

The Growth of Tourism in Colombia in the 21st Century

Jane M. Rausch

University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, USA

During the last decades of the 20th century, much of the outside world regarded Colombia as synonymous with cocaine and violence—country certainly too dangerous to visit. Thanks to the decline of violence, government initiatives in 21st century, strengthened by the well-publicized natural attractions of Colombia, have begun to overcome this negative reputation. Since there are few scholarly studies of tourism in Colombia, this essay breaks new ground by recapping the government's efforts to promote tourism with an emphasis on the two immense regions that lie east of the mountains, i.e., the Llanos or plains in the north and the Amazon jungles to the south.

Keywords: Colombia, tourism, violence, Llanos, Yopal

Introduction

Thanks to the advances of the industrial age, by the mid-19th century, more elites in the Western Hemisphere began to consider visiting Europe. As they aspired to make what was known as “The Grand Tour”, the availability of steamships and railways lowered the cost of travel and enabled them to spend their vacations visiting Italy, France, and Germany. The republics south of the United States and especially Mexico were likewise appealing to wealthy North Americans eager to venture beyond the borders of their own country. Better trains, roads, and airlines, plus the advent of motor cars, and the implementation of health initiatives that promised protection against yellow fever and other tropical diseases, encouraged them to explore Mexico and to visit Argentina and Brazil (Delpar, 1992). With its rich colonial history, Cartagena on Colombia's Caribbean coast was also popular. Colombia offered many tourist attractions, but its difficult geography created by three separate ranges of the high Andes mountains made the possibility of reaching the interior of the country until the development of reliable air traffic.

This situation improved in the 1940s when national and international airlines began transporting passengers on regular routes to major Colombian cities: Bogotá, Cali, Cartagena, and Medellín. By the 1980s, the number of international tourists reached 1.4 million a year despite reports of widespread violence in the country known as *la violencia*. Tourism revived as the most intense period of the *violencia* declined. Recovering at rates of 10% annually, it reached 1.9 million visitors in 2006. Rex Hudson noted in 2010 that due to internal violence, tourism had usually been considered a low growth service industry, but in 2006, the country earned US\$ 2 billion from international tourism (p. 170). The object of this paper is to review the development of Colombian tourism in the 21st century with a particular focus on the region of the Llanos Orientales.

Review of Literature

Tourism in Colombia has inspired few scholarly studies. The most helpful is *The Business of Leisure: Tourism in Latin America and the Caribbean*, ed. by Andrew Grant Wood (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2021)—a collection of twelve essays, two of which concern Colombia. Also informative is Eliabeth Becker's, *Overbooked: The Exploding Business of Travel and Tourism* (Simon and Schuster, 2013) which suggests that tourism in general has produced \$6.5 trillion of the world's economy and employed one out of twelve persons. Becker explores some key issues that face modern tourism, but she omits any mention of South American countries. Two standard travel guidebooks: *Fodor* and *Fromm*, both have sections on Colombia (along with the other Latin American republics) that include the Llanos, while *Moon* (2017) edited by Andrew Dier and *Lonely Planet* (10th ed., Egerton, 2023) have volumes dedicated solely to Colombia.

During the 1990s, Colombia's reputation for drug smuggling and guerrilla warfare worked against any incentive to visit the country by foreigners. In *Fodor's Guidebook for 1992*, the section on Colombia stated that the larger cities, i.e., Cartagena, Bogotá, and Medellín were relatively safe for foreigners, but that Leticia, Colombia's port on the Amazon River, was the only town east of the Andes where tourists might travel via airplane safely (Beresky, 1991, p. 381). In 2002, President Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002-2010) began to combat Colombia's violent image by organizing caravans protected by military forces to transport tourists on previously scheduled days. Uribe Vélez also created a Ministry of Commerce known as Pro Colombia to promote tourism. By 2006 tourism was growing aided by the initiation of flexible entry measures for visitors and the design of innovative portfolios by local travel agencies.

