

Teyuna • Ciudad Perdida

Archaeological Park

Guidebook
English



Global Heritage Fund





Global Heritage Fund

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Photo: ICANH Archive. Entry staircase stemming off the peripheral path into the Northern Sector terraces.



Introduction

Teyuna¹-Ciudad Perdida Archaeological Park is a clear example of contemporary society's fascination with the past and its continued allure, but it is also a place of profound historical silences in a territory inhabited for thousands of years before the arrival of the first European settlers to the New World. In comparison to other pre-Columbian societies of Central and South America however, we still know very little about the Tairona, even though continuing archaeological research in the area adds new and valuable information every year.

Since its official discovery in 1976, various archaeological projects have tried to address these silences and answer the different questions that assault us once we gain a sense of the complexity and monumentality of a place such as Teyuna-Ciudad Perdida. This information is strewn about in several unpublished site reports, multiple articles in academic journals, book chapters, and a few books. In this sense, this guidebook is a necessarily abridged and condensed version of all this information, and what we know, or think we know, about these societies. For those who would like to read beyond what this short guidebook offers, I have added a short bibliography at the end.

The main purpose of this guidebook is to provide visitors with basic information on the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, its ancient inhabitants,

1 Name given by indigenous and local peoples to the site known as Ciudad Perdida.

the discovery of Teyuna-Ciudad Perdida, its settlement history, and different sectors.

Since 1976, the Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, ICANH, (Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History), has supervised all archaeological research, restoration, and management of the Site.



Photo: ICANH Archive. View of the central terrace from the residential terraces on its western side. Note the staircase inset into the retaining wall.



1. The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta and the Archaeological Park

The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is a pyramid-shaped mountain range separate from the Andes extending over approximately 16500 square kilometers with altitudes ranging from sea level to its glacier-covered peaks –Colón and Bolívar peaks, 5780 meters elevation– within thirty eight kilometers of the coastline. This makes it one of the highest coastal mountain ranges in the world, giving it also an incredible range of ecological and climate diversity. The mountain range is part of three different Colombian *departamentos*: Magdalena, Guajira, and Cesar.

The altitudinal variation, high numbers of endemic species, and isolation from the Andes chain make it one of the most biodiverse places in South America. The arid and semi-arid coastal areas around Santa Marta and the western end of Parque Nacional Natural Tairona (Tairona National Park) are covered in thorny vegetation and dry tropical forest, which extends up into the lower slopes of the western side of the Sierra. Tropical rainforest is found along the coastline, roughly from Cinto Bay in Parque Tairona towards the East, and then up to an elevation of two thousand meters. Temperatures in the rainforest range from 16°C to 28°C and humidity can reach levels of 90 per cent or more due to the abundant rainfall. Humid montane forests are located in a narrow band circling the upper slopes between two thousand to three thousand meters elevation, with temperatures ranging from 10°C to 20°C. Tropical alpine *páramos*, or cool



Map No. 1: Teyuna-Ciudad Perdida Archaeological Park, located in northern Colombia.
Sources: Thematic map by ICANH based on cartographic information compiled by Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi, IGAC, Atlas de Colombia, fifth edition, 2002.



Photo:

ICANH Archive. In the excavated area between the walls of these terraces located in the Northern Sector you can see a sealed off staircase entering an older terrace buried below the one on view.

wet highlands with ferns, grasses and endemic vegetation, followed by glacial moraines are found between 3100 meters elevation and the snow-line, which begins at about 4700 meters elevation.

Ciudad Perdida Archaeological Park is located on the northern face of the mountain range towards the upper section of the Buritaca River basin. The archaeological remains extend over more than thirty hectares, spreading out over the crest and slopes of a narrow hilltop overlooking the Buritaca River, from 900 meters elevation to 1100 meters. The broken landscape around the Park is covered in tropical rainforest, with trees and palms over thirty meters high. The forest slowly regenerated in the past four hundred years after Ciudad Perdida and other Tairona towns located along the River basin were abandoned, probably some time between A. D. 1580 and A. D. 1650. Before this time, most of the surrounding slopes were used to farm crops such as maize, cassava, and beans.

By contrast with other parts of the Sierra Nevada where most of the vegetation is now gone or has been replaced by crops, high forest densities and sparse human presence mean that a great variety of wild animals

can be seen in or around the Park. Of the more than 628 species of birds living in the Sierra Nevada², endemic species such as toucanettes and toucans, chau-chau, hummingbirds, woodpeckers, great tinamou, and parakeets are frequent visitors. Some of these species are found nowhere else on the planet. Although their numbers were severely affected by a yellow fever epidemic some years ago, howler monkeys have recently returned to Ciudad Perdida, and their incredibly loud braying can be heard early in the morning as they move about the forest. Large rodents of the agouti species (*guatinaja*, *ñeque*), as well as red-brocket deer, peccary (*javelina*), *coatí* (hog-nosed coon), and the elusive jaguar and ocelot (little spotted cat) are found in more remote areas. Surrounded as it is by rainforest, snakes also abound. Most of them are harmless, but on occasion venomous snakes such as the coral (*micrurus*) and fer-de-lance viper (*bothrops*

Photo: ICANH
Archive. View of the
great central terrace
from the residential
sector on the
southern side of the
settlement.

-
- 2 The total number of bird species found in the Sierra Nevada is just about the same as those found in all the United States of America and Canada combined.



