

7 DAY

# THE PERFECT LOOP

The Absolute Best Of Colombia's Coffee Region



7 DAYS / 50% PAVED / 50% EASY OFF-ROAD / INTERMEDIATE SKILL LEVEL



**COLOMBIA'S BEST GEOGRAPHY FOR COFFEE PRODUCTION ALSO HAPPENS TO BE IDEAL FOR MOTORCYCLE TOURING.**

If you're looking to experience the best of Colombia and only have a week, we highly recommend this trip. Based on the feedback from dozens of travelers, we have put together what we consider to be the "Perfect Loop" of Colombia's famous coffee region. Best of all, it's located right in our backyard, only 2 hours from Medellin.

# HIGHLIGHTS

## NEVADO RUIZ VOLCANO

Explore a stratovolcano.

## THERMAL SPRINGS

Stay at a beautiful hot springs hotel.

## HANDFEED HUMMINGBIRDS

A one of a kind experience.

## PARAMO

Ride through alpine tundra. See 200 year old plants.

## COFFEE FARM VISIT

Harvest coffee with a local family.

## WAX PALMS FOREST

See the tallest palm trees in the world.

## SPECTACULAR VIEWS

As always, enjoying all the twists and turns while riding through some of the most amazing scenery in the world.

## A COFFEE REGION MOTORCYCLE TRIP CHECKS ALL THE BOXES

Lush green mountain vistas with soaring wax palms over 150ft tall. Check. Colonial haciendas turned into chic hotels and bed and breakfasts. Check. Hot springs flowing from snow-capped volcanoes. Check. Twist the throttle and lean into turn after turn after turn as you make your way through high mountain passes and fog covered forests. Check. Include the cosmopolitan city of Medellin as the starting point of the trip, and you have a motorcycle trip from heaven.