In 2008, Colombia's tourism board launched a series of commercials promoting the country's natural and cultural wonders. In them, visitors and locals speak glowingly about Colombian hospitality and cultural marvels. Each commercial closed with a man saying with a chuckle, "*El riesgo es que te quieras quedar*," or "The risk is that you'll want to stay". By that time, there were signs that civil conflict dating back some 50 years was winding down, and the commercials promoted images of smiling citizens and pristine beaches to counter negative media focused on cocaine smuggling featured on nightly TV (Modak, 2017).

With the restoration of relative peace, domestic tourism also surged as Colombians began to explore their own country.¹ Among non-Colombian tourists, Venezuelans fleeing the dictatorial rule of their president, Nicolás Maduro, were the largest group, but also the number of US tourists continued to grow, often attracted by the new trend of ecotourism made possible in the country's national parks such as the Tayrona National Natural Park in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta Mountain Range, and Cabo de la Vela on the tip of the Guajira Peninsula.

In 2016, the Colombian government headed by President Juan Manuel Santos signed a revised peace agreement with former guerrillas of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). Santos established a Special Jurisdiction of Peace to provide justice for many victims by investigating human rights violations and grave breaches of international humanitarian law which had occurred during the armed conflict. By 2021 tourism in South America overall was increasing by 18%, but Colombia was outpacing other popular destinations with a slow but steady recovery of 38% (Rausch, 2023, p. 171).

In May 2018, after Congress had adopted a measure that prevented Santos from running for a second term,

¹ In an email to the author, Renzo Ramírez Bacca, a native of Medellín, recalled how the world opened to him when his father took the family on a trip to the Caribbean traveling by train—the Expreso El Sol—from Bogotá to Santa Marta. Other Colombians, he notes, were making the trip by boats via the Magdalena River (email to the author, 02/16/2023).

Ivan Duque succeeded Santos as president. In June 2022, an election runoff ended in a win for former guerrilla fighter, Gustavo Petro, who, on August 7, 2022, was sworn in as president along with Francia Márquez—the first Afro-Colombian vice president. Petro stated that his government’s top priority was to transition “away from an extractive oil and gas industry, Colombia’s number one export, and embrace the environment and conservation as a main economic motor” (Lebawit Girma, 2022, p. 4). This priority was realistic given the fact that Colombian oil exports had been diminishing during the last 10 years from a high point of 32.48 billion in USD in 2013 to a dismal low of 15.61 billion in USD in 2023 (Statista, 2024). Gilberto Salcedo, vice president of ProColombia, added that the new administration’s plan showed a clear intention to strengthen the tourism industry.” (Lebawit Girma, 2022, p. 5). Rodrigo Atuesa, CEO of Impulse Travel, a Colombian-based tour company, agreed with Salcedo stating: “Petro is aiming for the two things that I think are very beneficial for tourism: his international policy agenda is in line with security and with awareness of climate change” (Johnson, 2022).

By the 21st century, at least four new forms of tourism had been developing. In *The Business of Leisure*, Editor Andrew Grant Wood points out that while crowds of tourists still went to Europe to see classic art works and buildings, many were opting for so-called cultural tourism. For this type of travel, Latin America and the Caribbean had an advantage over other world areas because of the region’s remarkably diverse array of peoples and cultures. As Wood explained:

Host populations include hundreds of different indigenous groups, with people of African, European, and Asian heritage combining in kaleidoscopic array. Travel, in other words, is different compared to that in Europe, Africa, or Asia because local societies within Colombia comprise truly distinct cultural and demographic elements. (2021, p. 9)

As in Europe, Colombian cities also offer beautiful churches and art galleries for viewing, but cultural tourism is an equally powerful draw. A second trend is “ecotourism”. The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment, sustain the well-being of the local people and involve interpretation and education”. TIES adds that this kind of tourism raises awareness about the need to protect sensitive environment and the desire to contribute toward this cause in both the visitors and the hosts (Wikipedia, 2024a). Included in this category are groups or individuals who travel hoping to see rare birds or orchids not found in their own countries (Wikipedia, 2024a).

