Business Customs

It is advisable to have some knowledge of Spanish, although many high level executives and businesspeople speak English.

Business visitors should be prepared with good quality promotional materials for the product lines offered. If possible, small samples will make visits more effective during preliminary negotiations. Literature in Spanish is preferable.

The weather in Bogotá is almost perennially early fall weather. The maximum temperature is 22 Celsius. Minimum temperatures are between 2 and 6 Celsius. Much of the rest of the country is tropical or semi-tropical.

Clothing depends largely on the climate of the region planned to be visited. In Bogotá (2600 metres above sea level) and the Andean regions, dress is more formal than in the tropical areas. Business attire for both men and women is customarily required for business or evening engagements. In warmer areas of lower elevation (Medellin, Cali, Barranquilla, Cartagena and other coastal cities) where the temperature is between 25 and 30 C, dress is less formal. Cotton is more comfortable, and jacket (frequently removed) and tie are usually worn by senior executives and for formal meetings. For women, cotton dresses are very common.

In Bogotá, banks are open to the public from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Fridays. On the last working day of the month, banks close at noon. Some international banks and savings/credit corporations have extended schedules, even 24-hour service. Banking hours in other Colombian cities differ from those in Bogotá.

Stores are normally open between 9:00 a.m. and 7:00 or 8:00 p.m. on weekdays and Saturdays. Some open for a few hours or all day on Sundays.

Although the metric system is used, weight is figured in pounds and gasoline is sold by the gallon. Urban land is measured in square "varas" (80 centimetres by 80 centimetres). Rural land is in some regions measured by "cuadras" or "fanegadas" (80 meters by 80 meters) and in others by hectares (100 meters by 100 meters).