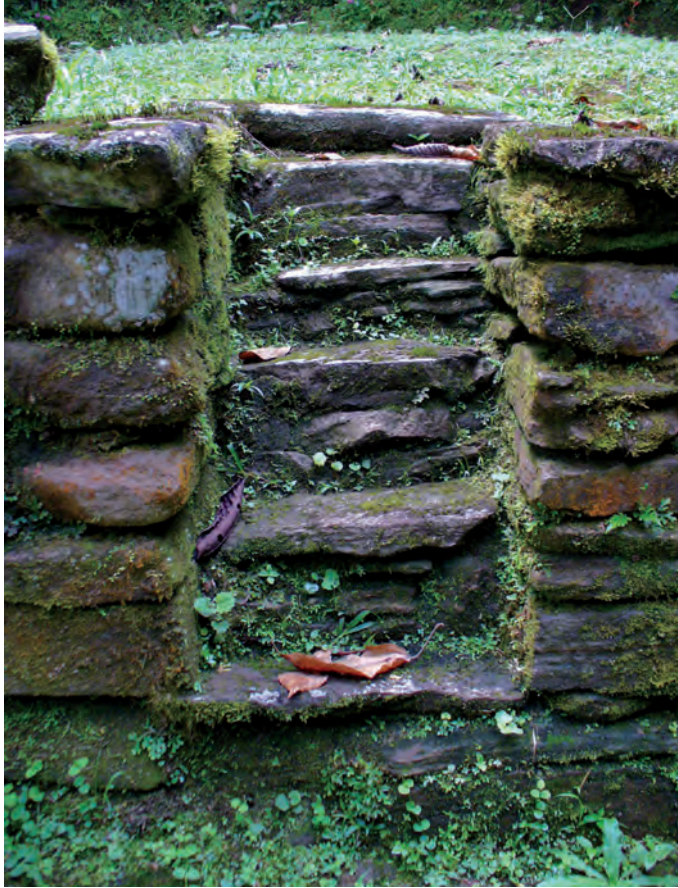


Photo: ICANH Archive. Entry staircase to a round dwelling. By inseting the steps into the sidewalls shifting of the stones is minimized.

lanceolatus, atrox) can be seen sunning themselves on the masonry walls and terraces.

Tairona Society

Approximately 1800 years ago, the ancestors of the Tairona slowly began to settle the Caribbean lowlands of northern Colombia between the swamplands of the Ciénaga Grande de Santa Marta to the West and the Palomino River to the East, and by A. D. 600 had also begun to colonize the slopes of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. Called the “Neguanje” or “Buritaca” Period, until a few years ago very little was known about these people and their relationship to the Tairona polities encountered by the Spanish at the end of the 15th century. Nevertheless, recent archaeological excavations in Chengue Bay (Tairona National Park), Pueblito (Tairona National Park), and Teyuna-Ciudad Perdida have begun to improve our

understanding of this time period and its relationship to subsequent ones. Excavations in Pueblito and Ciudad Perdida revealed that Neguanje Period dwellings and structures are buried beneath the stone masonry and rammed earth terraces on view at Ciudad Perdida and Pueblito that were built during the Tairona period (A. D. 1000-1650).

In comparison to Tairona settlements, the Neguanje Period (approximately A. D. 200 to A. D. 1000 or 1100) villages appear to be much smaller (four to ten hectares), although dwellings are also round in shape and some already have rough masonry walls similar to those built in later periods. Very few mortuary structures have been excavated by archaeologists, the most notable of these being the Neguanje burial mound excavated by John Alden Mason in 1921 for the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. More than 8000 beads were found in the burial, along with carved jadeite figurines, gold earrings, bracelets, breast plates, figurines and fine pottery vessels. Though no other Neguanje Period burials excavated by archaeologists to date have yielded comparable quantities of valuable objects, and archaeologists are only beginning to find settlements from this period, it is assumed that these objects index the existence of major social differences in the population.

Between A. D. 1100 and until their demise in A. D. 1600 at the hands of disease, displacement, and war, these people continued to settle the narrow river valleys of the northern and southwestern faces of the Sierra Nevada, developing into one of the most fascinating yet least studied societies in South America. By 1498, when Spanish explorer Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo anchored in the Bay of Santa Marta to trade steel axes for gold, more than two hundred and fifty Tairona villages and towns with stone masonry and rammed earth architecture could be found throughout the Sierra, from the shore line to altitudes above 2500 meters, covering an area of approximately five thousand square kilometers. It was also during this time period that extensive networks of flagstone paved roads and paths were built, along with agricultural terracing, reservoirs and water drainage systems.



Photo:
Carlos Pineda.

Although it is quite common to refer to the totality of this population by the term “Tairona”³, the social and political organization encountered by the Spanish in the early 16th century was truly complex. Towns, or rather groups of towns, were politically independent from one another, even though a certain degree of sociocultural unity is suggested by a common language, stone architecture and material culture. We know that by the 16th century some leaders extended their political domain over other towns and lower ranking leaders, controlling great territories or “provinces”, as they were called by the Spanish. It is also true that no single leader exerted control over all the population and territory. This supposes a complicated sociopolitical arrangement, wherein different leaders probably competed with each other to extend their influence by way of alli-

3 Spanish documents of the 16th and 17th centuries point out that the word apparently means “foundry” or “forge” and was only used when referring to one of these polities: That is, “those of Tairona valley”. It was only much later that it became a synonym for the entire populations of the northern and southwestern sides of the Sierra Nevada. To be sure, we do not know what they called themselves.



Photo: ICANH Archive. Series of overlapping terraces in the lower part of the Central Sector.

ances, trade partnerships and occasional skirmishes, so that their political power and authority increased or diminished accordingly.