Colombia is well-positioned for ecotourism because each of its distinct regions has a rich and varied geography. It provides a home to 1,826 bird species that have escaped habitat destruction in other parts of South America and are especially attractive to birders. Likewise dedicated florists come to observe rare orchid species, for Colombia has 3,500 of the estimated 25,000 orchids species found around the world. In addition, the Malpelo Fauna and Flora Sanctuary, a protected marine environment 320 miles off the country’s Caribbean coast, offers some of the best big-fish scuba diving in the world. Overall, located in Colombia are nine World Heritage Sites, including six cultural, two natural, and one mixed.²

A third trend includes sports people looking for new areas to try their skills. Colombian interest in cycling and their riders’ success in the Tour de France during the last two decades have encouraged groups of amateur and professional cyclists to tackle the republic’s Andean Mountain ranges (2023).

Over the past twenty years, Colombian enthusiasm for cycling—bolstered by the achievements of their

² “Tourism in Colombia”, *Wikipedia*. The World Heritage Sites include Chiribiquete National Park—“The Maloca of the Jaguar”; “Coffee Cultural Landscape of Colombia”; “ Historic Center of Santa Cruz de Mompox”; “Los Katios Nacional Park”; “Malpelo Fauna and Flora Sanctuary”; “National Archeological Park of Tierradentro”; “Port, Fortresses and Group of Monuments, Cartagena”; “Qhapaq Ñan, Andean Road System”; and the “San Agustín Archaeological Park”.

riders in the Tour de France—has motivated both amateur and professional cyclists to pursue challenges along the nation's Andean mountain ranges (2023).

Finally, there is a fourth phenomenon known as “Dark Tourism”, defined as tourism involving travel to places historically associated with death and tragedy (Gómez, 2021). In the case of Colombia, a 2015 Netflix film series entitled *Narcos*, that focused on the development of the Medellín drug cartel headed by Pablo Escobar, captured the interest of foreigners who wanted to learn more about the life and death of this well-known drug king who Colombian police forces shot and killed on December 2, 1993 in a Medellín suburb. Escobar's estate, known as Hacienda Napoles, included a sculpture garden, a car collection, swimming pools, man-made lakes, and a zoo complete with elephants, rhinos, exotic birds, giraffes, and a small herd of hippos consisting of three females and one male. After his death, most of these animals died or were transferred to zoos, but the hippos were an exception. Left to fend for themselves and with no natural enemies, they expanded to some 40 animals forcing the government to consider plans to euthanize them (Osbourne, 2023).

Once Escobar was killed, Medellín slowly regained its positive image, but the drug king's unique career continued to resonate with those who saw the Netflix films. Their popularity motivated many people to visit the places they had viewed on TV so they might experience the sensation of danger while avoiding actual harm, and local travel agencies created tours to take advantage of Escobar's notoriety (Manuel Burgos, 2021).

Tourism Growth in the Llanos

In recent decades, the decline of violence and improved transportation has opened tourism more viable in the eastern two thirds of Colombia that consists of two large regions: the Llanos or plains lying to the east and north of the Andes, and the Amazon jungle region that extends east and south of the Andes. The Llanos includes the departments of Meta, Casanare, Arauca, and Vichada, while the Amazon consists of the departments of Quindío, Caquetá, Guaviare, Vaupés, and Amazonas. As mentioned earlier, regular air flights to Leticia, located at the very tip of Amazonas and Colombia's port on the Amazon River, have been traditionally popular with tourists.

