proof of remote employment (contract or letter) and a minimum monthly income (typically around \$900–\$1,200 USD, though this fluctuates based on the current minimum wage). * **Application:** Applied for online through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Cancillería).

Overstay Penalties

Overstaying your permit is a serious offense. * **Fines:** If you overstay, you will be required to pay a fine at the airport upon departure. Fines vary based on the length of the overstay but can range from \$50 to several hundred USD. * **Payment:** Fines must be paid via a specific bank voucher (recibo) before you are allowed to board your flight.

Exit Stamp Rules

Always ensure your passport is stamped upon exit. While many modern airports use electronic records, a physical exit stamp is the only definitive proof that you left the country. This is critical if you ever need to dispute an overstay or apply for a long-term visa in the future.

3. Money & Banking

Cash vs. Cards Colombia is still a cash-heavy society. While malls, hotels, and upscale restaurants in El Poblado or Laureles accept credit cards, small cafes, street vendors, taxis, and local markets require Colombian Pesos (COP). Always carry a small stash of cash for daily essentials.

ATMs & Fees Most ATMs charge a local convenience fee. To minimize costs, use a debit card that reimburses ATM fees (like Charles Schwab). * **Best ATMs:** Davivienda and BBVA are generally reliable and widely available. * **Tip:** If the ATM asks if you want it to perform the currency conversion, always select “**Decline Conversion**” to let your home bank handle the rate; the ATM rate is significantly worse.

Wise & Remitly Do not use traditional wire transfers. Use **Wise** or **Remitly** to send money to yourself or others. These platforms offer the best exchange rates and lowest fees. You can send money to a local Colombian bank account (if you open one) or use them to fund your travel cards.

Bill Denominations Common bills include 2,000, 5,000, 10,000, 20,000, 50,000, and 100,000 COP. * **Warning:** 50,000 and 100,000 COP bills are often rejected

by small vendors or taxi drivers who lack change. Try to break large bills at supermarkets or pharmacies.

USD Acceptance USD is **not** accepted for daily transactions. While some high-end hotels or jewelry stores might quote prices in USD, you will almost always be required to pay in COP. Exchange houses (*Casas de Cambio*) offer better rates than airports for swapping physical USD cash to COP.

Tipping Culture Tipping is not mandatory but is appreciated. * **Restaurants:** A 10% tip is standard. The server will often ask, “¿Desea incluir el servicio?” (Do you wish to include the service?). You can say yes to add it to the bill or leave cash on the table. * **Taxis/Uber:** Tipping is not expected, but rounding up to the nearest thousand is common.

Exchange Rate Reference Budget based on approximately **3,260 COP = 1 USD**.

4. Neighborhoods & Housing

Finding a home base in Medellín requires balancing noise, safety, and budget. For a 90-day stay, most nomads start in a hotel or Airbnb and transition to a monthly rental.

Neighborhood Comparison

Area	Best For	Monthly Rent (USD)	The Catch
El Poblado	Nightlife & Networking	\$800 - 1,200	High noise levels; “tourist prices”
Laureles	Cafes & Walkability	\$600 - 900	Further from the main party hub
Envigado	Local Feel & Quiet	\$500 - 750	Less English spoken; residential
Sabaneta	Budget & Tradition	\$400 - 650	Long commute to El Poblado
Estadio	Value & Transit	\$450 - 700	Can be loud during match days

Short-Term Landing Pads

If you need a place for your first 7–14 days while hunting for a long-term apartment, consider these options:

El Poblado (High Energy/Luxury) * **The Charlee Hotel:** Luxury lifestyle stay with a rooftop pool. Best for those with a high budget who want to be in the heart of Parque Lleras. (~\$120-250/night). * **Diez Hotel:** Modern design boutique hotel. Mid-to-upper range. (~\$80-160/night). * **Hotel 574:** A reliable, well-reviewed mid-range option in the trendy district. (~\$70-140/night).

Laureles & Estadio (Quiet/Mid-Range) * **Inntu Hotel:** Contemporary mid-range hotel in Laureles near Estadio. A quieter alternative to Poblado. (~\$50-100/night). * **Hotel Punto 70:** Conveniently located diagonally opposite the Estadio metro station. * **Sauces del Estadio:** Budget-friendly option located at Cra 69 No.49A-30. * **Hotel Conquistadores & Hotel Egina:** Additional mid-range options for those prioritizing proximity to the city's northern hubs.