With the foundation of the city of Santa Marta by Rodrigo de Bastidas between 1525 and 1526, the small trading expeditions to the area gave way to a full-blown colonial enterprise. Throughout the 16th century, multiple governors tried, and failed, to Christianize and subject the indigenous population to Spanish rule. In truth, the Spanish only ruled over the immediate area around Santa Marta and a few of the coastal towns. Settlements located high up in the Sierra Nevada remained outside their control. In fact, the 16th century was characterized by intense periods of conflict followed by years of relative calm and reestablishment of peaceful trade relationships between the indigenous population and the Spanish colonizers. In this sense, the colonial enterprise was completely unsuccessful, since they were unable to establish new towns in the Sierra Nevada or dominate the indigenous population. Their control over this territory was so weak that some Tairona leaders were actually able to establish trade relations with English and French pirates, with whom they exchanged gold objects for European weapons (cuirasses, halberds, swords, daggers, and arquebuses),

as well as steel tools and wine. Indigenous leaders used these exotic goods to increase their status and authority.

Tairona towns and villages were slowly yet progressively abandoned during the 16th century due to a variety of reasons. Apart from recurring conflict with the Spanish colonizers, the early introduction of European diseases such as measles, typhus, smallpox, and influenza caused epidemic cycles approximately every ten years, with devastating effects for the indigenous population. Though no exact numbers are available for the Sierra Nevada, different studies have demonstrated that by 1570, most indigenous populations in the New World had decreased by 80 per cent. Spanish documents also mention the constant outbreak of these diseases among the Tairona. The frequency and magnitude of these outbreaks meant that populations did not have enough time to recover, something that must have caused severe problems in indigenous social structure.

On the other hand, and even though its effects have been greatly exaggerated, the retaliatory campaign of 1599-1600 led by Juan Guiral Belón,

Photo: ICANH Archive. The Kogi town of Mutanzhi, founded at the beginning of the 80's. The upper part of the Buritaca River basin was completely uninhabited up until the middle of the 20th century.





Photo: ICANH Archive. A large rectangular, cut and dressed grinding stone in granite found in the Mahecha or El Canal Sector weighing approximately 100 kilograms. Tairona masons were extremely skilled stone cutters.

the newly arrived governor, defeated the Tairona population living close to Santa Marta. It was in that year that the indigenous towns of Bonda, Ma- cinga and Jeriboca rose up against the Spanish, tiring of their insistence on Christianization and demands of tribute for the Crown. The initial uprising took the lives of three friars sent to convert them, at least thirty other Spaniards including some women and children, and an unknown number of African slaves and indigenous servants. Governor Guiral Belón then proceeded to carefully plan and execute the Spanish revenge. Drawing on experienced, battle-proven men from as far away as Cartagena, he chased after the leaders responsible for the uprising until they were captured and executed. He then resettled the surviving population in *encomiendas*⁴ close to Santa Marta and forbid them to move back to their towns.

4 The *encomienda* was a labor system used extensively throughout the Spanish colonies in the Americas up until the beginning of the 18th century. In exchange for tribute in the form of gold, work, cotton blankets, foodstuffs, or even firewood, a colonizer was entrusted with a number of indians. The *encomendero*'s obligations included teaching them Spanish and instruction in the Catholic faith.

Despite the success of Guiral Belón's punitive campaign, the Spanish were never able to establish permanent settlements or towns in the upper reaches of the Sierra Nevada during the 17th and 18th centuries. It is presumed that the surviving indigenous population migrated into areas outside colonial control. The forest slowly covered the great Tairona towns, keeping them hidden until they were rediscovered in the 20th century.

By contrast to other parts of the Americas, the successful resistance of the Tairona coupled with Spanish incapacity to establish political rule means that detailed descriptions of their society, daily life, customs and beliefs are few and far between. However, a careful reading of the more reliable accounts from the 16th century in conjunction with the archaeological discoveries, gives us a fascinating picture of a complex society organized along hierarchical lines, with several independent political and religious leaders, expert potters, stone-masons and goldsmiths, as well as what appears to be a warrior elite.

Photo: ICANH
Archive. Two
terraces in the lower
Piedras Sector.
The other path
and staircase to
the Buritaca River
linking Ciudad
Perdida with towns
further upriver is
located in this area.





Like many other indigenous societies of the Americas, the Spanish found that the Tairona were especially careful regarding their personal appearance, such that bodily adornment and aesthetics were particularly important. Men used gold nose rings, lip plugs, ear spools, and pectorals, as well as fine necklaces with beads of shell, bone, teeth, carnelian, agate, translucent quartz, jasper, emeralds, nephrite or chalcedony. Plumary art was also very important, and certain species of birds were raised for the specific purpose of using their feathers for headdresses, crowns, blankets, and vests, or to mount them on gold ornaments or make them into flowers.

Though bodily adornment was heavily emphasized, other elements of dress appear to be quite simple. Spanish documents mention that men moved around naked, occasionally using shell penis-sheaths or a fine cotton blanket draped around their shoulders. Women also used this kind of blankets tied around the waist or over their shoulders, as well as great strings of beads wound around their necks, wrists, forearms, calves, and ankles. The Spanish documents highlight that these finely woven cotton blankets⁵ were usually dyed with several colors and/or printed with distinct patterns, and that those used by higher ranking persons were also adorned with feathers and gold and stone beadwork.

5 In many of the indigenous societies encountered by the Spanish throughout the Americas, woven textiles were considered to be incredibly valuable, often times more so than gold objects.



Photo: ICANH Archive. A staircase abutting a masonry wall capped with dripstones in the Mahecha or El Canal Sector. Note how the dripstones extend beyond the edge of the wall, protecting it from water erosion.

