

Hay Festival *Colombia*

Report

24 January —
3 February 2025



Contents

Hay Festival Colombia 2025	4
The programme in detail	6
20 questions	11
Fellowships in Excellence	12
The Festival in numbers	14
The bestselling books	16
The Festival in the media and social media	21
The Festival in words	24
Acknowledgements	30
Hay Festival around the world	33

HAY FESTIVAL

Colombia 2025

The 20th Hay Festival in Colombia has involved **200 guests** at **215 events** dedicated to literature, music, film, the environment, journalism, democracy and anti-racism. Over the course of **10 days**, activities took place in **Jerico, Medellin, Cartagena de Indias** and **Barranquilla**, achieving a record attendance of **70,135 people**.

At the seventh Hay Festival in Jerico, over **16,300 people** were able to enjoy the **59 activities**, which reasserted the great transformative power of art and culture, and also its ability to boost tourism and strengthen the economy of a region that has always blended tradition with new conversations.

Hay Festival Forum Medellin encompassed **three days** of exchanging ideas, featuring writers, artists and thinkers, with **audiences of 4,800** at **11 free events**. This year, cultural spaces in different parts of the city were involved, taking events to the **Parque Biblioteca de La Floresta**, the **Biblioteca Pública Piloto**, the **Parque Biblioteca de San Javier**, the **Parque Explora** and the **Museo de Arte Moderno (MAMM)**.

The Hay Festival Cartagena de Indias celebrated two decades of transformational stories and dialogues, bringing together, for **four days**, writers, artists, thinkers, musicians, scientists, journalists and historians. **20%** of the seats at all the events on the general programme were distributed free among university students. Furthermore, on the Sunday, residents of Bolivar department had free access to events, with a total of **1,000 tickets** set aside for this purpose.

One of the most outstanding moments was the **20 Years, 20 Questions** initiative, giving space to reflect collectively on major themes such as democracy, artificial intelligence, the climate crisis, equalities, literature, science and culture. A **commemorative documentary** about the festival's history and impact was also screened at different venues and spaces around the city.

The Hay Festival Joven consolidated its presence in **Barranquilla**, with an **attendance of 700** at the **seven events** held at the Universidad del Norte.

This special anniversary event, which also reached other parts of Colombia and the world via **streamed broadcasting**, emphasised the characteristics that have made the festival a success: an enriching event for exchanging ideas, seeing new points of view, and considering sustainable and equitable alternatives, with a balance of representation of voices from the global South and their narratives.



The programme in detail

Pulitzer prize-winners

This year, 2025, the festival featured five Pulitzer prize-winners: **Anne Applebaum**, **Nikole Hannah-Jones**, **Viet Thanh Nguyen**, **Colson Whitehead** (United States) and **Cristina Rivera Garza** (Mexico), all figures who delighted festival audiences.

Literature

We enjoyed literary conversations with the participation of outstanding writers from different parts of the world. We were visited by **Leila Guerriero**, **María Negroni** and **Camila Sosa Villada** (Argentina); **María Dueñas**, **Juan Gómez-Jurado**, **Rafael Navarro de Castro**, and **Raúl Quinto** (Spain); **Gioconda Belli** (Nicaragua); **Yomi Adegoke** (United Kingdom), **Rachel Eliza Griffiths**, **Lena Khalaf Tuffaha** (United States/Palestine), **Justin Torres** (United States), **Nicola Lagioia** (Italy), **Yuliana Ortiz Ruano** (Ecuador), **Leonardo Padura** (Cuba), **Cristina Rivera Garza** (Mexico), **Salman Rushdie** (India/ United Kingdom /United States), **Gilbert Shang Ndi** (Cameroon), **Mayra Santos-Febres** (Puerto Rico), **Colm Tóibín** (Ireland), and others.