# DAY 1 / MEDELLÍN - SONSÓN



## El Tesoro

+57 48691217  
Cra. 7 #665, Sonsón,  
Antioquia, Colombia



## Sonsón Parking

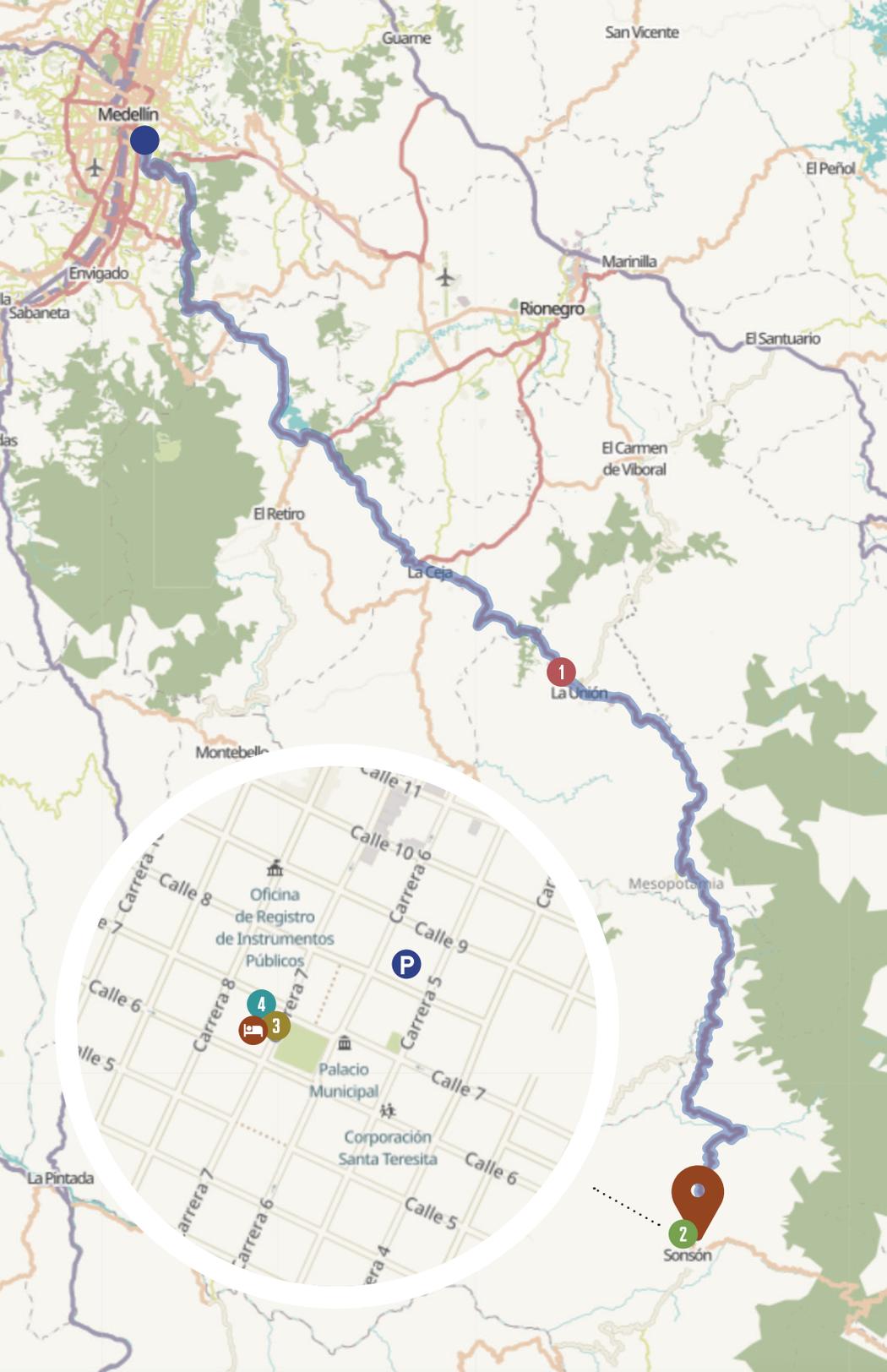
Cl. 8 #5-23, Sonsón,  
Antioquia



*This is going to be an interesting trip. Today we ride to the former guerilla conflict zone of Sonsón. Sonsón has been off-limits for decades due to guerilla activity. Although it's safe now there is very little information on the internet about the area. Consequently, it's untouched by tourism which makes it the perfect place to get an authentic taste of Colombia.*

*The ride to Sonsón is great. One of the best things about this ride is the miles and miles of exciting twists and turns. Ups, downs, ascending curves, descending curves, increasing radius curves, decreasing radius curves. You're going to get a ton of riding experience on just this one road. The pavement here is in good shape and as is the case in lots of areas in the countryside, there is very little traffic.*





## 1 COFFEE AT LUISA'S

Midway we're going to stop off at Luisa's house and have a cup of local coffee called tinto. If you like kids you'll be delighted to meet her twin toddlers. Tourists never stop here and you'll see how happy she is to talk with us. Besides being a fun way to connect with the locals, it's a way to directly support a family business.

