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SOUTH AMERICA - TOURISM G12

Maté Bombilla

Maté is an infusion prepared by steeping dried leaves of the yerba maté plant (*Ilex paraguariensis*) in hot water.



Maté is served with a metal straw from a shared hollow calabash gourd (below, right). The straw is called a bombilla in Spanish and is traditionally made of silver.



To make the drink, leaves and twigs from the yerba maté are dried with a wood fire, imparting a smoky flavour. Then the leaves and sometimes the twigs are broken up to make a rough mixture (left).The gourd is then filled one-half to three-quarters of the way with these leaves. Additional herbs are sometimes added for either health or flavour. Many people choose to pour warm water into the gourd before adding the bombilla, while others insist that the bombilla is best inserted into the dry leaf mixture. Whatever the case, the drink is said to have a pungent taste - a cross between green tea and coffee, with hints of tobacco and oak yummee. It is sucked through the bombilla, the holes in the lower end stopping the leaves being taken into the mouth.



Maté is traditionally drunk in family gatherings or with friends. The gourd is passed from person to person, each drinker emptying it completely before passing it on. The server (known in Spanish as the cebador) refills the gourd with hot water and passes it to the next person who likewise drinks it all. The ritual proceeds around the circle until the maté becomes 'lavado'(washed out/flat). This may happen after the gourd has been filled about ten times or more, depending on the quality of the leaves used.

Maté is popular in Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, southern Chile, Bolivia and Brazil. This bombilla is highly decorated.

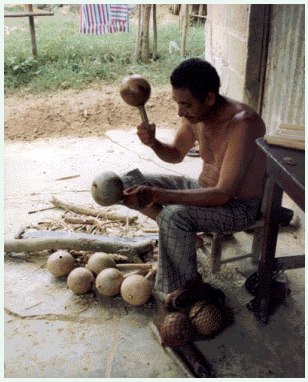
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Maracas from Colombia



Maracas are simple percussion instruments, usually played in pairs, consisting of a dried gourd shell filled with seeds or dried beans. They may also be made of leather, wood, or plastic. Often one maraca is pitched high and the other is pitched low - although one of these makes no sound at all! This probably because it has been damaged in the past.



The name *maraca* is thought to have come from the Tupi language of Brazil. In Trinidad they are known as shac-shacs. Because of the size of the shell - the seeds inside must travel some distance before they hit the sides, so the player must anticipate the rhythm. Traditional maracas were not often brightly coloured, so this pair was probably made specifically for sale to tourists. The photograph on the left shows a craftsman from Colombia making maracas.

Colombia is the home of many different dance music styles, most famously cumbia and vallenato. Cumbia is a development of an early folk dance music called gaitero. This music is played on two flutes (gaitas) and maracas, both of indigenous origin, along with drums of African origin, from the descendants of the many African slaves who were transported to Colombia. The haunting melodies of the two gaitas are played in counterpoint to each other and are combined with the steady, hypnotic beats of the drums and the elaborate rhythms of the maraca (below). The gaita players hold their flute in one hand and a maraca in the other. They play the two instruments simultaneously.







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Paisaje Aplicado from Colombia



Paisaje aplicado means appliquéd landscape in Spanish. Appliqué is a needlework technique in which pieces of fabric, embroidery, or other materials are sewn onto a piece of fabric to create designs.It is particularly suitable for work which is to be seen from a distance, as in wall hangings and banners.

This example was made in Santa Rosa, an impoverished quarrying town perched on the Andes overlooking the capital city of Bogota. Making such handicrafts is a way for many women to earn money while caring for large families.



This design has many of the characteristics of folk art throughout central and south America. Colours are primary and bright. Scale and perspective are distorted. The scenes are often filled with figures and diverse activities. Panels like this one can be hung on the wall (left), or incorporated into decorative pillows, bedspreads or clothing.

In Colombia, as in many south American countries, indigenous and rural people often wear brightly coloured clothing. One of the most famous groups to do this in Colombia are the Kuna, who are also found in Panama. They use appliqué techniques to create bright, abstract panels called *mola*, which are often incorporated into their blouses and skirts. Mola means shirt or clothing in their language. The mola originated with the tradition of Kuna women painting their bodies with geometrical designs, using available natural colours. After the arrival of Europeans these designs were woven in cotton and sewn using cloth bought from the settlers. The picture on the right shows a Kuna woman with some of her handiwork.



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Seed Necklace from Brazil

Made for tourists, this seed necklace evokes the rainforest and the indigenous groups which inhabit it. However, they lack the bright colours which are widely favoured by many of the native people who live in Brazil.





Snake Toy from Chile

Wooden snake toys like this are popular around the world. A single piece of wood is cut into numerous sections. The sections are held together by a strip of cloth which is inserted along the length of the pieces. The effect is surprisingly lifelike - and scary!



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Brazil Nut

The Brazil nut (*Bertholletia excelsa*) is native to the Guianas, Venezuela, Brazil, eastern Colombia, eastern Peru and eastern Bolivia. It occurs as scattered trees in large forests on the banks of the Amazon, Rio Negro and the Orinoco.

It is one of the largest trees in the Amazonian rainforest, reaching 30-45 metres (100-150 ft) tall and 12m (36ft) trunk diameter. It may live for 500 years or more. The stem is straight and commonly unbranched for well over half the tree's height, with a large crown of long branches above the surrounding canopy of other trees. The bark is greyish and smooth.



Brazil nuts will only fruit in forests that have not been touched by human activity. This is because they must grow near to species of orchids that attract long-tongued orchid bees (right) and these orchids will only flourish in undisturbed forests. The orchids produce a scent that attracts orchid bees and the Brazil nut's yellow flowers can only be pollinated by these bees.



Since it is illegal to cut down a Brazil nut tree in Peru, it is common to see them scattered around land that has been cleared for cows (right). These trees are a stark reminder of the once majestic rainforest. Unfortunately they will slowly die and are unable to regenerate as the absence of orchids means they will not produce fruit.



If both the orchids and the bees are present, the fruit takes 14 months to mature after pollination of the flowers. The nuts (or, strictly speaking, the seeds) are housed in grapefruit-sized pods that contain about 20 seeds each. This is the part you will find in the box. The nuts are packed inside like the segments of an orange. These pods can weigh up to 2kg and they are said to fall with such force that they would kill you should one land on your head!

Brazil nuts are good for your health. They contain 14% protein, 11% carbohydrates, and 67% fat. All the Brazil nuts that are eaten in England at Christmas are collected in the wild, rather than from farms. Collecting Brazil nuts can give forest dwelling people both a steady income as well as an argument to use against those who want to fell the trees for other kinds of farming.

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Sugar Cane





Sugar cane is a type of grass filled with rich sugar, which is grown by about 200 countries in the warm temperate to tropical regions of the world. The largest producer is Brazil, but it can also be seen in other South American countries including Peru, Columbia and Ecuador. The individual canes grow between 2 and 6 metres tall and are used in the production of sugar, molasses, rum and bio fuels. The photographs on the right show a field of growing sugar cane and some that has been freshly cut. Compare it to the piece in the box.



Sugar cane is most often harvested by hand. First, the field is set on fire. This burns away any dead leaves but the canes remain unharmed. The fire also kills any snakes that might be lurking amongst the crop. The canes are then cut using machetes. A stump is left above the ground, which will produce new shoots called ratoons for the next harvest.

Sometimes sugar cane is harvested mechanically, of course producing a much higher quantity. But on the down side there is more chance of the canes being damaged by the heavy machinery. The picture below shows sugar cane being loaded up ready to be taken away and processed.