Short-Term Rental Strategy

1. **The “Landing” Phase:** Book a hotel or Airbnb for the first 2 weeks. Do not sign a long-term lease sight-unseen.
2. **The “Hunt” Phase:** Use Facebook Marketplace or local real estate agents. Walk the neighborhood you want to live in; many “Se Alquila” (For Rent) signs are not listed online.
3. **The Negotiation:** For 3-month stays, negotiate a “monthly rate” rather than a nightly one. Ensure the price includes *administración* (building fees) and utilities.

Move-In Checklist

- ☐ **Internet Speed Test:** Run a Speedtest.net check during a video call to ensure the Wi-Fi handles your workload.
- ☐ **Noise Audit:** Visit the apartment at 10:00 PM. Check for nearby bars, construction, or loud neighbors.
- ☐ **Water Pressure:** Test the shower and toilets; inconsistent pressure is common in older buildings.
- ☐ **Security:** Verify the building has a 24/7 *portería* (doorman/security) and a secure entrance.
- ☐ **Inventory:** Take photos of any existing damage to the unit before moving in to ensure your deposit is returned.

5. Transport

Airport Transfers

- **José María Córdova International Airport (MDE):** Located in Rionegro (~45 km east of the city).
 - **Official Airport Bus:** ~\$5 USD (20,000 COP).
 - **Taxi/Private Transfer:** ~\$20–30 USD (80,000–120,000 COP).

- **Olaya Herrera Airport (EOH):** Located within the city (Carrera 65 # 13-157). Used for domestic and regional flights.

Public Transit

- **Metro de Medellín:** A clean, safe system integrating trains, **Metroplus** (BRT), and **Metrocable** (gondolas).
 - **Standard Fare:** ~\$0.70 USD (2,800–3,000 COP).
 - **Arvi Cable Line:** This is a tourist-specific line; fare is ~\$3.30 USD (13,400 COP) each way.
- **Bus Terminals:**
 - **Terminal del Norte (Carrera 64C # 78-580):** Main hub for north/east destinations including Bogotá, Cartagena, and Guatapé. Connected via Metro.
 - **Terminal del Sur (Carrera 65 # 8B-91):** Located across from Olaya Herrera airport. Serves south/west destinations including Jardín and Santa Fe de Antioquia.

Ride-Hailing & Taxis

For point-to-point travel, use **Uber**, **DiDi**, or **InDriver**. These are generally preferred over street taxis for transparent pricing and safety.

Do You Need a Car?

No. Between the integrated Metro system and affordable ride-hailing apps, a rental car is unnecessary and impractical due to heavy city traffic and limited parking.

6. Food & Dining

Eating Strategy & Budget

To survive 90 days without draining your budget, balance your diet between *Menús del Día* (fixed-price lunch specials) and curated dining experiences.

Price Tiers: * **Budget (\$3–\$7 USD):** Local *fondas*, street vendors, and *Menú del Día* (soup, main, juice). * **Mid-Range (\$10–\$25 USD):** Casual dining, specialized cafes, and “fine-casual” spots. * **High-End (\$30+ USD):** Upscale contemporary restaurants and tasting menus.

Must-Try Dishes

- **Bandeja Paisa:** The regional heavyweight; beans, rice, chicharrón, egg, chorizo, avocado, and arepa.
- **Mondongo:** Traditional tripe soup.
- **Arepas:** Corn cakes; eaten plain or stuffed with cheese/meat.

- **Empanadas:** Fried corn dough filled with meat or cheese.
- **Ajiaco:** Hearty potato and corn soup (Bogotá style, but available city-wide).
- **Sancocho:** Thick meat and vegetable stew.
- **Fresh Fruit/Jugo:** Freshly squeezed juices and exotic fruit bowls found at every corner.
- **Coffee:** World-class Colombian beans; try it black or as a *tinto*.

Recommended POIs

Traditional & Local Comfort

- **Mondongos** (Carrera 38 #8A-40, El Poblado): The gold standard for traditional *mondongo* and authentic Paisa cuisine.
- **El Pilon Guarceño** (Cra 43 B # 8-52, Parque El Poblado): Located on the southwest corner of the park; excellent for traditional local flavors.
- **La República Restaurante:** Popular spot for Colombian comfort food in a casual setting.
- **Restaurante Colosal:** Known for generous portions and high-rated local flavors.

Contemporary & Creative

- **Oci Medellín** (El Poblado): A top-tier fine-casual destination for acclaimed contemporary dishes.
- **Malanga del Trópico:** Creative tropical and Latin-inspired cuisine.