## 2 THE TOWN OF SONSON

The town of Sonsón is located at a high elevation but we're going to climb even higher. The Paramo de Sonsón is a lookout point that stands at over 10,000ft in elevation. The lookout has a scenic view of the fog rolling across the cloud forest and nearby valley. By now it will be late afternoon and we'll head back to town to check in to our hotel and grab a pizza and a beer.

## 3 EL TESORO HOTEL

We stay at the El Tesoro hotel located on the main square. This is a 200-year-old mansion that has been converted into a unique hotel. Unlike other hotels, this one hasn't been updated and still retains its original charm. In addition, the hotel is somewhat of a museum and is filled with an eclectic collection of antiques. Looking over everything will keep you captivated for hours.

## 4 PIZZA!

Located next door to the hotel is a great pizza restaurant. From the second-story balcony, we can enjoy a brick oven pizza while people-watching on the main square. It's good to note that Sonsón leaves the warm weather of Guatapé behind. Located at 8,100ft you'll want to bring a jacket because it's going to be cold at night.

# DAY 2 / SONSÓN TO PENSILVANIA



## Colina Plaza

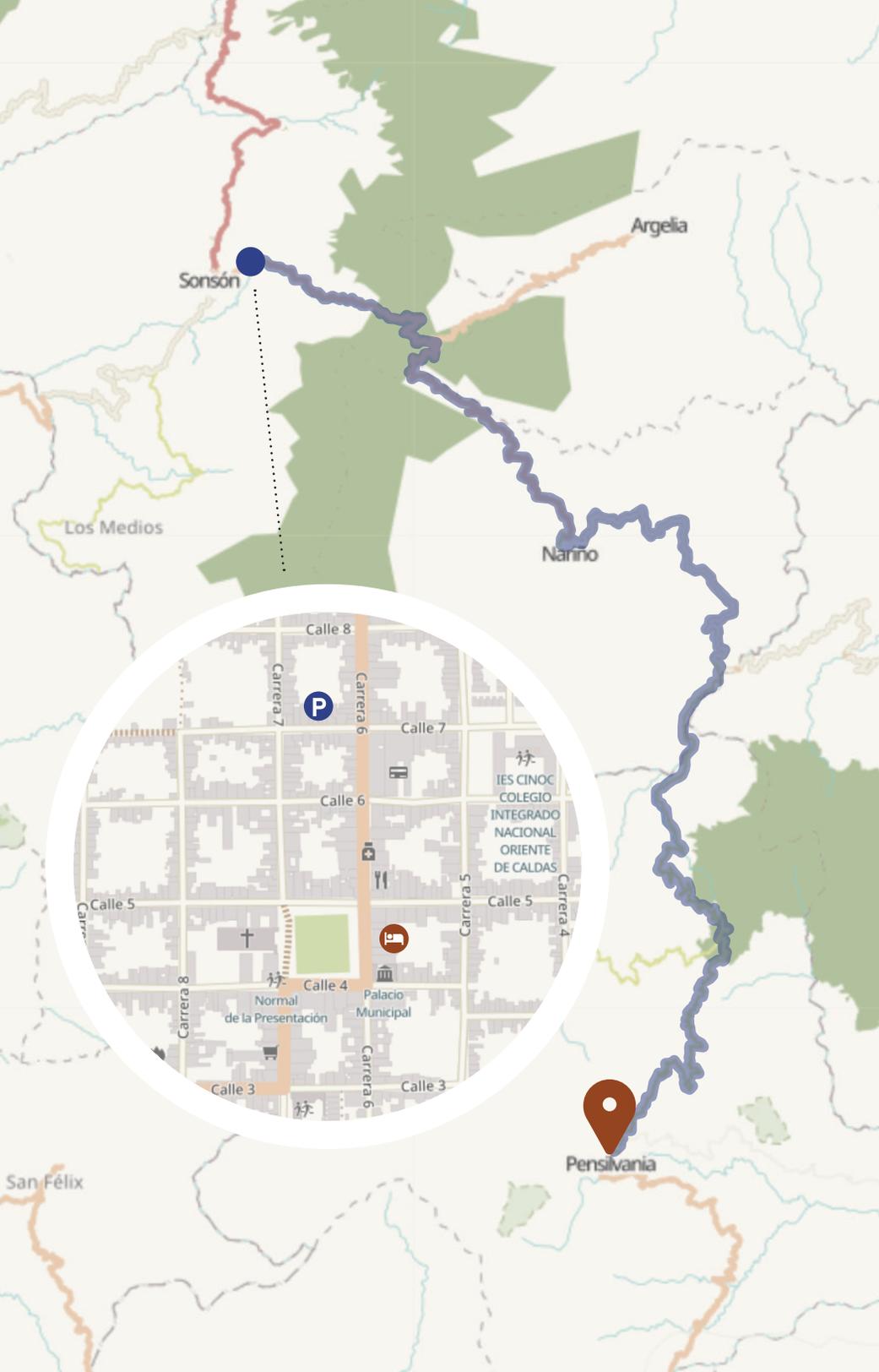
+57 68555574  
Cra. 6 #446, Pensilvania,  
Caldas, Colombia



