

Santa Marta for Cruisers

This information was assembled by cruisers in Santa Marta between Nov 2010 – Mar 2011. Most of the information should be good for 2012 but if you will send corrections, deletions, and additions to constance.elson@gmail.com I will continue to update this document until a real guide gets printed.

Local Information: Note: Calles (C.) run perpendicular to sea front, Carreras (Kra) run parallel to seafront. Marina is located at Carrera 1 and Calle 23. Historic district is (approximately) the rectangle Calle 13 to Calle 22, Carrera 1 to Carrera 6. In the historic district it is generally safe to walk around alone (male or female) all day and even into the early evening. This doesn't mean the rest of Santa Marta isn't safe, but it is not so well-lit and well-patrolled. But the town is genuinely peaceful.

Note: few people in Santa Marta speak English. It really helps to be willing to try a few words in Spanish.

ATMs (Cajeros): Bancolombia on C 14 ½ block east of Plaza Bolivar has a cajero that seems the most reliable. There are cajeros at other banks, the Exito stores and the big malls. Easy way to estimate \$US from COP: drop last 3 digits and divide remaining number by 2.

Taxis: Charges are regulated but ask first. Usual charge is \$4 mil pesos anywhere in town. Charge to beaches at Rodadero or Taganga is about \$8 mil pesos. Charge to airport is, as of 15 Feb 2011, \$22 mil pesos.

Buses: Get you almost everywhere, once you learn which one to catch (card on front window). Catch Quinto/El Rio bus seafront or C22 to go to Ocean Mall and Makro. Catch Taganga buses on Kra5 and Rodadero buses along C 22. All rides COP 1200 (=60 cents).

Car Rental: expensive and hair-raising. But if you must, call Estrella at National Rental Car, 301-756-0308

Groceries: 1. Exito Markets: one at C 22 and Kra 5 (entrance around back), one at C 19 and Kra 5, one at Buena Vista mall. Listed in increasing order of affluence and variety of food items.

2. SuperAlmacenOlympico (SAO): at Kra 8 and C23 or jump on Gaira bus. Good alternative to downtown Exitos.

3. Carrefour: in Ocean Mall.

4. Makao: a Sam's Club type store. located on Ferrocarril 1 block S from Ocean Mall.

5. Public Market: a 3block by 4 block rabbit warren of stalls and alleyways near Ferrocarril and C 10. Local produce, meat, fish and you-name-it.

6. Early risers can buy fish at the north end of the seawall where the fishing boats tie up.

7. There is a flower market (4-6 stalls) at C20 and Kra7 – wonderful and inexpensive bouquets.

Mail and package delivery: Local office of DHL on Calle 22, between K2-K3. Delivery prices seem high. Marina office can help you with Fed Ex arrangements. **Warning:** Y-I-T means nothing for packages arriving by air. You will be charged **28% customs** + \$30 US on every item with stated value, boat-related or not. Let's hope this changes.

National mail service doesn't seem to exist but its equivalent, called 4-72, will send flat mail either Certificado (trackable) or Normal to international addresses, at reasonable prices. Office is on C22, Kra2.

Office services (photo-copying, Fax): Many vendors along Calle 22 and elsewhere around town.

Book Swap: Tim's Café, 50m south of Marina entrance on Kra 1A.. Great coffee too.

Laundry: Washers and dryers in bathhouse. In addition, we highly recommend Margy (311-655-4720) who charges very reasonable rates, picks up and delivers, gives 48 hour turn-around and returns shirts >>>ironed. Lavanderia Paraiso on Calle 22 near K3 is more expensive than Margy but they can do dry-cleaning.

Haircuts: Amazingly, in SuperAlmacen Olympico. And for women (and guys who tolerate unisex salons): Pocho's Salon in Central Commercial Prado at C26, Kra4.

Restaurants and watering holes: There are many inexpensive places to eat in Santa Marta. The first cruisers in the Marina thought the following places were particularly good. When you find new ones to add to this list, let us know. .

Ben and Joseps: along seafront. Deserves its popularity

Agave Azul: C14 one block E of Plaza Bolivar (near Kra4). Mojitos to die for. Food is not Mexican but is v. good

El Santo: C21 between Kra 2A and Kra3. Argentinian, very good. Wed-Sun

Donde L'Italiano: Kra3 near C16. Quiet place for subtle pasta and meat dishes. Owner is Italian.

Bitacora: in Taganga along sea front. Well-prepared typical Colombian food at a great price.

PachaMama: in Taganga, one block back from sea front.

Pizza Factory: C29A and Kra 11. Good Alfredo-type pizzas and calzones.

Worth seeing:

Museo de Oro: 2nd Fl, Banco de Colombia Bldg, corner C14 and Kra 1. Gold from Indian tribes of the Sierra Nevada.