When describing indigenous towns, Spanish observers often mention that they were surrounded by farmland, with well kept plots of corn, manioc, yams, beans, sweet potato, and many fruit-bearing trees, including avocado, sour-sop, mammee apple and plantains. They also mention that several towns kept bees in large ceramic pots. The honey was used as food and the wax for casting gold pieces. Fishing and salt production were especially important activities in coastal towns since salt-cured dried fish were traded for other goods produced in the upper reaches of the massif.

The Discovery of Teyuna-Ciudad Perdida

Ciudad Perdida was discovered, sadly enough, by “*guaqueros*” or looters, the people responsible for the destruction of many archaeological sites throughout the Sierra Nevada and Colombia as they search for pre-Columbian objects to be sold illegally.

The discovery led to the partial looting of the site, a situation which lasted until March of 1976, when archaeologists working for the Colombian Institute of Anthropology, ICANH⁶ were alerted about the existence of an important site in the upper Buritaca River that was being destroyed by looters.

⁶ At that time part of Colcultura, the Colombian Institute of Culture. In 1999 it became the Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, ICANH. Created in 1938 as the Servicio Arqueológico Nacional (National Archaeological Service), ICANH is the government



Since 1973, these archaeologists had been conducting an archaeological survey in the massif, and by the time they were alerted about the looting, had already located almost two hundred other Tairona sites, covering an area of approximately 1800 square kilometers. Given the importance of the archaeological remains and the imminent danger of continued looting, ICAN designed and executed an ambitious research and restoration project developed in multiple phases between 1976 and 1986.

The site's high degree of complexity, remote location three days walk from the nearest road, and the extended research program that was implemented required the joint participation of archaeologists, architects, biologists, anthropology students and a large number of workers that contributed their knowledge, time and effort to clearing up, restoring and investigating the site.

Upon its discovery, the town was completely covered in vegetation, and although some of the structures had been seriously damaged by the looters, most of the terraces and walls were still in good shape. Its remote location far away from population centers such as Santa Marta had helped protect it from the ravages of time and the depredations of looters for the better part of five centuries. Even though the structures had been covered by forest for five hundred years or so, archaeologists found that approximately 85 per cent of the structures were very well preserved. Consolidation and restoration of the structures was mostly limited to clearing out the vegetation and fixing the upper sections of walls damaged by tree fall. Many of the flag-stoned paths were found buried under heavy layers of soil and leaf litter, and these too had to be cleaned out and consolidated. Careful to preserve the authenticity of the remains, collapsed walls were put back together without mortar or other adhesives, using the same stones that had tumbled down. The incredible stability of the structures eased the task of consolidation and restoration, making it possible to open the Park to the public in 1981.



2. Teyuna-Ciudad Perdida

After thirty years of research at the Park, archaeologists have located more than two hundred structures covering an area of approximately thirty hectares. The structures include dwellings of various sizes, terraces, stone-lined paths and staircases, plazas, ceremonial and feasting areas, canals and storehouses. Outside these thirty hectares, and still covered by forest, more structures can be found awaiting further archaeological research. This means that the specific limits of the town have not yet been determined.

Although the upper section of the Buritaca River is currently uninhabited, five hundred years ago Teyuna was surrounded by settlements. Between 1976 and 1986, while investigation and restoration advanced at Ciudad Perdida, archaeologists located another twenty-six settlements. All along the trail leading to Ciudad Perdida, and invisible to most visitors, lie numerous settlements and terraces. Most are protected by forest cover, but others have been destroyed and looted as swaths of forest are felled to make space for crops or ranching.

Ciudad Perdida was one of the more than two hundred and fifty towns inhabited by the Tairona up until the end of the 16th century. In comparison to the other twenty-six settlements found in the upper section of the Buritaca River basin, it appears to be the largest and most impressive of them all, which is why we assume it was the seat of political, social, and economic power in this specific part of the Sierra Nevada. Nevertheless, many more years of archaeological research are still required for us to be able to understand the political, economic and social links

binding together all these towns. Equally so, we are only beginning to understand Ciudad Perdida's complex history and the changes it underwent through time.

History of the Town's Construction

Until very recently, archaeologists thought that Ciudad Perdida's construction might date to the year A. D. 1000. Recent archaeological research (Giraldo, 2006) however, found that the oldest residential areas date to the year A. D. 650 and were still in use up until A. D. 1100 or 1200, which would place these occupations within the Neguanje Period. These residential areas are located towards the northern end of the town, and correspond to the first cluster of terraces found at the beginning of the staircase leading down to the Buritaca River. The early period structures are buried below the stone

Photo: ICANH Archive. The upper level of this Northern Sector terrace was one of the last to be built for this Sector. A lower level associated with the sidewalk on the left dates to 900 A. D.



masonry terraces and rings on view, which also gives us a good idea of the specific order in which this sector and the Core Area was built.

The terraces for this residential cluster, as well as the string of terraces in the Core Area leading up to the great central terrace were built in an ascending order, from the lowest to the highest one. It is hoped that future research will clarify the construction sequences for other parts of the town and indicate whether there are more buried terraces in these sectors. To summarize a bit, what this means is that the stone-masonry terraces and walls that were cleaned out and restored between 1976 and 1986 which are currently on view, were built between A. D. 1200 and A. D. 1600, modifying and burying other earlier structures. To be sure, it was in this time period that the town acquired the form and layout that you can see today. By the 16th century, we estimate that Teyuna might have had a population between fifteen hundred and two thousand people. If we add to this the population estimates for the surrounding settlements, approximately ten thousand people were living in this area alone at this time. Bear in mind that these are very conservative estimates, since precise demographics for pre-Hispanic populations are incredibly difficult to calculate.