Villavicencio, capital of Meta and the largest city in that department, is the terminus of the principal road from Bogotá which offers a gateway for penetrating deeper into the Meta Llanos. Unfortunately, this highway descends along the eastern side of the Cordillera Oriental and is subjected to periodic landslides that are often catastrophic and block traffic flow for days. Most recently in August 2023, an earthquake in the Cordillera caused the collapse of a major highway bridge, “Los Grillos”, completely shutting down road traffic between Villavicencio and Bogotá and leaving both Villavicencio and Yopal cut off from the highlands (Flechas, 2023). Government efforts to reinforce the weak points of the road have been only modestly successful, and the regular arrival of oil tankers ascending from the Llanos with their valuable cargo mars the breathtaking beauty of the landscape.

Roads exist between Boyacá and Yopal, but they too are not well maintained. More promising is Colombia's section of the Carretera Marginal de la Selva, a project first conceived in 1963 by Peruvian President Fernando Belaúnde Terry as a corridor to unite the Amazon regions of Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela. Once finished the highway will connect already existing shorter roads in five republics and extend for 5,596 kilometers along the eastern cordillera. Thanks to work on this highway, by 2011 the Colombian portion, known

as Ruta Nacional 65, was completed and remains the most reliable land route through Casanare.³ Despite this new alternative, airplanes still offer the quickest and most comfortable way to reach Villavicencio, the key city of Meta, and Yopal, capital of Casanare, and Arauca. Satena Airways provides regular service, and there are charter flights between Yopal and Villavicencio.



Figure 1. Showing Colombian departments.

³ *El Tiempo*, Dec. 13, 2000.



Figure 2. Showing the Llanos and Amazonian regions of Colombia.

The Impact of Oil Discovery and Production

The discovery and exploitation of petroleum at Caño Limón in Arauca in 1883, and in 1990 at Cusiana, Casanare; Chichimene; Castilla la Nueva; and Apiay in Meta transformed the piedmont area of the Llanos Provinces into the region with the highest economic and political growth of Colombia and reinforced the decision to designate Yopal as the capital of Casanare. Before 1940, the department's economy depended on ranching supplemented by limited cultivation of food crops. In 1936, Juan R. Medina estimated that there were 393,865 cattle distributed among *hatos* and *fundaciones* in the province (Plazas Olarte, 1944, pp. 202-205). Although

these figures might seem substantial, the herds in Casanare were declining due to failure of owners to crossbreed, the impact of disease, theft, and a relentless slaughtering of females. Until the outbreak of the *violencia*, life was largely peaceful with the glaring exception of conflicts between whites and Indians. By September 1946, the situation was becoming more dangerous as rustlers stole cattle worth millions of pesos, assassinating their owners “in the most cowardly and cruel manner”⁴.

The advent of the oil boom quickly changed this heretofore-neglected area of the plains into the region with the highest economic and political growth of Colombia. The production of oil brought a surge of oil royalties into national and departmental coffers. Once it became public knowledge that huge oil deposits at Cusiana were a potential source of wealth for Casanare, Meta, and Arauca, a veritable avalanche of migrants from other Colombian regions converged upon the departments exacerbating ongoing problems of unemployment, inadequate schools, housing, sanitation, and lack of potable water.

Only jobs available were in construction for men and domestic service for women. Before the oil boom, 10 percent of the population were entrepreneurs who controlled seventy-eight percent of the land by investing in large-scale rice cultivation or extensive cattle ranching. After oil production began, thousands of peasants moved into the Llanos seeking a better way of life. Between 1973 and 2003, the population of Arauca city increased from 12,500 to 70,000 while that of Yopal grew from 10,500 to 84,200. Villavicencio ballooned from 91,559 people in 1973 to 285,425 in 2003. While the expansion of all three cities was impressive according to Avellaneda Cusarí, Yopal registered the highest growth relative to the other urban centers due to “forced displacement, the great movements of money, significant improvements in roads and public services, and the fact that many entrepreneurs from Arauca and Meta moved their households to Yopal” (1980, pp. 98-99).

The main effect of the large number of migrants was to transform a town composed of ranchers and farmers. Belonging to neither of these categories, the migrants arrived hoping to sell food, but they soon realized that in spite of the limitations facing them in Yopal, they did not want to return to the insecurity of the countryside (Benítez, 2004, pp. 98-99). In 2003, Mantilla Trejos (2003) observed their very presences over three decades were transforming the local culture that had formerly revolved around cattle raising and Llanero folklore such as the *joropo*, a llanero dance, and other aspects of cowboy activities.