Colombian writing, too, was celebrated with the presence of **Piedad Bonnett**, **Melba Escobar**, **Cindy Herrera**, **Óscar Guardiola-Rivera**, **Pablo Montoya**, **Laura Ortiz Gómez**, **Yurieth Romero** and **Juan Gabriel Vásquez**.

History and current affairs

There was also space for discussions about the present and the past, with experts including **Charlotte Higgins**, **Greg Clark**, **John Sellars**, **Peter Frankopan** and **Jennifer Ackerman** (United Kingdom); **Alfonso Múnera**, **Florence Thomas** and **Diana Uribe** (Colombia); and **Nikole Hannah-Jones** (United States). **Virginia Mendoza** (Spain) gave her views on the problems that affect the world today, such as climate change and migration.

The conversations on politics and the economy involved specialists who were warmly received at each venue: **Anne Applebaum**, **Susan Neiman** (United States); **Edward Chancellor** (United Kingdom); and **Alejandro Gaviria** and **Bruce Mac Master** (Colombia), who talked to us about global current affairs.

The journalists **Jorge Ramos** (Mexico), **Nataliya Gumenyuk** (Ukraine), **Txell Feixas** (Spain), **Catalina Gómez Ángel**, **María Jimena Duzán**, **María Elvira Samper** and **Tatiana Velásquez** (Colombia); and **Abraham Jiménez Enoa** (Cuba) all talked, in different spaces, about journalism today, the challenges of reporting, and their views on recounting true stories.

Cross-disciplinary conversations

The **Malunga: Network for Global Justice series**, for the first time at the festival, brought together writers, thinkers and academics such as **Mario Ellington** (Guatemala), **Mónica Moreno Figueroa** (Mexico), **Federico Pita** (Argentina), **Roberto Zurbano** (Cuba), **Suraj Yengde** (India), **Nikole Hannah-Jones** and **Agustín Lao-Montes** (United States); **Yoseth Ariza**, **Aurora Vergara Figueroa** and **Claudia Mosquera Rosero-Labbé** (Colombia); and **Osmundo Pinho** (Brazil), who talked about fighting anti-black racism.

There were also dialogues on Afro narratives with **Yuliana Ortiz Ruano** (Ecuador), **Mayra Santos-Febres** (Puerto Rico) and **Gilbert Shang Ndi** (Cameroon).

As part of the **South to North Conversations series**, a number of well-known authors were present to talk about matters such as identity, territory and its community management, the culture and history of peoples, democracy, social perspectives, and the work of writers to further such causes. Featuring the Colombians **Weidler Guerra**, Wayuu anthropologist; **Ricardo Villafañe**, indigenous Arhuaco leader; **Olimpia Palmar**, Wayuu human rights expert, communicator and activist; **Gustavo Ulcué Campo**, Nasa film producer and activist; **Javier Zamora**, El Salvador poet and activist; and from the US, **Lena Khalaf Tuffaha**, poet, essayist and translator of Palestinian origin; **Jon Lee Anderson**, investigative journalist, writer and war correspondent; **Viet Thanh Nguyen**, writer and Professor of English and American Studies and Ethnicity, and Comparative Literature; and **Colson Whitehead**, the author of novels that explore themes such as corruption, social inequality and police violence.

Music

Music featured strongly, with the participation of **Carlos Vives** and **Juan Carlos Coronel** (Colombia), **Bocafloja** (Mexico) and **Carlos López Puccio** (Argentina) of Les Luthiers. At different events, they entertained the public with both concerts and conversations. The closing evening underlined the importance of the Carranguera music of Jorge Velosa with maestro **José Ricardo Bautista Pamplona** and the **Dueto Primavera**.

Visual art

Within the sphere of the visual arts we had the presence of the filmmaker **Ava DuVernay** (United States), who presented a Cartagena de Indias audience with her most recent work, the documentary *Origin*; and the illustrator **María Hesse** (Spain), who, through a highly visual and allegorical language, speaks to us about anxiety, manipulation, precariousness, change, loneliness, madness, motherhood, aging and death.