## Pensilvania Parking

Cl. 5 #6-85 a 6-1, Pensilvania,  
Caldas, Colombia

*Instead of heading directly to Salamina today, we will drive from Sonsón down into the jungle. From there, we take the backroads across the mountains to the isolated villages located in the department of Caldas. One of the most beautiful roads I've ever seen!*





## DAY 3 / PENSILVANIA TO SALAMINA



### Salamina Highs

+573232262382  
Centro Calle 4 Nro. 5 - 21,  
Salamina, Caldas, Colombia



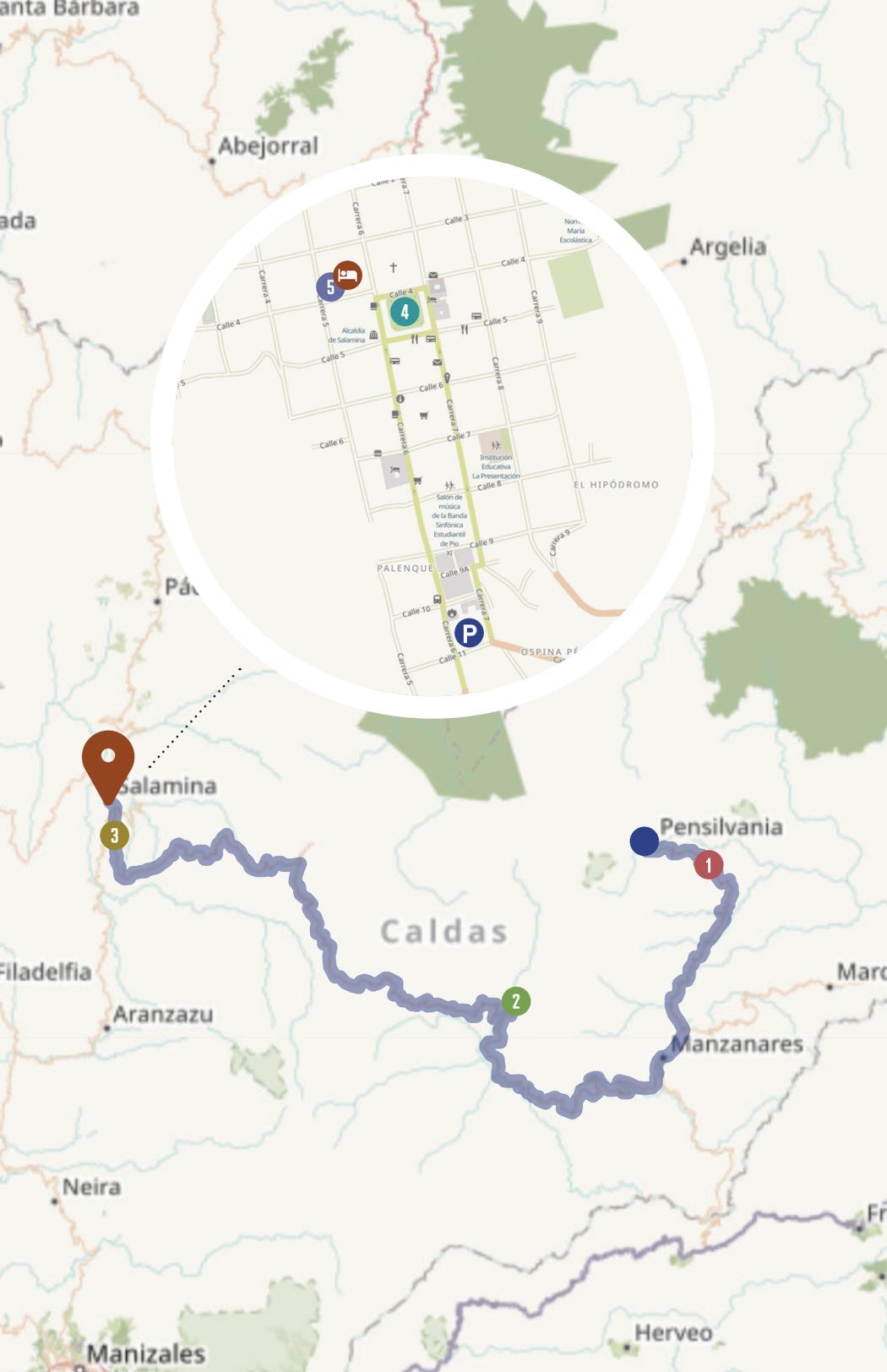
### Salamina Parking

62 Cra. 7, Salamina,  
Caldas, Colombia



*Salamina is Colombia's best-kept secret. Tucked away in a far off corner of the coffee region, the beauty of Salamina is a sight to behold. The town itself is situated on the peak of a mountain, with entire streets sometimes appearing as if they are about to slide off the side of the mountain. Once we enter the town, we see why it has earned national heritage status. Houses climb the sloping streets with each one seeming determined to outdo its neighbors. Elaborate woodworking takes the form of intricately decorated doors, windows, balconies, and zócalos (the distinct lower sections of the whitewashed facades). It's hard to walk the streets of Salamina without constantly looking upward at the flower-filled balconies.*





### 1 SPECTACULAR VALLEY VIEWS

The road from Sonson is unpaved but in good condition. Almost as soon as we leave Sonson we have to stop to take photos of the expansive valley right outside of town. The rest of the ride consists of windy roads and spectacular views of the surrounding coffee and sugarcane plantations.

### 2 A WHITE WATER RIVER

In the middle of the trip, we drop into a warm valley and cross a bridge over a white water river before winding back into the mountains on the other side.

### 3 PANORAMIC VIEW OF SALAMINA

Just before we arrive in town, there's a panoramic view of the town precariously sitting on the top of a hill. Once we arrive, we feel like you have somehow discovered a special place that hardly any other foreigner has set eyes upon.

### 4 THE FOUNTAIN IN SALAMINA

A gorgeous bronze basin fountain made in Paris sits in the central plaza surrounded by tall trees and benches. In 1900 the fountain was brought to town on the back of ox and mules. Since then it has become a symbol of the region. There are also various restaurants surrounding the main square where you can try typical local dishes, including the local favorite of steamed eggs (Huevos al Vapor), made with the help of an espresso machine.

### 5 SALAMINA HIGHS HOTEL

One of the nicer boutique options in Salamina is the Salamina Highs hotel. Formerly a coffee hacienda, the owners have beautifully restored the house and converted it into a charming boutique hotel. The property is complete with spacious rooms, king-sized beds, and a beautiful courtyard with jasmine trees and a jacuzzi. The hotel has a perfect location and is only a two-minute walk from the main square.