Tairona Architecture

In such a difficult and broken topography, which oftentimes resembles a badly crumpled piece of paper, building great terraced surfaces to be used as foundation structures for temples, dwellings, gathering places, and plazas is an incredibly sensible solution. Since a great majority of the towns are located on hilltops with very steep slopes, this makes them easily defensible without having to add fortifications. Add to this that the only way of reaching these towns is by climbing in single file a narrow staircase emplaced on a 45, 50, or even 60 per cent slope and we begin to understand why the Spanish had such a hard time attacking and dominating these populations. Furthermore, building on hilltops and steep slopes allowed them to cultivate the less pronounced slopes which are less prone to erosion.



Photo: ICANH Archive. Path and terraces in the Piedras Sector. The use of boulders as part of terrace structures and foundations maximizing available space can be seen here.

Terraces at Ciudad Perdida and elsewhere in the Sierra Nevada are of two very broad types, although both use a construction technique known as packed earth in combination with stone-masonry retaining walls. A simple isolated terrace begins when a slope is cut to make a flat cross-section. The soil and stones taken from the cut are then moved down-slope as fill, and held in place by several courses of roughly dressed stone. The flat surface is then reinforced by tamping the soil and adding medium sized cobblestones. Once the wall reached a certain height, the Tairona then added a course of long (one to two meter), rather flat stones, building up over them the next retaining wall in a stepped-back fashion. The combined weight of soil, rubble, and stone retaining wall upon the long stones adds structural reinforcement to the lower terrace and wall, minimizing deformation and shift. Once the terrace was finished, surfaces exposed to water run off were then covered with flagstones to prevent water from puddling, thus avoiding erosion caused by seepage and oversaturation. It was then that the elevated ring of cut and dressed stone used as a foundation for buildings was placed on the terrace surface. As population and a need for level living space grew, other cuts for terraces were made nearby, and masonry walls and terraces extended until they abutted or intersected

against one another, thus creating great flat surfaces for living, some with areas exceeding three thousand square meters.

Terraces built on the narrow crest leading up to uppermost part of the hilltop on the other hand, that is, those in the Core Area of the settlement, were built somewhat differently. Archaeological excavations have determined that the crest and hilltop were studded with rock outcroppings, something that forced the Tairona to build higher, and thus more complex retaining walls on both sides and add great amounts of soil and rubble as fill. Once a terrace was completed, it was possible to build the next one in the sequence, since the walls could now rest upon this lower one. Great stone “stakes” were also sunk in at the edges of certain walls to counteract displacement.

One of the more important and fascinating aspects of Tairona construction, is that it is one of the clearest examples of an urban architectural pattern completely unlike the modern architectonics we experience in our daily lives, where straight lines, spatial subdivision into neat boxes, and perpendicular angles direct our perception. Even if we compare it to the construction patterns used by other pre-Columbian societies like the Inca, Maya, or Aztec, or to the great urban centers of Teotihuacán (Mexico) or Tiwanaku (Bolivia), there are no great similarities, for these societies commonly used rectangular forms, straight lines and partition walls to subdivide and create multiple inner rooms within a single building.

Tairona architecture by comparison, highlights and emphasizes sinuosity, the use of circles and circularity as formal elements, open spaces between buildings and the constant management and direction of circulation and movement, both within and between settlements. These characteristics can also be observed in the extensive, and oftentimes bewildering, network of paths, staircases and sidewalks guiding people’s circulation between buildings in a settlement such as Ciudad Perdida. Although the Sierra Nevada was inevitably altered and transformed by the construction of these large towns, one of the more interesting aspects is that buildings somehow follow the landscape’s natural forms. This implies