20th anniversary

This anniversary event featured the presentation of *Color Cartagena*, a book compiling photos taken over the course of two decades by **Daniel Mordzinski** (Argentina), known as the “photographer of writers”. His work embodies the essence of the Hay Festival and its impact on the city.

A **commemorative documentary** was shown that traced the festival’s evolution, as well as its impact in Colombia and the world. The screening underlined the essential roles of local, national and international audiences in the consolidation of this festival as a cultural landmark and a vital space for dialogue.

Hay Festival Comunitario

The Hay Festival Comunitario is the programme offered by the Hay Festival to local audiences, particularly made up of children, outside the old town of Cartagena de Indias. With an attendance of 1,300 children, young people and adults, this year the programme featured 30 activities in partnership with organizations including the Fundación Plan Internacional, La Canoa Literaria, the Biblioteca Popular de Playa Blanca, La Carreta Literaria ¡Leamos!, the Corporación Ruleli and the Colegio Politécnico El Pozón educational institution. The events were held in the neighbourhoods and districts of El Pozón, Nelson Mandela, Olaya Herrera, Membrillal, Puerto Rey, Tierra Baja, Bayunca, Pontezuela and Playa Blanca-Barú. We also visited the municipality of Turbana and Ballestas district. There were children's activities in the Claustro de las Ánimas at the Centro de Convenciones and in the library of the Centro de Formación de la Cooperación Española with groups of children from Vista Hermosa, La Boquilla district and the municipalities of San Jacinto, El Carmen de Bolívar, Soplaviento, Villanueva and Sincerín (Arjona).

The programme included the traditional Community Journalism Workshop with Catalina Gómez Ángel (Colombia), and the screening of the film *La Suprema*, as well as discussions with its Colombian protagonists; its actors Elizabeth Martínez and Pabla Flores, the director Felipe Holguín and the producer Tere Gaviria, all from Colombia. Workshops and storytelling sessions with the writers Carlos Agudelo Montoya, Javier Cajiao, Carolina Garzón Blanco, Mary Grueso, Daniela Pabón, Brillith Sossa Wilches (Colombia); Elisa Guerra (Mexico), and María Hesse (Spain).

Hay Festival Joven

The Hay Festival Joven events for the university community were held in Cartagena de Indias and Barranquilla between the 30th of January and the 3rd of February.

As part of the Hay Festival Cartagena de Indias, from 30th of January to 1st of February, 24 activities were held at Cartagena University (Claustro de la Merced and Claustro de San Agustín) and at the Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar (Manga campus). In Barranquilla six events took place at the Universidad del Norte on Monday 3rd of February.

In Cartagena de Indias, around 1,200 students, lecturers and university staff were involved in the experience, which included journalism workshops, a lecture on neuroscience, a concert, a dance performance, poetry and music and conversations on literature, current affairs, contemporary thought, cultural management and south-to-south diplomacy.

The programme, with events moderated by teaching staff from our partner universities, featured figures such as the writers Leonardo Padura (Cuba), Cristina Rivera Garza (Mexico), Yuliana Ortiz Ruano (Ecuador), Mayra Santos-Febres (Puerto Rico) and Camila Sosa Villada (Argentina); the Colombian Ambassador in Senegal, Claudia Mosquera Rosero-Labbé (Colombia); the journalists María Jimena Duzán, Tatiana Velásquez (Colombia) and Abraham Jiménez Enoa (Cuba); the historian Diana Uribe (Colombia), the scientists Mariano Sigman and Rodrigo Quian Quiroga (Argentina); the feminist psychologist and academic Florence Thomas (France/Colombia); the Cartagena de Indias cultural managers Jesús Herrera Babilonia and Lilia Herrera Jiménez; and the philosophers Susan Neiman (United States) and Wolfram Eilenberger (Germany).