## DAY 4 / FREE DAY IN SALAMINA



### Salamina Highs

+573232262382  
Centro Calle 4 Nro. 5 - 21,  
Salamina, Caldas, Colombia

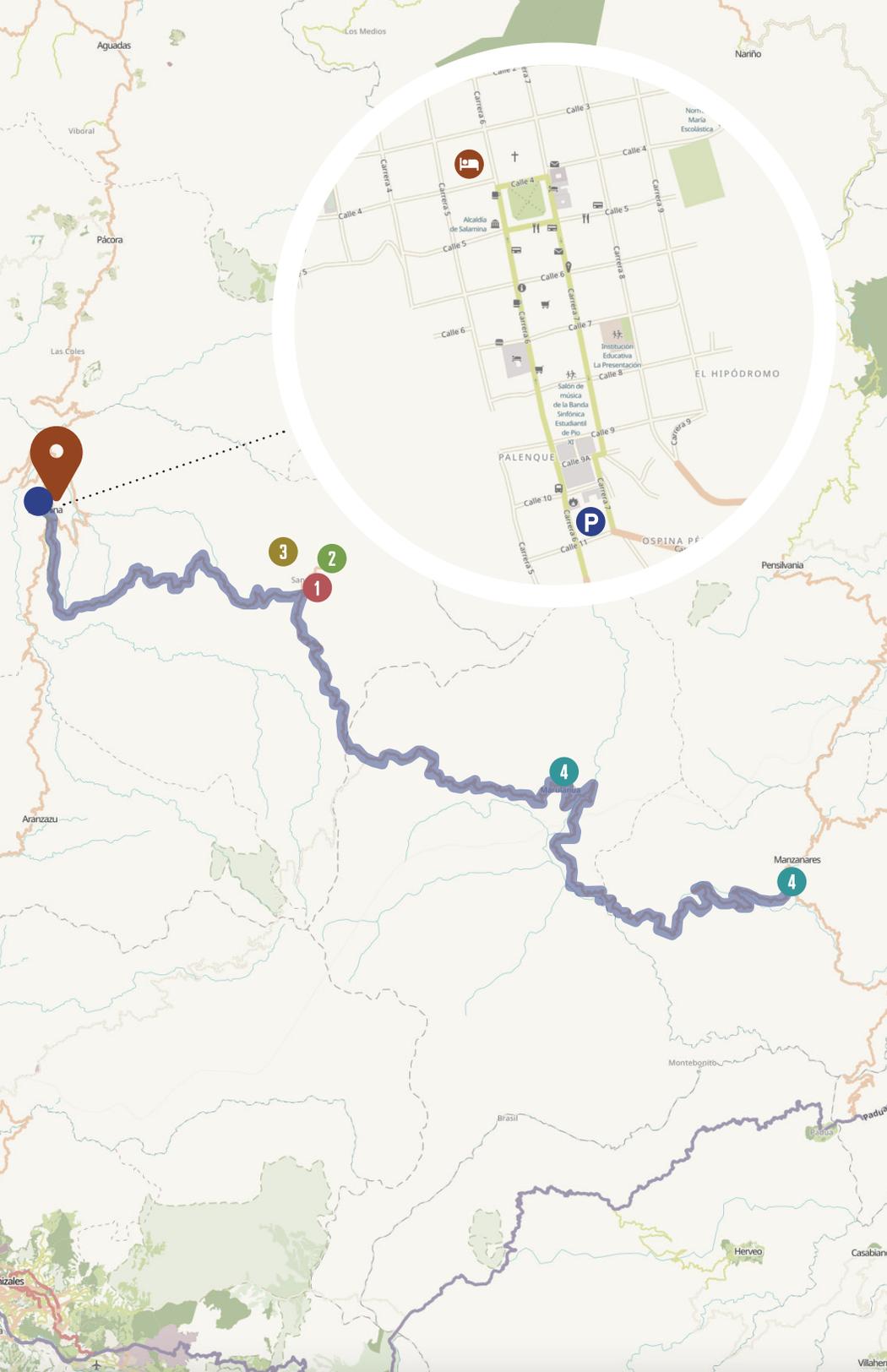


### Salamina Parking

62 Cra. 7, Salamina,  
Caldas, Colombia

*Most travelers come to town and only get to see the beautiful architecture of the town. Lucky for us we have motorcycles and can travel into the backcountry outside Salamina and see some truly breathtaking landscapes. Today we take a trip over to the hamlet of San Felix and the nearby Samaria Valley. Here, growing on the slopes of lush green mountains, we find the national tree of Colombia, the Quindío Wax Palm. The wax palm is the tallest palm in the world, reaching heights of over four stories. Not only are the palms themselves beautiful, but they are home to green and yellow parrots, which can be seen flying overhead. The views across the valley are picture-perfect, and once you arrive, feel like you have somehow discovered a special place that hardly any other foreigner has set eyes upon.*





## 1 A STOP IN SAN FELIX

The ride to the valley is as spectacular as the destination itself. The road out of Salamina takes us across a ridge with yet again, spectacular views of the town and the surrounding cloud forests with fog spilling over the treetops. The road is almost completely paved and makes for some easy riding before arriving in the small town of San Felix. San Felix is a pretty quiet place, and we won't see much activity other than the occasional local farmer wandering around the plaza dressed in his poncho and cowboy hat. This area is still relatively undiscovered, and it wouldn't be surprising if we were the only foreigners in town.

## 2 THE WAX PALM FOREST

Heading from San Felix to the wax palm forest, the road becomes unpaved but well maintained with hard-packed gravel. The ride to the palm forest is only 15 minutes and takes us through tropical forest and farmland with cows and horses dotting the lush green hillsides. Before sequoias were discovered in California, the wax palm was considered the world's tallest tree, with some growing 200 feet high. This palm species can grow to a height of 45 m (148 ft) —or rarely, even as high as 60 m (200 ft).

## 3 EXPLORE OFF-ROAD TRACKS

The wax palms of the Samaria Valley isn't the only sight to see. The surrounding area is filled with isolated off-road tracks that are perfect for riders wanting to explore more of the area.

## 4 VISIT MARULANDA & MANZANARES

Visiting isolated towns such as Marulanda and Manzanares make great day trips if you wake up early. Continuing the drive south from Manzanares to the Nevado del Ruiz volcano is a great trip. Better yet, it keeps us out of the city traffic in Manizales. The ride is truly breathtaking and takes us through spectacular cloud forest landscapes with rolling fog spilling over the treetops.