Two powerful oil companies—Occidental Petroleum (OXY) and Mannesman—have built pipelines through protected forests in Casanare and dumped thousands of barrels of contaminated water into the flood zone of Caño Limon and the Arauca River, destroying vegetation and biological resources in the headwaters of the Cinaruco and Capanaparo rivers. Repeated guerilla attacks on the pipeline further compounded the problem (Avellaneda Cusarí, 1980, pp. 51-54).

Meanwhile, by 2003 narco-traffickers and emerald dealers had established themselves in southern Casanare, while in the north the FARC and the ELN (Ejército de Liberación Nacional), the two major guerrilla groups, continued to capture police posts, combating the army, confronting para militaries, and murdering ranchers and merchants (Delgado Martínez, 2004, p. 112).

In her article, “Beyond the Perimeter Fence: Oil and Armed Conflict in Casanare, Colombia”, Jenny Pierce points out that notwithstanding this new oil boom, “Colombia is not an oil economy as such since oil provided only 32% of the country’s exports in 1999”. She continues, “The fact that these newly discovered oil reserves are amid war zones, the oil sector forms a target for extortion that has put a brake on its development” (Pierce, 2004,

⁴ *El Tiempo*, September 21, 1946.

pp. 11-13).

Nevertheless, Yopal, as Casanare's largest city, has become an attractive place for investments by local entrepreneurs and especially large Colombian store chains. For example, 2011 Almacenes Éxitos opened a new branch to serve as the key store in a new shopping plaza. The town has several other commercial centers, most of which include shops run by local merchants.

The petroleum bonanza also created a demand for large and small hotels. By December 2013, there were 187 hotels, hostels, and residencias. Several public and private schools were built, and the Fundación Universitaria (UNITRÓPICO), enrolled 2,200 students (Wikipedia, 2024b, pp. 12-19). The avalanche of migrants from other departments exacerbated ongoing problems of unemployment, and inadequate schools, sanitation, and lack of potable water. The only jobs available were in construction for men and domestic service for women (Villarraga, 2024). The city itself has many urban sites to see including the begun in 2000. These developments increased Yopal's attraction for tourists for until recently, Villavicencio, has been the principal starting point for tourism in the Llanos. Both towns have travel agencies to help arrange sight-seeing trips.

Opportunities for Sightseeing in Villavicencio, Meta

The Department of Meta was long dependent on oil and gas, but in recent years, the government has decided to promote tourism as a way to increase its Parque Avestruz (Ostridge Park), the Parque de los Fundadores, and an obelisk representing the geographic center of the nation.

It also sponsors three festivals that are especially popular with Bogotanos. The Torneo Internacional del Joropo has been held for four days in June since 1960. The joropo is the primary dance of the Llaneros. Over one thousand couples dance including children dressed in traditional costumes who perform this dance of fast and fancy footwork accompanied by music played on harp, bandola, cuatro, and singing. The festival also includes rodeo events and a beauty contest (Dier, 2017, p. 410).⁵

In late October, the city sponsors the Encuentro Mundial del Coleo in the Parque las Malocas, a contest in which participants show their skills by galloping on horseback and capturing stray bulls by their tails throwing them to the ground (a technique regularly used for branding). In late March, the city hosts the Concurso Mundial de la Mujer Vaquera, where cowgirls compete in various skill-based events (Dier, 2017, p. 410).

The most spectacular destinations in Meta are some distance from the capital and require a guide. For example, Caño Cristales is located in the hills of the Serranía de la Macarena national park. The Macarena Serranía is unique in that it is situated at the confluence of three highly distinct ecosystems: the Amazon to the south, the Llanos to the north, and the Andean Mountain rainforest to the west.