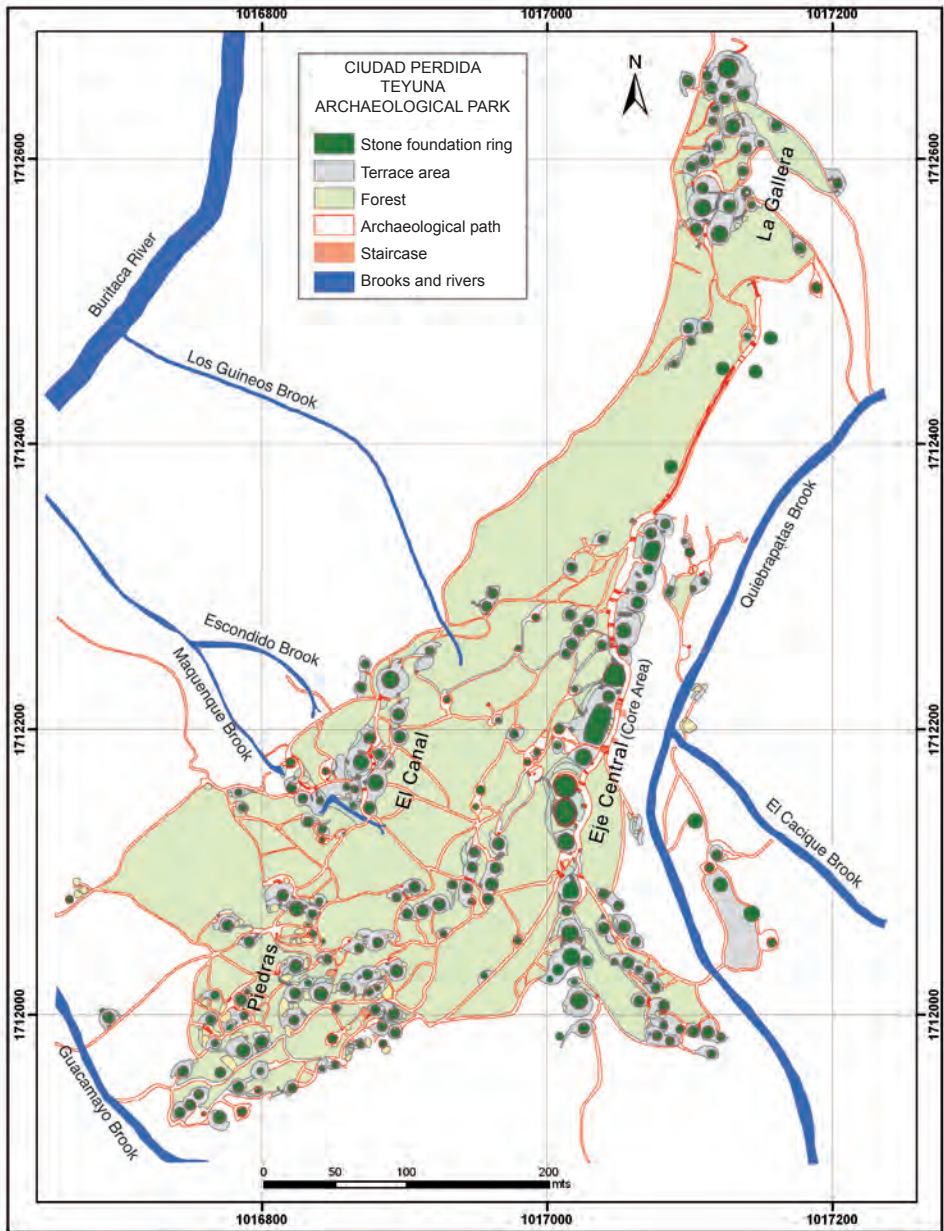
a low-density urban pattern *vis-á-vis* the total amount of area that is effectively used by the population, which tends to be far greater.

On the other hand, due to this particular architectural pattern, Tairona towns do not have well-defined edges allowing us to determine where a settlement begins or ends. Differing from many other pre-Columbian and preindustrial societies, the Tairona did not make use of walls or fortifications, to delimit, enclose and protect their towns. If we add to this the countless paths linking nearby towns to another, what emerges is a settlement pattern characterized by conurbation. This means that a certain area, in this case a section of a river basin comprising approximately eighty square kilometers, has a number of rather large towns, each with its own characteristics, that are socially, politically and economically dependent on one another.

Teyuna-Ciudad Perdida's Sectors

After arriving at the Park and weather permitting, the guides will take you out on a walking tour of the different sectors, which usually takes about forty-five minutes to one hour. Visitors however, can get to know other areas outside the usual walking tour by venturing out on their own. In general, the walking tour begins at the great central terrace, moves on towards the Piedras Sector, where you can also see two small dwellings used by the Kogi *mamo*⁷ and his family while they are at Ciudad Perdida, descends to the Mahecha Sector and then takes the peripheral path towards the Gallera or Northern Sector. From this point onwards, it follows a stone path leading through the forest to Quiebrapatas Brook, where you can swim, and then loops back to the Core Area by way of the great central staircase.

7 Priests among the Kogi, Arhuaco, and Arsario indigenous groups are called *mamo* or *mama* (singular). They fill a number of religious and political roles among the indigenous communities and occasionally visit Ciudad Perdida.



Map No. 2: Topographic and architectural base map of Teyuna-Ciudad Perdida Park.
Sources: Thematic map by ICANH based on digitized information compiled by Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi, IGAC, Atlas de Colombia, fifth edition, 2002.

In the following section, I briefly describe the different sectors comprising the Archaeological Park, giving the approximate number of masonry terraces and rings, and their total area.

Eje Central (Core Area) Sector

The exceedingly large, well-finished central terrace, as well as the ovalshaped structure known as La Capilla correspond to gathering places used for feasts and rituals. Smaller rings of finely cut and dressed stone were probably elite residences. Beginning with the first terrace right at the end of the central staircase, these terraces were built in a short period of time at some point after A. D. 1200. Much of the more elaborate stone work and terracing is concentrated in this area. Building it required immense quantities of locally quarried stone taken from nearby outcroppings. To the sides of the Core Area, and connected to it by staircases and paths, more residential terraces can be found. The structures cover an area of approximately 48000 square meters.

- Terraces: 46.
- Rings: 60.

Piedras Sector

This is one of the sectors with the highest construction densities and where great boulders were incorporated into the foundations of terrace walls, wall sections, and even used as “patio furniture”. The careful stonework used to channel and slow down runoff can also be seen in many of the terraces. Much of the stone used to build Ciudad Perdida was quarried from this Sector. Currently closed to the public, another stone staircase leading down to the Buritaca River provides an alternative entrance into the town. It is also a residential area. The structures cover 28000 square meters.

- Terraces: 38.
- Rings: 51.



El Canal or Mahecha Sector

Some of the archaeological excavations in this area suggest that it was one of the last residential areas to be built, possibly between the 15th and 16th centuries. Complex multi-level terraces with several staircases and a canal can be seen here. The structures encompass approximately 16000 square meters.

- Terraces: 22.
- Rings: 28.

Photo: ICANH Archive. The Kogi town of Mutanzhi is reached on the second day of the trek. The boundaries of the Kogi-Malayo-Arhuaco indigenous resguardo Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta National Park are located close to the town.



Photo: ICANH
Archive. Dawn
in summertime.
Temperatures can
go down as low as
15°C at this time
of year.