# DAY 5 / SALAMINA TO MANIZALES



## Termales del Otoño

+57 601 5875220  
Kilometro 5, Antigua Vía al  
Nevado, Caldas, Colombia



## Hacienda Venecia

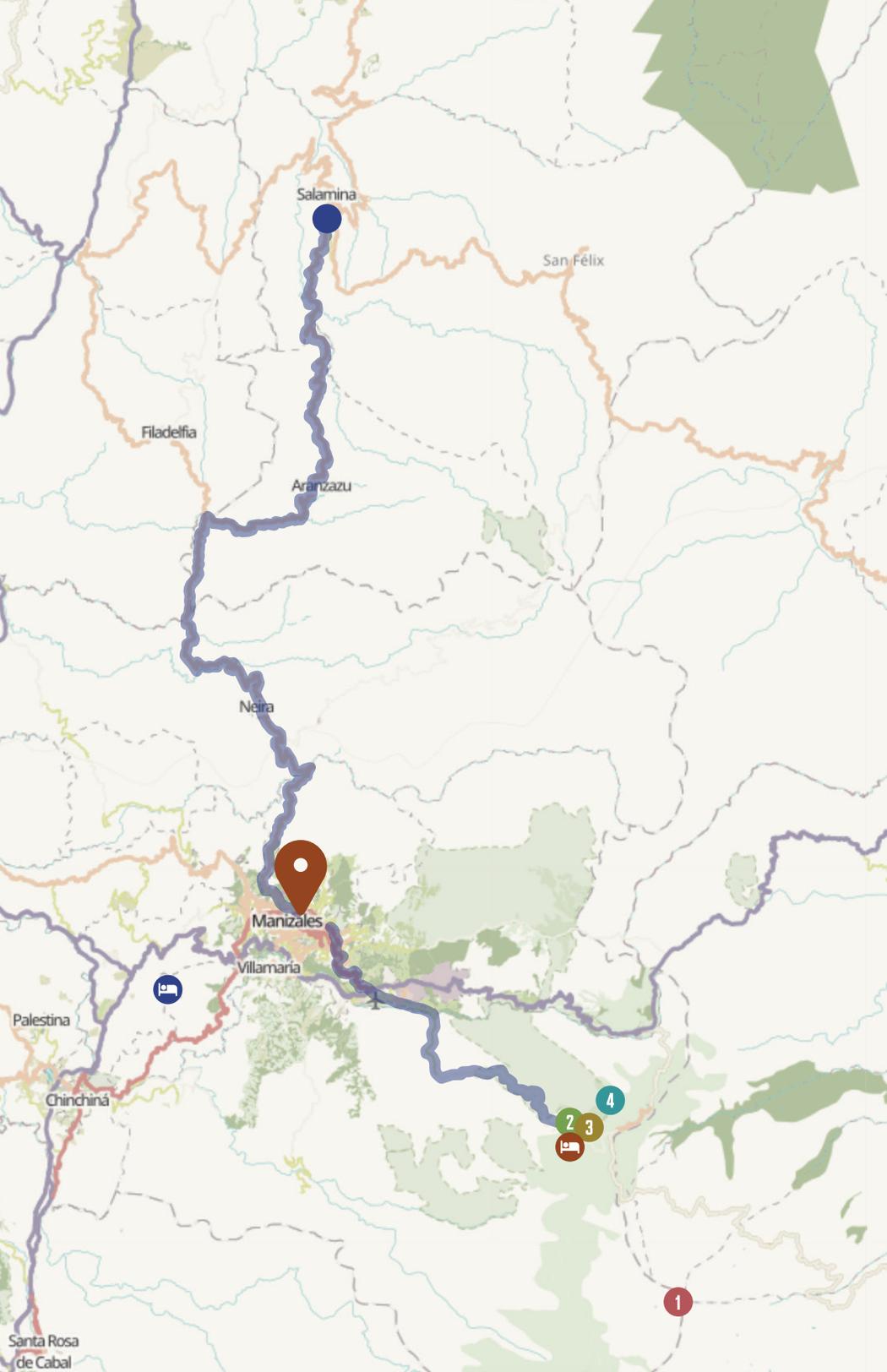
+57 320 6365719  
Manizales, Caldas,  
Colombia

Today takes us to the famous Nevado Ruiz Volcano. Colombia is part of the Ring of Fire, a 40,000 kilometer (24,900 miles) long string of volcanoes that forms a horseshoe-shaped ring around the edge of the Pacific Ocean. This Ring of Fire contains 75% of the world's volcanoes and 90% of its earthquakes with Colombia itself being home to 23 volcanoes, of which 19 are considered active. Conveniently located right in the heart of the coffee region is Nevado Ruiz stratovolcano which reaches a staggering height of 5,311m (17,424ft)

### 1 NEVADO DE RUIZ

Rides around the Nevado del Ruiz are often touted as "The best rides in Colombia." You'll ride up through the clouds until arriving in a high altitude tundra known as Paramo. Sitting at 13,000ft you will be surrounded by ancient plants that look a lot like cactus. Called frailejones these plants are actually related to sunflowers and are over 150 years old. Although you are at a high altitude the temperatures aren't freezing and the cool air feels more like a sunny day in the Swiss Alps than sitting on a stratovolcano on the equator.

Although beautiful, Nevado Ruiz was the cause of one of the most devastating events in Colombian history. On November 13, 1985, after ignoring evacuation warnings from geologists, the Nevado del Ruiz erupted. The intense heat of the eruption melted the volcano's ice caps producing high-speed avalanches of mud, water, and debris (called lahars) that



rushed down the side of the mountain destroying the town of Armero and claiming the lives of 23,080 of its residents.

You can still visit the destroyed town of Armero and see abandoned buildings which are actually the upper levels of the town with the lower parts still covered with dirt.

## 2 TERMALES DEL RUIZ HOTEL

Whatever you do, don't even think of coming down from the volcano without spending at least one night at the Termales del Ruiz Hotel, one of the few hotels actually located on the side of an active volcano. Located amid stunning landscapes at 3500masl (11,500ft), this glorious thermal-bath complex is the place to go to for total relaxation. The ride to get here is just as good. Visiting this hotel means navigating an off-road route that takes you from the relatively low altitude of Manizales through the jungle and into the high altitude paramo. Constructed in the 1940s by a German skiing champion, the rooms have the feel of a classic alpine lodge because it actually was an alpine ski lodge, used by the first-ever Colombian ski-team. While not huge, the rooms are certainly comfortable.

## 3 THERMAL POOLS

Outside, there are two large hot thermal pools. Sitting in the steaming hot pools while feeling the cool mountain air and looking out over the valley below feels great after a long ride. The lodge is also great for bird watching. Located on a hillside above it, there's a birding shelter beside a gushing stream where 17 species of hummingbird come to feed including the second largest hummingbird species in the world. The front desk can provide you with brightly colored sugar water feeders to feed the birds from your hand.

## 4 FRAILEJONES FOREST

Head uphill through a side road and you'll come to a forest of frailejones, a tundra plant that's been adapting at this altitude for eons, covering its flowers in white hairs to protect it from the sun and surrounding its stems in dead leaves to protect it from the cold.