International Flavors

- **Fenicia** (Cra. 73 # circular 2 - 41, Laureles): Specialized Middle Eastern cuisine located on Ave Jardin.
- **Al Patio** (Carrera 38 No.19 -265 Km 2 Vía las Palmas): High-quality Mexican and seafood.
- **Milagros** (Carrera 48 # 26 Sur 87): Mexican cuisine located near Hotel Plaza Rosa.
- **Mystic Restaurante** (Cra. 65 #48-108, Suramericana): A diverse dining option in the Suramericana area.

Logistics & Safety

- **Delivery Apps:** Download **Rappi**. It is the dominant app for food, groceries, and pharmacy deliveries in Medellín.
- **Food Safety:** Stick to bottled or filtered water. In street markets, ensure empanadas and arepas are fried fresh and hot.
- **Tipping:** A 10% tip (*propina*) is standard and usually asked if you want to include it in the bill (“¿Desea incluir la propina?”).

7. Remote Work & Coworking

Internet & Connectivity

Medellín is a top-tier hub for digital nomads with widespread fiber optic coverage. Expect speeds between 100-250 Mbps in most coworking spaces and modern Airbnbs. Power reliability is generally high, but occasional outages occur during heavy storms; always keep your devices charged.

SIM Data Plans: Purchase a local SIM (Claro or Tigo) for a reliable backup. Data is cheap and essential for tethering if your accommodation's WiFi fails.

Coworking Spaces

Prices typically range from \$10–\$20 for day passes and \$100–\$250 for monthly memberships.

El Poblado Area: * **Selina Cowork El Poblado:** (Carrera 36 #10A-37) Attached to the Selina hostel. Offers day passes and monthly memberships with a strong nomad-friendly vibe. * **WeWork Medellín:** (Calle 26 #69-76 / Ruta N area) Global brand offering flexible month-to-month desks, private offices, and day passes. Multiple locations available. * **Atomhouse:** (Astorga/Provenza corridor) Specialized for developers. Features 250 Mbps stable WiFi with ISP failover. Day pass ~\$12, weekly ~\$45, monthly ~\$120–\$150. * **Tinkko Coworking:** Local chain with high-speed WiFi (150+ Mbps). Day pass ~\$10–\$13, monthly ~\$100–\$140. * **Semilla Coworking:** Highly recommended by expats in the Poblado/Laureles area for its nomad-friendly atmosphere. * **Regus Medellín:** International serviced offices and coworking centers located in El Poblado and other districts.

Laureles & Other Areas: * **Velo Coworking:** Located in the Laureles/El Poblado area. Popular with freelancers for its budget hot desks and monthly memberships. * **Tinkko Coworking:** Additional locations available in Laureles and Centro. * **Regus Medellín:** Business centers available in Laureles and Centro.

Café Work Culture

Working from cafés is common in El Poblado and Laureles. Most “laptop-friendly” cafés provide free WiFi with a purchase, but speeds are less consistent than coworking spaces. For deep work or important Zoom calls, stick to dedicated coworking spaces or Atomhouse to ensure ISP failover and stability.

8. Healthcare

Emergency Services

For all emergencies, dial **123**. This is the general emergency line for police, fire, and ambulance services.

Navigating the System: Private vs. Public

Colombia has a dual healthcare system. As a digital nomad, you should prioritize **private clinics (Clínicas)** over public hospitals. Private facilities offer shorter wait times, higher standards of English proficiency, and better amenities.

Recommended Hospitals & Clinics

Medellín is a medical hub with world-class facilities. Look for **JCI (Joint Commission International)** accreditation for the highest global standards of patient safety.

- **Hospital Pablo Tobón Uribe (HPTU):** Calle 78B No. 69-240, Barrio Robledo. JCI-accredited non-profit with strong emergency/trauma services and English-speaking patient coordinators. +57 604 445 9425 | <https://hptu.org/en>
- **Clínica Las Américas Auna:** Diagonal 75B # 2A-80, Belén. Large private hospital (300+ beds) with an international patient office and comprehensive specialties. English-speaking staff are often available. +57 604 345 8357.
- **Clínica CES:** Calle 7 # 39-290. Private university hospital renowned for research and top-tier specialists.
- **Hospital San Vicente Fundación:** Calle 64 # 51D-154. Major university-affiliated complex with strong emergency and specialist services. +57 604 448 2626 | <https://www.sanvicentefundacion.com/> (Alt: +57 604 444 1333).