Norte or La Gallera Sector

This sector comprises the first cluster of terraces at the end of the staircase leading up from the Buritaca River. It is also a residential sector, and has some of the largest terraces and house-rings. A number of early period structures were found here, which makes it one of the oldest parts of the town. The small stone ring probably served as a storehouse. A multitude of paths lead out of this area towards Quiebrapatas Brook, the Core Area, the Canal Sector, and the Buritaca River. The structures cover an area of approximately 28000 meters.

- Terraces: 19.
- Rings: 32.



3. Getting to Teyuna-Ciudad Perdida

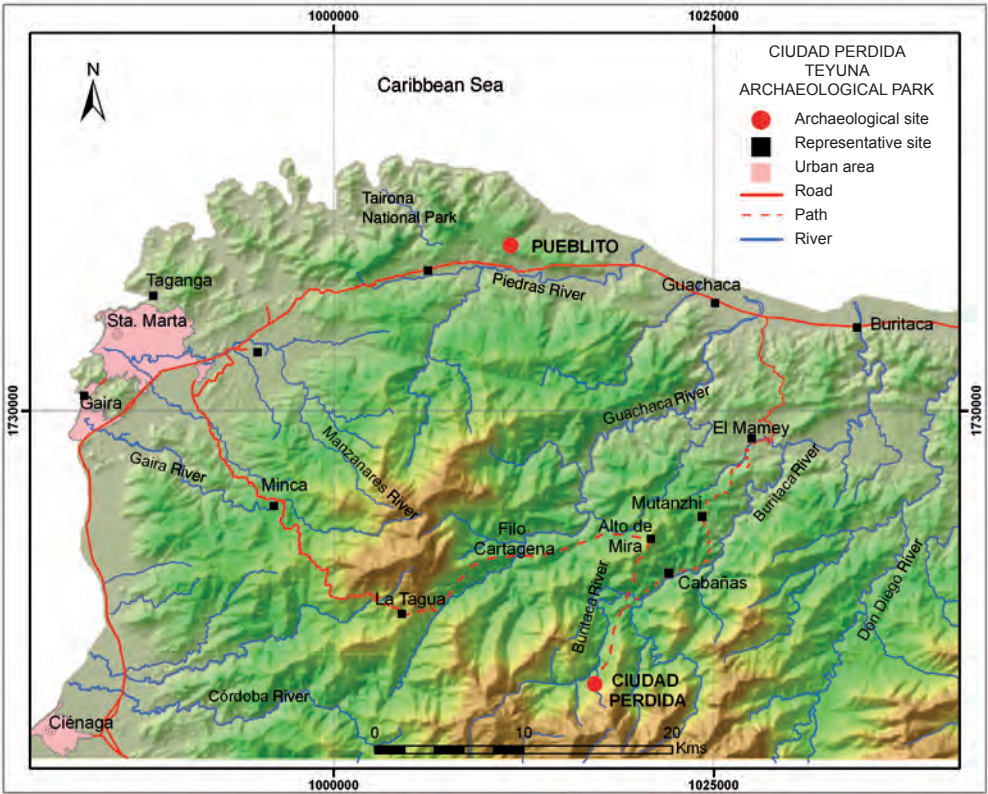
Ever since its discovery in 1976, traveling to Ciudad Perdida has involved a three to four day hike along any of the routes established by ICANH, the National Parks Unit and the indigenous authorities. Currently, only the Buritaca River route is open to the public. Although some outfitters offer four or five day tours, you should be aware that the usual round trip using this route requires two to three days of travel to and from the site (forty kilometers round trip), in 26°C temperatures and high levels of humidity and rainfall. Travel by helicopter is prohibited by ICANH due to the risk of damaging the archaeological terraces used as landing spots.

Ciudad Perdida's most attractive qualities are its remote location in the midst of tropical rainforest, the absence of roads, cars, tourist buses and trains, and of course, the exhilarating beauty of the landscape and the archaeological remains. In general, this has allowed for the high levels of preservation and the Park's long term sustainability.

Even though Ciudad Perdida is open to the public all year long, this part of the Sierra Nevada has two clearly defined dry seasons and two rainy seasons during the year. The first dry season (*verano*) begins in January and usually lasts until the end of March, followed by a rainy season that begins in April and lasts until the final days of June. A short dry season (*veranillo*) in the months of July and August is then followed by very intense rains between September and December. Day time temperatures average 26°C, with high levels of humidity and occasional rain showers after mid-day even during

the dry season. When planning your trip, bear in mind that the busiest seasons of the year are the end-of-year holidays and Holy Week (Easter), so reservations with tour operators have to be made well in advance.

Trips to Ciudad Perdida usually begin in the city of Santa Marta, where you can find a wide range of accommodations. All outfitters have offices in Santa Marta or in the nearby town of Taganga, although tours may also be booked through travel companies elsewhere in Colombia. The easiest way to get to Santa Marta is to fly in. Domestic flights to Santa Marta from any major city in Colombia are quite frequent. The nearest



Map No. 3: Location of Teyuna-Ciudad Perdida Archaeological Park within Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta Natural Park.
Source: Thematic cartography by ICANH based on digitized information originally compiled by Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi, IGAC, Atlas de Colombia, fifth edition, 2002

international airports are located in the cities of Barranquilla (ninety kilometers) and Cartagena (one hundred and eighty kilometers). You can also reach Santa Marta by bus or shuttle.