# DAY 6 / MANIZALES TO JARDIN



## Casa Passiflora Boutique Hotel

+57 318 2421000  
Cra. 5 #11 - 48, Jardín,  
Antioquia, Colombia



## Jardin Parking

+57 320 4553844  
Cl. 9 # 1-07, Jardín,  
Antioquia



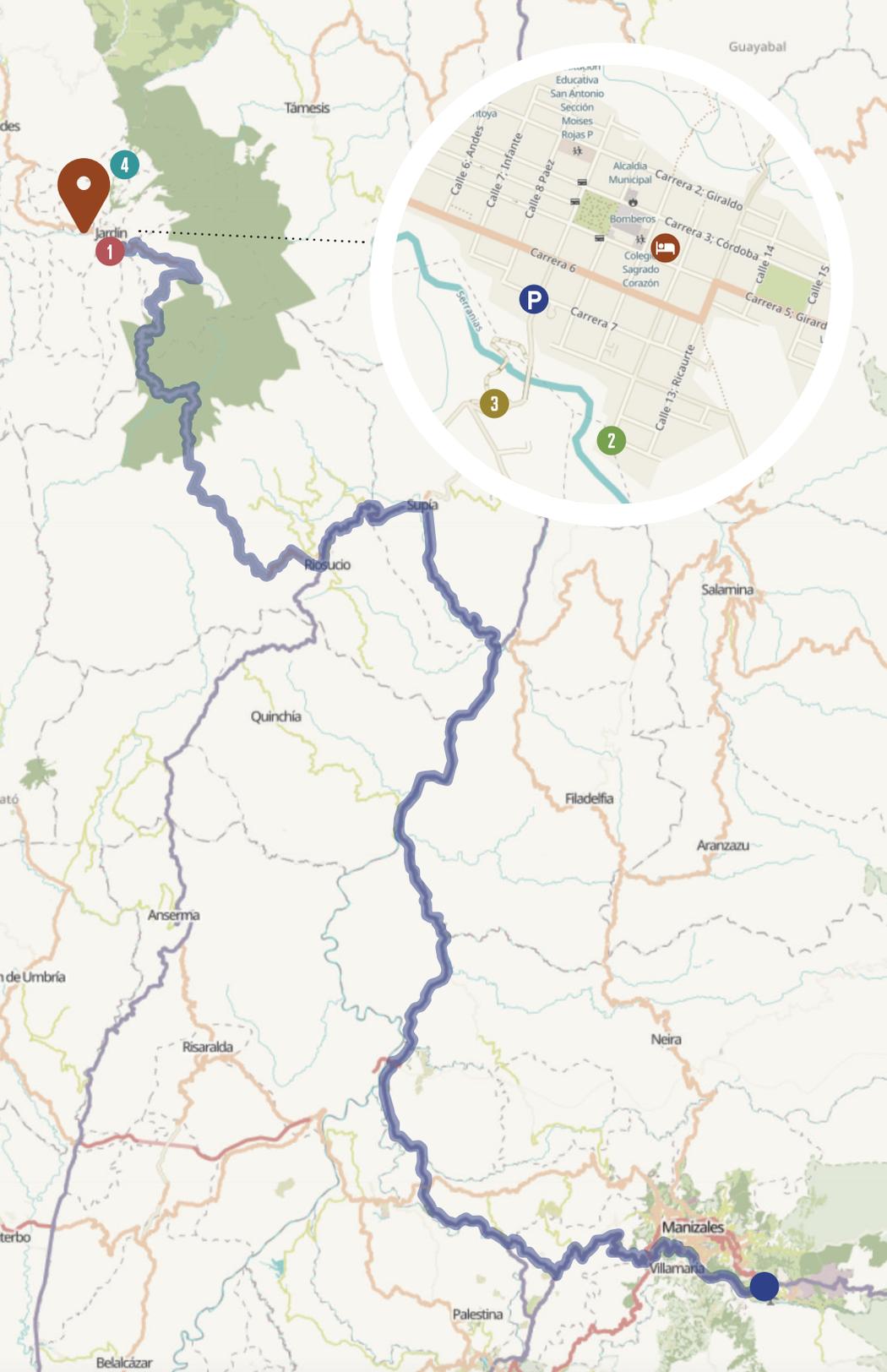
*Jardin is the perfect place to finish a great trip. Leaving Nevado de Ruiz, we make our way down from the paramo and through the jungle until we reach the city of Manizales. Here we cross the city in about 30 minutes before we climb back up into the mountains towards the town of Riosucio. After reaching Riosucio the trail switches from pavement to unpaved gravel. We stay on the unpaved trail, winding our way through the forest until we reach the town of Jardin.*

## 1 THE TOWN OF JARDIN

Revered for its brightly-colored houses and quaint mountainside location, Jardin is often dubbed 'the most beautiful town in all of Colombia' and acts as the poster-child for the culturally-enriched Antioquia region.

In Spring, when the town's floral decorations are in full bloom, Jardin is an explosion of colors (and tourists), and local cafes do a great job of reflecting the vibrant essence of the city with their rainbow-colored outdoor seating. The town looks tailor-made for postcards. In town, you can simply stroll the little colonial streets, admire the stunning architecture, and watch as cowboys come into town in the evening with their trained horses. The center of town is compact and easily explored on foot.