Accessing Care & Costs

- **Walk-ins:** For non-emergencies, you can walk into most private clinics for a consultation. You will typically pay an upfront fee (copay) for the visit.
- **Costs:** Out-of-pocket specialist consultations generally range from \$30 to \$80 USD.
- **Pharmacies:** “Droguerías” are on nearly every corner. Many pharmacists can provide basic medical advice and sell over-the-counter medications that may require prescriptions in your home country. For controlled substances, a Colombian prescription is strictly required.

Health Insurance for Nomads

Do not rely on local public health (EPS) as a foreigner on a short-term stay. * **Travel Insurance:** Ensure your policy covers “Medical Evacuation” and “International Hospitalization.” * **Nomad Insurance:** Use providers like SafetyWing or World Nomads. * **Payment:** Most top-tier clinics in Medellín accept major international insurance, but be prepared to pay upfront and file for reimbursement via your provider.

9. Dental

Medellín is a global hub for dental tourism, offering high-quality care at a fraction of US/EU prices. Most clinics catering to nomads are bilingual and use modern technology.

Estimated Pricing (USD)

- **Routine Cleaning:** \$30 – \$50
- **Dental Crown:** \$300 – \$500
- **Dental Implant:** \$800 – \$1,500

Recommended Clinics

- **Colombia Care Dental:** Located in the Q Office Building, El Poblado. English-speaking clinic focused on international patients. Specializes in implants, crowns, veneers, and cleanings.
 - Phone: +57 301 114 6858 | <https://colombiacaredental.com/>
- **International Smiles:** Located at Calle 11 # 30A-21. A holistic dental clinic for international patients with bilingual professionals. Specializes in implants, veneers, and crowns.
 - Phone: +57 300 611 8015 | <https://internationalsmiles.co/>
- **Oralstudio:** General and cosmetic dentistry utilizing 3D technology. English services available.
 - <https://oralstudio.com.co/en/>
- **International Smiles Medellín:** Dental-tourism oriented clinic focusing on implants and cosmetic work for international patients.

Practical Advice

- **Insurance:** Most international travel insurance policies cover emergency dental (pain relief/extractions) but not elective cosmetic work or routine cleanings. Confirm your coverage before booking.
- **Quality:** Look for clinics that provide digital X-rays and 3D imaging to ensure precision, especially for implants.
- **Scheduling:** For major work (crowns/implants), allow at least 2 weeks in the city to account for lab turnaround times and follow-up appointments.

10. Safety & Emergency

Crime Reality & Neighborhoods

- **El Poblado & Laureles:** Generally safe for nomads. Petty theft (pick-pocketing) is the primary risk. Stay vigilant in crowded areas and avoid walking alone on deserted streets after midnight.
- **El Centro (La Candelaria):** High energy by day, high risk by night. Avoid walking through Centro after dark. Crime rates increase significantly once shops close; stick to registered taxis or Uber for transit.
- **General Rule:** “No dar papaya” (Don’t give papaya). This means don’t make yourself an easy target by flashing wealth or negligence.

Common Scams

- **The “Friendly” Local:** Be wary of strangers who over-share personal information to build instant trust before asking for money or offering “exclusive” tours.
- **Unregulated Taxis:** Always use apps (Uber, Cabify, InDrive) or requested radio taxis. Avoid hailing random cabs on the street in unfamiliar areas.
- **The “Free” Sample/Gift:** Ignore street vendors pushing unsolicited products or “free” samples that lead to aggressive solicitation.

Emergency Numbers

- **123:** General Emergency (Police, Ambulance, Fire). This is the primary number for all crises.
- **112:** International emergency standard; generally redirects to local services.
- **125:** Fire Department.

Natural Risks

- **Landslides:** During the heavy rainy season (typically April–May and October–November), avoid hiking in steep, unstable terrain or staying in precarious hillside housing.
- **Flash Floods:** Heavy rains can cause sudden street flooding in lower-lying areas of the city.

Phone & Security Habits

- **The “Decoy” Phone:** Carry a cheap, older smartphone for street use (GPS, calling Ubers) and keep your expensive primary device hidden in your bag.
- **ATM Safety:** Use ATMs located inside shopping malls or bank branches. Avoid street-side ATMs, especially at night.

- **Digital Security:** Use a VPN on public Wi-Fi in cafes. Enable Two-Factor Authentication (2FA) on all financial accounts.
- **Bag Choice:** Use a crossbody bag or a front-facing backpack. Never leave your phone on a cafe table or your bag on the back of a chair.