Since the trail to Ciudad Perdida is unmarked and it is very easy to get lost, ICANH, the National Parks Unit and the indigenous authorities require that guides be used by all visitors. All outfitters offering tours to Ciudad Perdida have offices in Santa Marta or Taganga and must be contacted beforehand to make reservations. Trip costs vary somewhat between outfitters depending on a number of factors. Once you receive a quote, ask them to describe exactly what is included in the price. Higher pricing may be reflected, among other things, in the quality and variety of food or the use of mules for riding or carrying packs part of the way. ICANH is in no way responsible for the services or accommodations offered by tour operators and guides.

Outfitters provide transportation between Santa Marta and El Mamey (two hundred and fifty meters elevation), also known as Machete Pelao, the small hamlet where the hike begins and ends. The drive to El Mamey from Santa Marta takes two to three hours depending on road conditions and the time of the year. Some basic provisions (toiletries, snacks) can be bought in El Mamey, but keep in mind that major purchases must be made in Santa Marta before leaving. From El Mamey to Ciudad Perdida, the hike may take two to three days, depending on whatever arrangements you have made with the guide. On average you will walk three to five hours each day (five to ten kilometers). If you are using mules for riding or transporting packs, be aware that they cannot be used past the first crossing of the Buritaca River and you will have to carry your own pack from here onwards. On this part of the trail you will also find the small Kogi village of Mutanzhi, established in the early eighties when the Kogi-Malayo-Arhuaco *resguardo* (reservation) was created. Isolated houses built by the Arsario and Kogi families living in this basin can also be seen along the trail and dotting the slopes. Visitors usually arrive at Ciudad Perdida around noon of the third day, ideally before the rain begins, after hiking up river for three to four hours. After a one-night stay in Ciudad Perdida, visitors return to El Mamey by the same trail.

Travel Recommendations and Essentials List

Ciudad Perdida Archaeological Park is located at 1100 meters elevation amidst tropical rainforest. Extremely high levels of humidity and occasional showers are normal during the hike, with day time temperatures ranging from 22°C to 28°C. Nights are cool, with temperatures as low as 16°C at certain times of the year, so be sure to bring at least one lightweight fleece sweater. The following suggestions and packing lists are meant to make your trip easier and more enjoyable.

- Carry only essential items. Weight is very important whether you are using mules or carrying your own pack. Pack weight should not exceed ten kilograms (twenty two pounds).
- Before traveling, make sure you are in good health.
- Return *all* trash to Santa Marta. Neither the Park nor the area have a garbage collection service.
- Protect and respect what you find, help us preserve the past. Do not damage, mark, or collect cultural or biological materials and artifacts. Allow others to enjoy the Park and its surrounding wilderness as you found it.
- Observe wildlife from a distance, especially snakes. Do not follow animals, feed them or try to approach them.
- Respect other visitors, be courteous and protect the quality of their experience. Avoid loud noise and voices.
- Remember to respect the past and customs of local peoples: respect the privacy of peasant and indigenous homes. Do not take pictures of them, their children or their belongings without permission.
- There is no cell phone signal or communications equipment available to make calls in the Park. Notify your family and friends that you will only be able to communicate with them upon your return to Santa Marta.

Personal Gear

- Medium sized pack (maximum fifty liter capacity).
 - Cotton or nylon hammock, preferably with mosquito netting. All lodges are set up to accommodate hammocks. Guides provide hammocks and mosquito nets, but you can also bring your own.
 - Light sleeping bag or fleece blanket/sleeping bag. In case you don't have any, guides will also provide blankets.
 - Water bottle.
 - Head lamp or flashlight.
 - Pocketknife.
 - Plastic bags to pack your clothing and protect it against the rain. Bring extra bags to store wet/muddy clothing and your personal trash.
- Important:** Do not bring any items or gear with military appearance.

Clothing

Clothing for walking should be comfortable and preferably non-cotton.

- Long pants and/or shorts.
- Two T-shirts.
- Long-sleeved shirt (useful against mosquitoes and no-see-ums once you reach a lodge).
- Extra change of clothing safely packed in a plastic bag.

- Undergarments.
- A light fleece sweater or a windbreaker.
- Swim suit.
- Several pairs of non-cotton hiking socks.
- Sun hat or cap.
- Comfortable pants and top for sleeping.

Footwear

During the hike your feet will often be wet and/or muddy.

- Light, non-leather hiking boots or trail running shoes (one pair). If you choose to bring heavy

leather hiking boots, be aware that once wet, they will not dry out.

- Back up shoes. Trail sandals, running shoes, or even flip-flops are sufficient.

Personal Care and Hygiene

- Personal first-aid kit. Blister pads (moleskin), anti-itch cream, and Benadryl (diphenhydramine) are especially useful.
- Toiletry bag, preferably with environmentally friendly soap and shampoo.
- Strong mosquito and tick repellent.

- Sunscreen lotion.
- Roll of toilet paper packed in a plastic bag.

Miscellaneous

- Camera with extra batteries stored in a water-proof pouch.
- Light poncho or rain jacket.
- Travel towel.
- Small amount of cash (there are no ATMs) and legible copies of your personal documents (passport, national identity card).

Food is included in your trip, but you should bring along reasonable amounts of snacks and trail food or your favorite hot beverages (tea, instant chocolate).

It is very important that your yellow fever and tetanus vaccinations be up-to-date before you travel.

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An illustration of two domestic structures built on a single terrace. Inside you can see the hammocks used for sleeping and mats covering the floor. Note also the wide eaves projecting beyond the stone foundation rings, thus creating an ample corridor used as a work and storage area. 16th century documents indicate the polygyny was common among the Tairona, wherein one man can have two or more wives at the same time. Hence, a man with two or more wives and his extended family probably used multiple terraces and dwelling structures.



Photo: ICANH Archive.