

## sense for a Place

Cartagena de Indias, Mercado Bazurto, Colombia. 2019 | Photography by [Bernadette Fox](#) | @dettesnaps



Cartagena de Indias has always played a major role in Colombia's history. As one of the largest ports in the Americas, it has been invaded by the Spanish, French, and English, and was a major hub for the slave trade. As a result, Cartagena has one of the largest populations of African descendants.

Today, this rich cultural mix has made for a uniquely diverse and colorful city landscape, lush with tradition and a deep sense of community. 28% of the Colombia population is Afro-Colombian and the majority of Cartagena's inhabitants identify as Caribes (from neighboring Caribbean islands). With over 1 million residents, it's constantly bustling with a vivacious energy. It's also a crucial tourist destination where visitors feed on this life force.

Cartagena has been romanticized in many Hollywood films, not surprisingly all of which read as inaccurate. In documenting the city and its people, my aim was to avoid making images of the surface or tourist experience, but rather to transfer a sense of memory for a place and it's feeling; to communicate the way it ebbs and flows.

There's a vivid contrast between just about every facet of the city, a charm and a heartache for every corner: a late-night bachelorette party clashes with an early-morning labor protest, a quiet game of chess in the shade gives way to a vendor selling trinkets under an oppressive midday sun, a Venezuelan family with six children begs for help while an upper-class couple enters the street in crisp white linen for an evening on the town. The city remains a strange and beautiful juxtaposition of its past stories and present hopes.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, the country has temporarily closed its borders to visitors, there's basically no unemployment assistance, there has been a dramatic increase in violence, communities are starving, and many refugees are returning to their homes in Venezuela. There's hope that a memory of a city survives, transforms, and is reborn anew with time, but for now, these street scenes—full of life and togetherness—may be some of the city's last for a long while.

