2

## LA GARUCHA

A great way to get a bird's eye view of the town is by cable-car. La Garucha is a home built metal lattice cable car that pulls you across a valley while suspended hundreds of meters in the air. The views of the city, mountains, and valley below are incredible, and there is a restaurant located on the other side.

3

## PARQUE NATURAL JARDÍN DE ROCAS

Visiting the Parque Natural Jardín de Rocas is a must-do trip for birdwatchers. You can see the shockingly bright orange and black Gallo de Roca Andino also known as the Andean Cock-Of-The-Rock. Located at what is known as a lek, we can see courtship displays with males trying to impress the females. The best time to go is in the early morning and just before dusk. You can get within feet of the birds as they socialize to start and end their days.

4

## THE CAVE OF SPLENDOR

A hidden highlight of Jardín is found just outside the town, though: a magnificent spot called the Cave of Splendor (La Cueva del Esplendor). The best way to see this splendor is on a 12-mile hike, which is hard work but rewarding - you'll come face to face with a spectacular cave with a waterfall cascading right through its roof. You can enjoy a refreshing swim here, so pack your swimmers. The cave is on private property, and there's a small charge to enter.

# DAY 7 / JARDIN TO MEDELLÍN

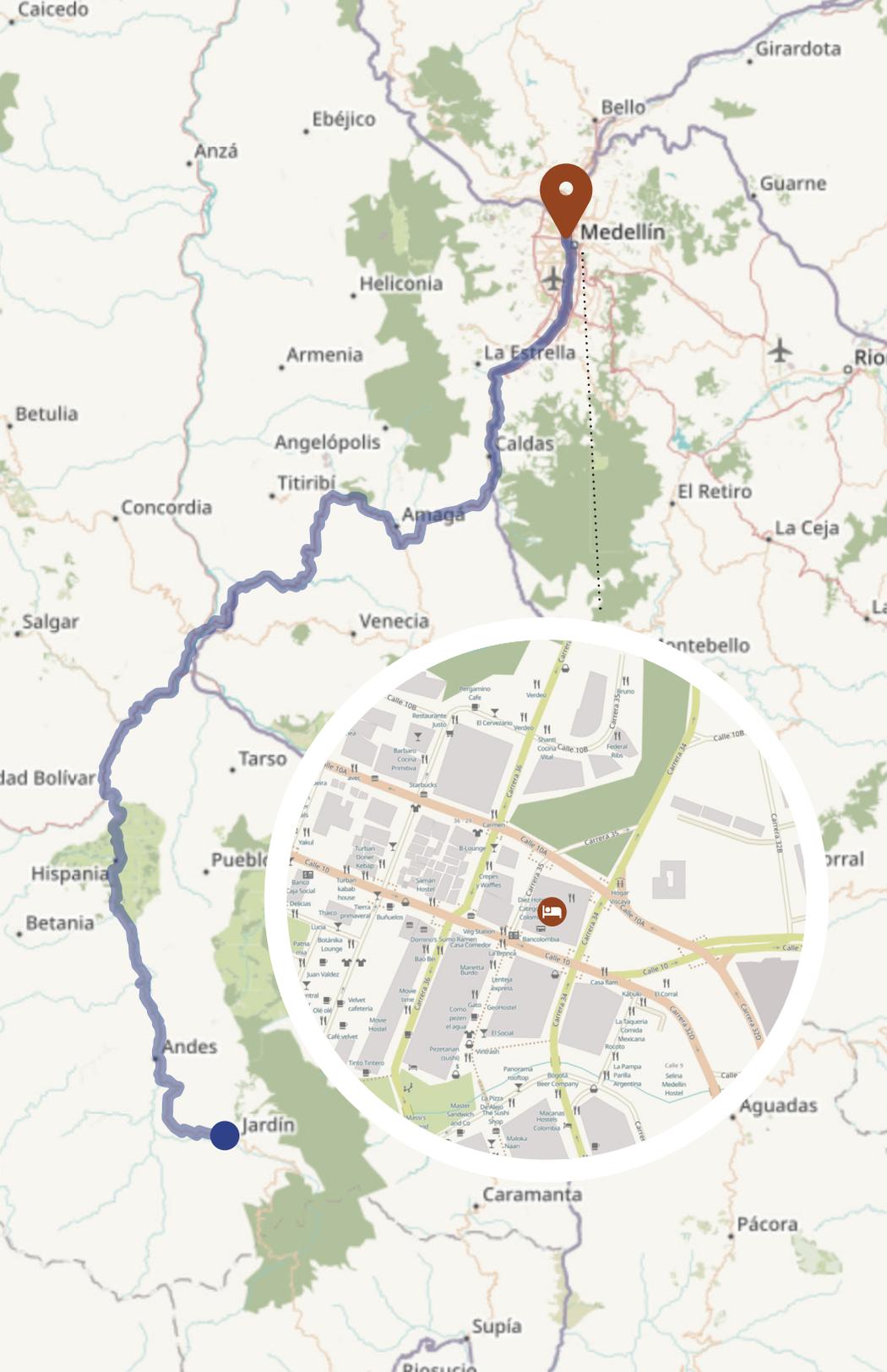


## Diez Hotel Categoría

+57 604 4481034

Cl 10A #34-11, El Poblado, Medellín,  
El Poblado, Medellín, Antioquia

*Sorry amigos, today we have to go back to Medellín. The trip is beautiful though and its a great way to end an awesome motorcycle adventure in Colombia.*



## **COLOMBIA MOTO ADVENTURES**

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