Solo Traveler Tips

- **Share Your Location:** Use WhatsApp “Live Location” with a trusted friend or fellow nomad when exploring new areas.
- **Blend In:** Avoid wearing expensive jewelry, luxury watches, or high-end camera gear prominently.
- **Transport:** Always use ride-sharing apps rather than walking long distances at night, even in “safe” neighborhoods.

11. Weather by Month

Medellín is known as the “City of Eternal Spring.” Because of its elevation, it lacks traditional seasons. Instead, it has wet and dry cycles. Temperatures remain consistent year-round, but the “feel” changes based on cloud cover and rain.

Month	High/Low (°C)	Rain	Notes
January	27° / 16°	Low	Peak dry season; sunny and clear.
February	27° / 16°	Low	Very dry; ideal for outdoor exploration.
March	27° / 16°	Low	Transition month; still mostly dry.
April	26° / 16°	High	Heavy rains; frequent afternoon storms.
May	26° / 16°	High	Peak rainy season; high humidity.
June	26° / 16°	Moderate	Drier window; pleasant for walking.
July	26° / 16°	Moderate	Generally sunny with occasional showers.
August	26° / 16°	Moderate	Drier window; mild temperatures.

Month	High/Low (°C)	Rain	Notes
September	26° / 16°	High	Rain returns; unpredictable showers.
October	26° / 16°	High	Heavy rain; grey skies.
November	26° / 16°	High	Peak rainy season; high cloud cover.
December	27° / 16°	Low	Dry season begins; festive and sunny.

Packing List

Avoid packing a heavy winter coat; you will not need it in the city. Focus on layers to handle the temperature drops at night and the sudden rain.

- **Lightweight Rain Jacket/Windbreaker:** Essential. Rain can start instantly.
- **Comfortable Walking Shoes:** Waterproof sneakers or leather boots are preferred over mesh trainers during rainy months.
- **Light Sweater or Hoodie:** For evenings and air-conditioned coworking spaces.
- **Breathable Clothing:** Linen or cotton t-shirts and trousers.
- **Small Travel Umbrella:** Cheaply available locally for ~\$5–\$10 USD if forgotten.
- **Sun Protection:** High-SPF sunscreen and sunglasses (the Andean sun is strong).

12. Shopping & Daily Life

Mall Culture & Shopping

Malls in Medellín are social hubs and the safest bet for finding international brands, electronics, and air conditioning.

- **El Poblado Area:**
 - **El Tesoro Parque Comercial** (Carrera 25 # 1A Sur-45): Upscale, open-air center with high-end brands and panoramic city views.
 - **Centro Comercial Santafé** (Carrera 43A # 7 Sur-170): Large, modern mall with a wide variety of international stores and a massive food court.
 - **Oviedo Centro Comercial** (Av El Poblado Cr 43 A # 6 S 15): Conveniently located for those staying in the heart of Poblado.

- **Laureles Area:**
 - **Centro Comercial Unicentro** (Carrera 66B # 34A-76): A massive hub with 270 shops, Cine Colombia, and an integrated Éxito supermarket.
 - **Centro Comercial Viva Laureles** (Carrera 65 # 13-157): A more compact option for quick shopping and dining in western Laureles.
- **Central/Other:**
 - **San Diego Centro Comercial** (Calle 33 No 43 16): Strategically located at the intersection of Las Palmas and Avenida Oriental.

Supermarkets & Household Goods

For budget shopping, stick to **Éxito** (found in Unicentro and standalone locations) or **D1** and **Ara** (hard-discount stores) for basic staples. * **Household Goods:** For affordable home essentials, visit **Homecenter** or the department stores within the malls listed above.

Pharmacies & Health

Pharmacies are ubiquitous. For a modern, supermarket-style experience with a wide range of skincare and wellness products, use **Farmatodo**. For standard prescriptions and quick medicine, **Cruz Verde** is widely available.

Daily Services

- **Laundry:** Most budget nomads use “Lavanderías” (wash-and-fold services). Expect to pay \$2–\$4 USD per kilo. Do not leave expensive delicate items; specify “no dryer” if needed.
- **Gyms:** Look for “Smart Fit” for a standardized, budget-friendly gym experience (\$15–\$30 USD/month). Local “gimnasios” in neighborhoods are often cheaper but have less equipment.
- **Haircuts:** Local barbershops (barberías) are high-quality and affordable. A men’s cut typically costs \$5–\$10 USD.
- **Electronics:** For repairs or new gadgets, the malls (Santafé or Unicentro) are the safest options to avoid counterfeit goods.