Salman Rushdie & Juan Gabriel Vásquez
© Daniel Mordzinski



20 questions *to understand the present and imagine the future*

To commemorate our twentieth anniversary, we launched a collaborative project in which Colombian society played an essential role. We invited citizens to help define the 20 key questions for our time.

The result was a collective conversation in which **we received over 500 questions** from Colombians of all ages and from all parts of the country. This exercise reflected the diversity and the commitment of our society, triggering a debate about the issues that really matter to us, thinking about crucial questions related to **democracy, artificial intelligence, the climate emergency, equalities, literature, science and culture.**

Based on these contributions, we selected **20 questions** that were incorporated into our programme. Outstanding figures from culture and science, together with the attending audiences, explored possible answers through an enriching and transformative dialogue.

Participants such as **Weidler Guerra** and **Ricardo Villafañe** (Colombia), together with **María Negroni** (Argentina), reflected on the importance of science, nature and the future of research.

Piedad Bonnett (Colombia), **Charlotte Higgins** (United Kingdom), **Nicola Lagioia** (Italia) and **Cristina Rivera Garza** (Mexico) debated the role of culture and literature at the present time.

Marcus du Sautoy (United Kingdom), **Rodrigo Quian Quiroga** (Argentina) and **Rafael Yuste** (Spain) tackled the uncertainty and the implications of the rise of artificial intelligence.

Anne Applebaum (United States), **Edward Chancellor** (United Kingdom), **Nataliya Gumenyuk** (Ukraine) and **Susan Neiman** (United States), analysed democratic values and models in a world where disinformation is so strongly present.

Peter Frankopan (United Kingdom), **Virginia Mendoza** (Spain) and **Gustavo Ulcué Campo** (Colombia) questioned our relationship with the planet in a context of environmental crisis and climate change.

Gioconda Belli (Nicaragua), **Bocafloja** (Mexico), **Ochy Curiel** (Dominican Republic), **Colm Tóibín** (Ireland) and **Justin Torres** (United States) discussed and questioned the progress being made in the direction of gender, race and class equality.

Furthermore, the festival participants **Anne Applebaum** (United States), **Nataliya Gumenyuk** (Ukraine) and **Jorge Ramos** (Mexico/United States) talked about current affairs, with a perspective that included both the global north and south.

Fellowships in Excellence

Cartagena de Indias 2025

We ran the third round of **Fellowships in Excellence**, offering **eight positions** as part of this cultural management project to **young Afro-descendent professionals from the creative industries**. This offered them a great chance to accompany the management team of the Hay Festival Cartagena de Indias during its 20th anniversary in Colombia.

The people selected for the fellowship participated in the Social Media, Press and Media, Podcast and Education teams for the festival.

They also had the opportunity to attend events and deepen their knowledge together with outstanding experts, including **Andrea Bonilla**, manager of the Cultural Experiences cluster of the Cartagena Chamber of Commerce; **Ariel Sudea** and **Lina Marcela Valencia Grau**, fellows of the 2024 programme; **Ricardo Chica Gelis**, Deacon of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Education at the University of Cartagena; **Claudia Mosquera Rosero-Labbé**, social researcher, academic and current Colombian Ambassador in Senegal; and the Argentinean anti-racist activist, **Federico Pita**.

We congratulate those who have benefitted from this third programme: **Karen Paola Alcazar Ramos**, **Julieth Paola Cuesta Tuñón**, **Gabriela Andrea García Hoyos**, **Yulianis Yosanis Gutierrez Monroy**, **Valeria Valentina James Sanmartín**, **Jesús Daniel Osuna Martínez**, **Rodrigo Alejandro Paredes Rodríguez** and **Yuzney Polo Ramos**.



Participants
Fellowships in Excellence
© Daniel Mordzinski

“I feel I came to the 2025 Hay Festival with a lot of expectations, open to discovering new ideas, but without knowing how much this would affect my vision of the future. With every day and every word I heard I resolved doubts about my professional and personal path. Today, more than ever, I feel the desire to open spaces in the academy so that more Afro-Colombian voices can be heard and recognised.”

