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Colombia is the land of sabrosura: a word meaning complete delight in the senses.

The world feels alive there and the people I met urged me to truly indulge in the rich experiences around me. I learned to inhale deeply, to feel fully, and to see in a new way.

The rate of tourism is increasing rapidly in this stunning country filled with what the locals call “realismo mágico,” or magical realism. And for good reason. Colombia is the second most biodiverse country in the world and the

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Colombia

SABROSURA: LESSONS FROM COLOMBIA

vast expanse of landscapes is breathtaking. The Burch Fellowship allowed me to travel to Colombia where I met a group of students working to create authentic and sustainable travel experiences throughout the country. We dreamed of how we could share



the unbelievable beauty of their country with travelers like me, while also preserving the rich history and biodiversity.

I was able to travel to a variety of coffee farms and realized that café might be the perfect starting place for authentic experiences. Colombia produces some of the best coffee in the world, and I quickly learned that friends and tourists were very interested to learn more about how their daily cup arrived at their table. The coffee-growing regions, of which there are many, I learned, have distinct histories, geographies, accents, foods, and people. The rising



international passion for coffee seemed like a perfect way to introduce foreigners to the complex and beautiful intricacies of each place.

With the purpose of connecting travelers and friends in the US to the people and places in Colombia through coffee, I set off. There are over half a million coffee farms in the country so I had a lot of ground to

cover. I had the chance to make it to 15, where I quickly learned from the passion and persistence of coffee growers. The process is arduous and complicated, and the impact of climate change is making it even more

challenging. Despite this work, coffee growers only make about 1% of the final value of every cup. I learned, through meetings with producers, roasters, shippers, and marketers all along the value chain, that the large international coffee companies are not always the friendliest to often isolated and vulnerable growers, and that whom we buy our coffee from makes a huge difference in the livelihoods of those half a million families.

As I learned more about the production of coffee and the people who made it, I couldn't help but fall in love with the realismo magico around me. I found profound comfort in the sweet smell of the ripe beans, the soft hum of the coffee-sifter throughout the evening, the

meditative process of raking the dried grains in the sun, and the warm company of friends sitting and laughing around their afternoon tinto, the local word for coffee. I



fell in love with knowing of the people and the landscape that had filled my cup. I fell in love with the sabrosura of every sip, the delight in every one of the senses.

I hope through a new form of immersive tourism, we can learn together about how to appreciate the sights, smells, and feelings that make us feel whole. And I hope we can



embark on these conversations and experiences with a cup of café in hand.

I am extremely grateful to Mr. Burch, Gina Difino and the Honors Carolina staff, my mentors Dr. Greg Gangi and Dr. Arturo Escobar, and my family and friends for supporting me through this surreal and beautiful journey. And I hope you each take the time to appreciate the people and the processes that make your everyday magic.