Budget Tips

- **Avoid “Gringo Prices”:** In non-mall settings, always confirm the price before the service begins.
- **Cash is King:** While malls and large chains (Farmatodo, Éxito) take cards, small laundry shops and local barbers often require Colombian Pesos.

13. Groceries, Markets & Meat

Supermarket Tiers: Carulla vs. Éxito vs. Jumbo

Depending on your budget and needs, you will choose between three main chains:

- **Carulla (High-End):** Best for imported cheeses, international brands, and high-quality bakery items. Prices are significantly higher.
 - **Carulla Oviedo:** (Carrera 43A # 6 Sur 145, El Poblado) High-end selection; features a 24-hour service window at the back for emergencies.
 - **Carulla Laureles:** (Carrera 43A # 21 Sur-219, Laureles) Ideal for imported goods and premium produce.
- **Éxito (Mid-Range/Standard):** The most common Colombian chain. Wide selection and more affordable than Carulla.
 - **Éxito Laureles:** (Calle 81 # 37-100, Laureles - Estadio) Large store with a comprehensive variety. Phone: +57 1 800 0428800.
 - **Éxito Unicentro:** (Centro Comercial Unicentro, Laureles) Conveniently located inside the mall near the food court and cinema.
- **Jumbo (Mid-to-High):** Similar to Éxito (same parent company) but often focuses on larger bulk sizes and a slightly more “hypermarket” feel.

Local Markets & Fresh Produce

For the best budget, avoid supermarkets for fruits and vegetables. Visit local *plazas de mercado* or the small *fruterías* on your street. Produce is fresher and often 50% cheaper than at Carulla.

Meat & Fish

- **Butcher Counters:** Most Éxito and Carulla stores have professional meat counters. Ask for “Corte Americano” if you want steaks similar to US/EU styles.
- **Local Carnicerías:** Small neighborhood butcher shops are common. They are generally cheaper and allow you to customize the thickness of your cuts.

Budget & Staples (Estimated USD)

- **Eggs (30 pack):** \$3.50 – \$5.00
- **Milk (1L):** \$1.20 – \$1.80
- **Bread (Loaf):** \$1.00 – \$2.50
- **Avocados (Each):** \$0.50 – \$1.20
- **Chicken Breast (kg):** \$3.00 – \$5.00

Water Delivery

Tap water in Medellín is generally potable, but most nomads prefer filtered or bottled water. * **Botellones:** Buy 5-gallon jugs (*botellones*). * **Delivery:** Look for local water delivery services that bring jugs to your door via a small truck; this is significantly cheaper than buying individual small bottles at the store.

14. Language & Local Etiquette

Spanish Basics & The Paisa Accent

While English is spoken in tourist hubs (El Poblado, Laureles), you will struggle in local markets and transport without basic Spanish. * **The Accent:** *Paisas* (people from Medellín) are known for a melodic, singing tone. They often use “vos” instead of “tú” for “you.” * **Essential Slang:** * **¡Qué bacano!**: How cool! * **Parce / Parcerero:** Friend/Dude (use casually). * **A la orden:** “At your service.” You will hear this constantly from shopkeepers; it is a polite way of saying “How can I help you?” or “You’re welcome.” * **Tinto:** A small black coffee. * **Rumba:** Party.

Greeting Norms & Personal Space

- **Greetings:** A single cheek-to-cheek kiss is the standard greeting between women, and between men and women. Men typically greet men with a handshake or a brief hug.
- **Politeness:** Always start interactions with “*Buenos días*” (morning) or “*Buenas tardes*” (afternoon). Jumping straight into a request is considered rude.
- **Personal Space:** Colombians generally have a smaller personal space bubble than North Americans. Expect closer proximity during conversations.

Tipping (La Propina)

Tipping is not mandatory but appreciated. * **Restaurants:** A 10% tip is standard. Many bills will ask “*¿Desea incluir el servicio?*” (Do you wish to include the service charge?). This is the tip. * **Taxis/Uber:** Tipping is not expected, but rounding up the fare is common. * **Coffee Shops:** Small change or \$0.50–\$1.00 USD is sufficient.

Bargaining & Street Vendors

- **Bargaining:** Negotiating is common in street markets (like El Hueco) and for taxis not using a meter. Be polite; aggressive haggling is frowned upon.
- **Street Vendors:** You will be approached frequently by vendors selling snacks, sunglasses, or tours.