Quinta San Pedro Alejandrino: Well-preserved 18th C country estate where Simon Bolivar died. Bilingual explanations and beautiful gardens Take a cab there, bus back.

Museo de Arte, Univ. de Magdalena. Kra2A near C16 : (if nothing else, see it for the building and staircase)

Ethnographic and Historical Museum, Univ Magdalena, Kra1 and C22: Interesting if you can read Spanish.

Adventures / Day Trips: These can all be done with tour groups but do-it-yourself info given here.

1. Taganga: fishing village morphing into laid-back funky hippie beach town. Many dive shops (eg, Oceano, Octopus, Poseidon); Oceano gave an unhurried 2-tank dive with English-speaking divemaster. Hike over western side (or take a launch) to Playa Grande for crystal-clear water and good snorkeling. Bus (see info above) or taxi COP 8000.

2. Rodadero: Rio-type beach with 5,000 to 20,000 happy swimmers. Mellow. Bus (see info above) or taxi COP 8000.

3. Minca: lovely cool air in mountains, swim in river or falls, visit coffee plantation. B&B: Sierra Son, 312-615-3850. Taxi: pay driver to return to collect you at end of day or next day. ~COP 50,000.

New: Truck or vans will take you to Minca from bus area near Public Market for about COP 5000.

4. Quebrada Valencia: 1 mi hike, level and very pretty, to beautiful waterfall (good flow only in rainy season). Catch Guaychaca/Palomino bus (starts near the Public Market). Buses leave every 15 min and cost COP 2500. Tell driver you want to get off at Quebrada Valencia. Flag return bus by standing on road. 1 hr ride each way with nice scenery.
5. Overnight trip to Tayrona Park and Pueblito: See instructions in #4 for Guaychaca bus. Tell driver you want to go to Pueblito. He will let you off at S entrance to Tayrona Park (COP 35000 per non-Colombian citizen). Hike strenuous 7 km to Pueblito, small Indian ruins, then continue to Cabo San Juan where you can rent hammock with mosquito net and get food (or bring your own). Next day enjoy beautiful hike along beach past luxury resort Cañaverales and along a road to N entrance of Tayrona Park. Catch bus home as in #4. You can make a day trip to Tayrona Park by doing either half of this and returning to the entrance you used.
6. Ciudad Perdida: Strenuous 6-day trip. Use a tour group.

Marine Services

Chandleries and services geared to the cruising sailor and boater lie in the future, alas. But there is very good marine mechanical and electrical help available. Local craftspeople and fabricators have already provided a surprising number of solutions for problems. A 5x6 block area near Kra 11 and C11 has hardware stores, paint stores, electrical repair shops, carpenter shops, metal-workers, and more. Be resourceful. Explore. Ask. People are eager to be of help. Be warned: if you import parts by air, you pay 30% import duties on EVERYTHING. Try to source items in Baranquilla or Cartagena.

Florida Yacht Services, located near Marina entrance, can provide a variety of services and carry liability insurance. Their prices are geared for luxury mega-yachts.

“Chandlery”:

Sierra y Mar, Yamaha dealer on Kra 4, near C23, carries a limited selection of boaters’ supplies geared mostly for power boats. Some cleats and marine hardware at Oceano Dive shop in Taganga.

Engine Work:

ServiMar: G. Quiñones 316-242-8416. Highly recommended, competent, employs several able technicians.
North Coast Diesel: R. Dario 312-697-4894.

Electrical Work: ServiMar: see above.

Batteries:

Energiteca, Kra 7 and C 22, MAC dealer. A few marine batteries available. J. Rojas. 310-373-2496. Mr. Rojas can direct you to local sources for gel and AGM batteries.
Duncan Batteries: Duncan dealer at Ferrocarril and Rompon (taxi or Gaira bus).

Sail Repair, Canvas work: Darwin Carpa 310-356-8859

Cushions: Ferreteria La Nacional, C12 near Kra8. Also some upholstery fabric. Other upholstery shops in vicinity.

Refrigeration: xxx is banned from the Marina for fraud. Do NOT use his services.

Hoses and belts: Correas y Mangueras del Litoral. Kra 11 near C 11. M. Cortes Mercado. 317-668-2700.

Cleaning Services: As their schedule permits, many of the professional captains of the large sport fishing boats in the marina are available to clean hulls and topsides. They also can troubleshoot mechanical and electrical problems.
Warning: If you stay longer than 3 weeks in the marina be sure to clean your prop before leaving – very busy barnacles.

Poncho Martinez, captain of Mia.
Enrique Bogoya, captain of Papacho
Juan Carlo Cortes, captain of Ache,
Paul de Avila, captain of Simplicity, 312-463-0983
Manuel Morales, captain of Elvira

Leaving your boat while traveling: The Marina staff will oversee the docklines in your absence but if you want boat care beyond that (cleaning, checking sails and sailcovers, etc) make private arrangements with one of the captains listed above.