In the years between 1998 and 2002, the small town of La Macarena, the gateway to Caño Cristales, was part of a demilitarized zone granted by the government to the FARC as part of the peace process, but the guerrillas used this opportunity to destroy the park facilities and built a road right through the area, allowing squatters to take illegal possession of lands within the park. Since 2002, the town has become the location of a 4,000-strong army base, one of the largest in Colombia, and tourism has given this isolated community new life.

To reach Caño Cristales a guide is necessary, and there are tourist agencies located in Villavicencio to help with the arrangements. This excursion begins in La Macarena. It consists of a boat ride up the Río Guayabero,

⁵ A little like the Spanish flamenco guitar, the bandola has four strings and is played with a pick. A cuatro is similar to a small mandolin.

followed by a two-kilometer hike to a place where the unique multicolored stream can be viewed as it gushes through pools and waterfalls. At the end of the trip, a tourist swimming pool is available for the refreshment of the travelers as well as a waterside lunch (Dier, 2017, p. 412).

The following destinations can also be reached from Villavicencio: The Sanctuary and Eco Hotel or Cosmogenesis is just 45 minutes from Villavicencio. It is a peaceful oasis for relaxing and taking walks along a small jungle path. At 5:00 pm, hundreds of ibises arrive at a huge tree in the middle of a small lake, and in the drier months of the year, you can even spot the relatively rare Scarlet Ibis. The Cerro Bendito (sometimes called the “Balcony of the Eastern Plains” is also 45 minutes from Villavicencio and offers scenic views from its hills. Finally, around the town of Acacias, 30 minutes from Villavicencio, are beautiful rivers and waterfalls which can be viewed after a hike through a deep forest. From the town of Acacias, 30 minutes by bus from Villavicencio, the Caño El Sagu features impressive rock formations and offers opportunities for hiking, canyoning, and rappelling. So far local Colombians have made up the bulk of the visitors.

Sightseeing in Yopal and Casanare

Regular air flights from Bogotá and Villavicencio to Yopal are just beginning to open tourism in the northern Llanos of Casanare. Sightseeing in the city is still in an early stage but the most interesting places to see include the Catedral de Yopal, the Unicentro, and the Parque Temático Historias de Piedra (which has unique sculptures of various figures carved out of the trees and rocks). Other places worthy of a visit are the Museo Centro Histórico del Oriente, the Casa Museo Yopal, and the Parque El Resurgimiento. Yopal sponsors several festivals during the year including the Copa America de Coleo and the Joropera Internacional Cimarronneando Joropo (Dier, 2017, p. 410).

The greatest attractions, however, are agriculture and cattle raising operations just beyond Yopal since they remain the dominant activities in the department and are still the prototype of typical Colombian cattle ranches. The most popular ranch is the Hacienda la Aurora that is located about 112 miles northwest of Yopal. It measures 17,000 hectares and has 6,000 head of cattle. The Barragan family are the current owners. They purchased the property in 1970, and have not allowed the hunting of animals, neither cattle nor their jaguar and puma predators. The hacienda is a working farm and offers the opportunity to view cattle-ranching in the Colombia style (Dier, 2017, p. 414). There are other ranches, but many have been converted into large African palm, corn, soy or rubber plantations.

The Pisina Natural de La Aguatoca, only 12 kilometers from Yopal, is a natural swimming pool. Marroquín, another town worthy of a visit, is where cattle hide is refined into leather for use on the ranches.

In short, the most important reason to visit Meta and Casanare is to observe the traditional local cattle-cowboy culture and the wildlife via horseback riding, and birdwatching excursions sponsored by the local tourist agencies before modernization inevitably transforms the region.

Summary and Conclusions

This review of the development of the tourism growth in Colombia with an emphasis on the Llanos may strike the reader as being overly optimistic, since for many years, Colombia has been synonymous with cocaine and coffee—regarded as a dangerous place without the usual attractions that a foreign visitor has come to expect. Nevertheless, for those seeking a cultural or ecotourism experience, it could not be a better time to visit eastern Colombia where the current official tourist slogan is: “The only risk is that you’ll want to stay” (Modak, 2017).