- **The Rule:** If you aren't interested, a firm but polite "*No gracias*" while continuing to walk is the most effective method.
- **Avoid:** Do not let a vendor place an item in your hand or on your shoulder, as this creates a social obligation to buy.

Dress Code

- **General:** Medellín is a fashion-conscious city. Locals generally dress "up" compared to US casual standards.
- **Daily Wear:** Jeans and a clean shirt/blouse are standard. Avoid wearing flip-flops and gym clothes unless you are actually exercising or at the pool.
- **Nightlife:** In upscale clubs or rooftop bars, avoid sandals and athletic wear to ensure entry.
- **Climate Tip:** Bring a light jacket or sweater; the "City of Eternal Spring" gets chilly at night.

15. History & Culture Snapshot

Brief History Founded in 1616, Medellín evolved from a small settlement into an industrial powerhouse driven by a textile boom and its role as a hub for the surrounding coffee region. The city is globally known for the dark era of the 1980s and 90s under Pablo Escobar's cartel influence. However, the city underwent a massive "social urbanism" transformation, replacing slums with libraries, parks, and an innovative integrated transport system featuring cable cars (Metrocable) to connect hillside barrios to the city center.

The Paisa Identity Residents are called *Paisas*. They are known for being exceptionally friendly, entrepreneurial, and proud of their regional heritage. Expect a more formal and polite way of speaking compared to Bogotá; using "usted" is common even among friends.

Cultural Highlights & Festivals * **Feria de las Flores (Flower Festival):** Held every August. The city is decorated with massive flower arrangements. Expect crowds and higher short-term rental prices. * **Alumbrados (Christmas Lights):** Starting in early December, the Medellín River is lined with millions of lights. It is a free public spectacle and a primary local gathering point.

Practical Advice for Nomads * **The "Narcos" Conversation:** Avoid praising Escobar or treating the cartel era as a tourist attraction. Locals view this period as a trauma, not a novelty. Focus conversations on the city's current innovation and resilience. * **Social Etiquette:** Tipping is not mandatory but rounding up a bill or leaving 10% at sit-down restaurants is appreciated. * **Budgeting for Culture:** Most museums (like Museo Casa de Campo) and the Metrocable are budget-friendly, typically costing under \$5 USD per trip or entry. * **Dress Code:** While casual in El Poblado, dress slightly smarter (closed-toe shoes, no gym clothes) when visiting government offices or traditional neighborhoods to be taken more seriously.

16. Tourism & Day Trips

City Highlights (Medellín)

Comuna 13 (San Javier) A formerly troubled hillside neighborhood transformed by outdoor escalators and vibrant street art. * **Tip:** Take a guided graffiti tour to understand the social history of the area.

Plaza Botero & Museo de Antioquia (Calle 52 #52-43, Centro) The plaza features massive bronze sculptures by Fernando Botero. The adjacent museum houses a large collection of Botero's work and other Colombian art.

Jardín Botánico (Calle 73 #51D-14, Aranjuez) A large city botanical garden featuring an orchid house and a lake. * **Cost:** Free entry.

Pueblito Paisa (Cerro Nutibara) A replica of a traditional Antioquian village situated on a hilltop. Offers panoramic city views. * **Cost:** Free.

The Metropolitan Cathedral (Cra 48 calle 56) Located along Bolívar Park, this is one of the world's most brick-intensive buildings (over 1.1 million bricks). * **Access:** Metro station **Parque**.

The Junín Pedestrian Street A historic cobblestone street in downtown running from the Colteger building to Bolívar's park. Visit the Astor and Versalles salons for a glimpse into the city's history.

Museo Universidad de Antioquia (Calle 67 N° 53-108) * **Access:** Metro station **Universidad**. * **Phone:** +57 4 219 5180.

Los Alumbrados (Christmas Lights) From early December to mid-January, the city is decorated with massive light displays. These are a must-see during the holiday season.

Nature & Day Trips

Parque Arvi (Santa Elena) A highland nature reserve offering hiking, picnics, and a cooler climate. * **Access:** Take the Metrocable from Acevedo or Santo Domingo stations. * **Cost:** Metrocable fare is approximately \$3.40 USD (13,400 COP) each way.

Guatapé & Piedra del Peñol Located about 2 hours east of the city. * **The Rock:** Climb the 740 steps of Piedra del Peñol for 360-degree views of the reservoir. * **The Town:** Visit Guatapé, famous for its colorful *zócalos* (decorative bas-reliefs on the bottom of houses).

Santa Fe de Antioquia A colonial town known for its hot climate and preserved Spanish architecture. Ideal for a day trip to experience "Old Colombia."

