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January, 2011

Dear Guest,

We are pleased to deliver our January electronic newsletter! This month we are focusing on Colombia, which happens to be where Brenda hails from.

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Featured Article



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A Letter From Our President

Having recently celebrated our 28th anniversary, all of us at PALS want to wish you a Happy and prosperous 2011. Fluency in foreign languages and knowing how to work in a global economy have never been more important than they are today. We are looking forward to many more successful years helping Michigan businesses thrive in a global economy.

I just returned from a trip to Colombia and thought I'd share a little bit about my homeland with you. If you ask, most Americans will tell you that the first things they think of when they think about Colombia are: coffee and cartels. But there is so much more to know and understand. The United States is Colombia's largest trading partner and trade ties between these two countries are growing. Colombia is one of the strongest economies in Latin America and has largely escaped the significant economic stress faced by many other countries in recent years. A new president, Juan Manuel Santos was just elected and is expected to follow former President Uribe's conservative policies. So, the trend of economic strength is expected to continue.



Colombia is very diverse geographically, and can rightly boast that nearly every type of ecosystem is found within its borders. Colombia is also the only country in South America with two sea coasts, Caribbean and Pacific. This geo-diversity has provided for a strong agricultural base, including the biggest agricultural exports: coffee and flowers. Along with this ecological diversity Colombia is unusual in Latin America in that it has a number of very large cities, not just a busy capital. In addition to Bogotá, the cities of Medellín, Cali, Cartagena, Barranquilla and Cúcuta are all very large and growing urban centers.

If you go to Colombia for business or pleasure you will find Colombians to be a warm and welcoming people. Many Colombians speak English and have attended university in North America or England. In fact, President Elect Santos graduated from The University of Kansas, Harvard, The London School of Economics and Tufts University, and he earned more than one degree from some of those institutions. From an anthropological point of

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view, Colombians are big on context, social relationships and tradition. We Colombians pay close attention to what you say and how you say it. Although you will find business meetings in Bogotá or Medellín fairly formal, we would not dream of starting a meeting without a warm welcome, some heartfelt chat and of course a warm cup of coffee. By the way, in Colombia we call an espresso a “tinto”. “Tinto” might mean red wine in other Spanish speaking countries, but for Colombians it is a strong espresso with just the right amount of sugar. I would invite all of you to visit Colombia, whether you like the beach, the mountains or big city glitz, Colombia is waiting to share its rich history and rich, diverse natural environment. Bogotá is often referred to as the Athens of Latin America and Cali is called Heaven’s branch office. Just about every other city has some delightful nickname, and for a good reason, Colombia is a beautiful country with a rich cultural heritage. Start planning your trip now.

Did You Know?

Colombia is the oldest democracy in Latin America.

Bogotá is one of the highest capitals on Earth at 8,661 feet above sea level.

The Organization of American States was founded in Bogotá in 1949.

Colombia’s Manuel Elkin Patarroyo is one of the most well-known Latin American scientists of the 21st century. He developed a new vaccine to prevent malaria and has given it away as a gift to the rest of the world.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez was the second Latin American to win a Nobel Prize in literature. Many of his novels have been global best sellers including “The Hundred Years Solitude” and “Love In The Time of Cholera”.

Experts believe there are 14,000 species of butterflies in the world: about 3,000 of them, or 20%, are found in Colombia.

Colombia has the world’s greatest diversity in orchids (3,500 species) and birds (1,754 species). It is also #2 in amphibians and #3 in reptiles.

Do you like green? 95% of the world’s emeralds come from Colombia.

Colombian María Isabel Urrutia is the only South American to win Olympic gold in weightlifting in 2000 in Sydney.

Colombia is the world’s third-leading producer of women’s lingerie.

The amazing gold work of Colombia’s pre-Colombian tribes is housed in one of the world’s better known museums, Bogotá’s Museo de Oro (Gold Museum).

Colombia is the second largest coffee producer in the world, producing 12% of the 400 billion cups of coffee served globally each year.

The port city of Cartagena is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and features fortifications and beautiful architecture from the colonial period in addition to popular beaches.

There are many well known Colombians involved in the arts and sports on the global stage. They include Shakira, Carlos Vives and Juanes who are well known singers, Sofia Vergara the actress, Fernando Botero the painter and sculptor, and Juan Pablo Montoya the race car driver.

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