Valeria Valentina James Sanmartín

“The fellowship gave me the chance to learn about cultural management, understand how an event of this size is structured and find out, from the inside, about media coverage. I was able to see, close up, interaction with the media, how cultural communication works, and how narratives are built. Something that stood out were spaces for the Afro conversation, which raised the profile of essential viewpoints for understanding our history and the resistances that are still present.”

Karen Paola Alcazar Ramos

“For me, the impact of this experience on my life is related to a great deal of learning, and I am very grateful for the opportunity to share with some authors, which fed back into my ideas, expanded my horizons and, above all, helped to boost the self-esteem of my work, since I could see the participants’ perceptions of certain matters that are of interest to me, and this motivates me to be more active with my work in journalism.”

Rodrigo Alejandro Paredes Rodríguez

“This experience opened my mind to the rich and extensive space of people who are doing what I dream of in the future: promoting the defence of human rights through their discourse, their work and their contributions to the world. I learned about anti-racism as never before, and this strengthened not only my knowledge but also my very identity.”

Julieth Paola Cuesta Tuñón

The Festival in numbers

days **10**

artists
from 24 countries **244**

events
in Jericó, Medellín,
Cartagena de Indias and Barranquilla **215**

attended in person
at the four venues **70,135**

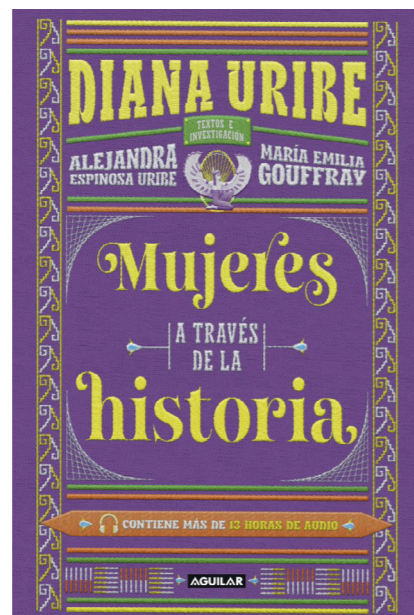
viewings via streaming **73,382**

visits to the website **349,022**

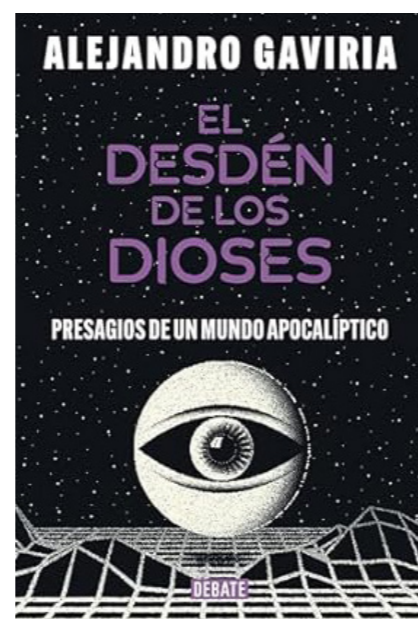
people reached
via social media **3,633,270**

new digital users
from: Argentina, Brazil, Chile,
Colombia, Spain, United States,
Francia, Mexico, Panama, Peru,
United Kingdom and Venezuela **1,344,987**