Jardín A picturesque coffee-growing village in the mountains. While further away than Guatapé, it is highly recommended for its traditional atmosphere and nature trails.

17. Master Links

- **Migración Colombia:** <https://www.migracioncolombia.gov.co> (Official visa and entry requirements)
- **Medellín Tourism Official:** <https://www.medellin.travel> (City guides and events)
- **Metro de Medellín:** <https://www.metrode Medellin.com.co> (Maps and transit schedules)
- **José María Córdova Airport (MDE):** <https://www.aeropuertojmc.com.co> (International arrivals/departures)
- **Olaya Herrera Airport (EOH):** <https://www.aeropuertoohayahrenera.com.co> (Domestic flights)
- **Official Bus Terminals:** <https://www.terminaldelnorte.com.co> / <https://www.terminaldelsur.com.co> (Intercity travel)
- **US State Dept Travel Advisory:** <https://travel.state.gov> (Safety alerts and travel warnings)
- **San Vicente Fundación:** <https://www.sanvicente.col> (High-complexity medical care)
- **Hospital Pablo Tobón Uribe:** <https://www.pablo-tobon.com> (Private healthcare services)

18. Final Budget Table

Depending on your lifestyle preferences—from shared dorms and street food to luxury apartments and fine dining—your costs in Medellín will vary. Use these three tiers to plan your 90-day stay.

Expense	Lean Nomad (Monthly)	Comfortable Nomad (Monthly)	Premium Nomad (Monthly)
Room	\$500	\$900	\$1,500
Food	\$250	\$450	\$700
Transport	\$60	\$120	\$250
Coworking	\$100	\$180	\$250
Insurance	\$80	\$120	\$200
Visa	\$0	\$0	\$0
Entertainment	\$100	\$250	\$500
Buffer	\$100	\$200	\$400
Monthly Total	\$1,190	\$2,220	\$3,800
90-Day Total	\$3,570	\$6,660	\$11,400

Budget Breakdown Notes:

- **Lean:** Focuses on shared housing, cooking at home, and utilizing the Metro/bus system.

- **Comfortable:** Private Airbnb/apartment, a mix of dining out and home cooking, and frequent Uber/Didi use.
- **Premium:** High-end luxury rentals in prime areas, frequent fine dining, and private transport.
- **Visa:** Listed as \$0 as most nomads enter on a 90-day tourist permit (PIP) which is granted upon arrival.

19. Glossary of Local Terms

Term	Meaning
Paisa	People from the Antioquia region (including Medellín). Known for being entrepreneurial and hospitable.
Parche	A group of friends or a social plan.
Qué más	“Hacer un parche” means to hang out. A common greeting meaning “What’s up?” or “How is it going?”
Listo	Literally “ready,” but used constantly to mean “OK,” “Got it,” or “Deal.”
Chevere	Cool or great. Used to describe people, places, or experiences.
Rumbear	To go partying. A “rumba” is the party itself.
Guaro	Short for Aguardiente, the local anise-flavored liquor. Cheap and high-alcohol.
Tinto	A small black coffee. Sold on street corners for roughly \$0.20 - \$0.50 USD.
Arepa	Corn cake. A staple food eaten at almost every meal.
Bandeja Paisa	The regional platter (beans, rice, chicharrón, egg, plantain, chorizo). Very filling; costs \$5 - \$10 USD.
Chiva	Colorful open-air buses used for transport or tourist parties.
Metrocable	The gondola system integrated into the Metro; essential for reaching higher hills.
Comuna	Large administrative districts of the city (e.g., Comuna 13).
Barrio	A neighborhood within a Comuna.
Estrato	Socioeconomic stratification (1-6). Affects utility costs and determines the “class” of a neighborhood.

20. Sources & Credits

The information in this guide was compiled from the following resources. For the most current visa requirements, transit fares, and safety alerts, consult these sources directly:

- **Travel Safety & Regulations:** US State Dept Colombia Travel Advisory (Current safety alerts and regional warnings).
- **Immigration & Entry:** Official Migración Colombia (Visa requirements and entry permits).
- **Transportation:** Official Medellín Metro site (Current maps and fare structures).
- **General City Guides:** Wikivoyage Medellín page (Neighborhood overviews and landmarks).
- **Digital Nomad Logistics:**
 - Medellín Guru (Budgeting and local life tips).
 - Medellín Lodging (Coworking and accommodation guides).
 - Colombia Move (Café and coworking space recommendations).