References

- Anderson, H. (2014). *Tourism and violence: New directions in tourism analysis*. Farmham, Eng: Ashgate.
- Avellaneda Cusaría, A. (1980). *Petróleo, colonización y medio ambiente en Colombia de la Tora a Cusiana*. Bogotá: ECOE Ediciones.
- Becker, E. (2013). *Overbooked: The exploding business of travel and tourism*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Beresky, A. E. (Ed.). (1991). *Fodor's travel publications*.
- Benítez, A. (2017). *Violencia and Desplazamiento en Casanare*.
- Delgado Martínez, A. (1990). *Casanare y su historia*. Bogota: Editorial Bochica.
- Delpar, H. (1992). *The enormous vogue of things Mexican*. Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press.
- Dier, A. (2017). *Colombia* (2nd ed.). Moon.com.
- Flechas, A. M. (2023). Las Grietas en la Transport en Colombia. *Razón Pública*, Agosto 27, 2023.
- Gómez, R. (2021). Mina El Eden and dark tourism in Zacatecas, Mexico. In Wood (Ed.), *The business of leisure* (pp. 279-298). Lincoln: University of Nebraska.
- Hudson, R. (Ed.). (2010). *Colombia: A country study* (5th ed.). Area Handbook Series. Washington D.C.: Library of Congress.
- Johnson, M. (2022). 12 top-rated attractions & places to visit in Colombia. *Planet Aware*. Retrieved from <https://www.Planetware.com/touristattractions, Colombia-col.htm>
- Lebawit Girma, L. (2022). *Colombia tourism is poised for transition under new president*. Skift.com.
- Martinez, D. E. (2023). Wrong directions and new maps of voice theorizing cultural tourism, indigenous commodities. *American Indian Quarterly*, 36(4), 545-573.
- Manuel Burgos, F. (2021). Netflix narcos and narco-tours. In Wood, *The business of leisure* (pp. 299-316). Lincoln: University of Nebraska.
- Mantilla Trejos, E. (2003). Luz y Sombra: 25 años de Historia de los Llanos Colombianos. In *Memorias, VIII Simposio internacional de los Llanos colombo-Venezolanos* (pp. 14-23). Junio 28-30, 2003.
- Modak, S. (2017). How Colombia, once consumed by violence, became your next destination. *Condé Nast Traveler*, November 9, 2017.
- Osbourne, M. (2023). Pablo Escobar's multiplying "Cocaine Hippos" will be sterilized in Colombia. *Smithsonian Magazine*, November 22, 2023.
- Pérez Rodríguez, C. (2023). Traveling for pleasure: A brief history of tourism. Europeana blog.
- Pierce, J. (2004). *Beyond the perimeter fence*. London: London School of Economics and Political Science.
- Plazas Olarte, H. (1944). *Los territorios nacionales con introducción y de su historia al estudio de su geografía*. Bogotá: Editorial Paz.
- Rausch, J. (June 2023). Tequendama falls: Ongoing efforts to restore what was once Colombia's greatest natural wonder. *The Latin Americanist*, 67(2), 155-178.
- Salamanca Uribe, J. (2023). Yopal: Una cruce de caminos convertido en ciudad. *Biblioteca Virtual: Credencial Historia*, No. 237.
- Statista. (2024). Colombia crude oil export value 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/999474/>
- Villarraga, H. (2024). Colombia's meta province bets on tourism instead of oil. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/business/>
- Wikipedia. (2024a). What is ecotourism?
- Wikipedia. (2024b). Yopal. Retrieved from <https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yopal>
- Wood, A. G. (Ed.). (2021). *The business of leisure: Tourism history in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Egerton, A. (2023). Colombia's Ciclovía's: Opening up the streets to cyclists. In *Lonely planet* (10th ed.) (pp. 277-279).