The 10 bestselling books



Juan Gabriel Vásquez
Los nombres de Feliza

Salman Rushdie
Cuchillo

Diana Uribe
Mujeres a través de la historia

Piedad Bonnett
La mujer incierta

Gioconda Belli
Un silencio lleno de murmullos

Leonardo Padura
Ir a la Habana

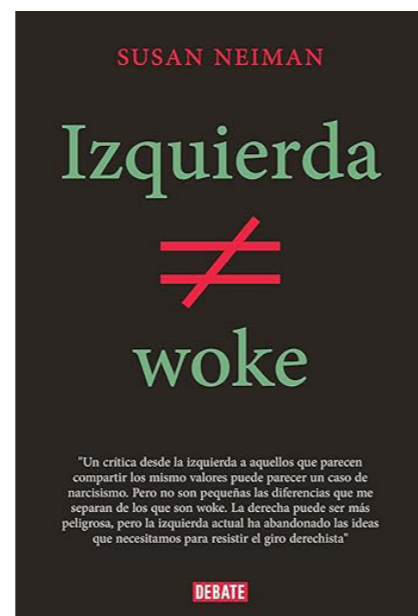
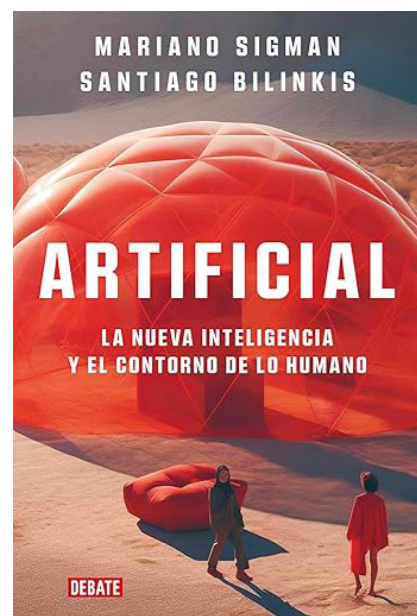
Alejandro Gaviria
El desdén de los dioses

Mariano Sigman, Santiago Bilinkis
Artificial

Rafael Yuste
El cerebro, el teatro del mundo

Susan Neiman
Izquierda no es woke

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10





Carlos Vives
© Daniel Mordzinski

The Festival in the media...

press conferences **8**

press releases **30**

media outlets
community, local, regional,
national and international **+80**

international media companies **15**

interviews
organised **+500**

accredited journalists **250**

accredited photographers **60**

booktubers
covering the festival **5**

R.O.I.
in Colombian pesos **+52
billion**

...and in the social media

people reached
in 79 days
of publications **3,633,270**

Facebook
people reached
and **6.5%** of engagement **1,300,179**

Instagram
people reached
and **6.9%** of engagement **1,982,232**

X
people reached
and **8.4%** of engagement **390,849**

new followers
compared to 2024 **+14%**



Leila Guerriero & Leonardo Padura
© Daniel Mordzinski

The Festival in words

“I feel tremendous gratitude to all those who supported Salman [Rushdie] and I... and, which is more important, our need for and commitment to literature and the arts. I felt right at home in Cartagena de Indias!”

Rachel Eliza Griffiths, writer

“As a journalist I have experienced the event with major authors, figures such as Piedad Bonnet who are open to media organisations such as ours, and who allow Colombians a closer view of people like her.”

Jessica Sánchez, *El Tercer Canal*

“The public was fantastic. Everything was beautiful, memorable and perfect.”

Colm Tóibín, writer

“Hay Festival Cartagena de Indias is a great feast of literature in Colombia, and it is one of the most important festivals. The festival’s organisers do a surprisingly good job, considering the complicated logistics of authors, press, guests and public. I have had a great experience.”

Vicente Gutiérrez, *Milenio*

“What I liked most about this Hay Festival is the organization. The guests were of the highest level. It is worth underlining that Cartagena de Indias has been enriching national culture for 20 years.”

Huber Bustamante, *El Heraldo*

“It was a unique experience.”

Yuliana Ortiz Ruano, writer

“The 20th Hay Festival has been a solid success, consolidating Cartagena de Indias as a worldwide leader in art, culture and literature.”

Delcy Liliana de Avila Mejía, *Alerta Caribe*

“I really enjoyed the festival, the passion of the people at each of the events where I was participating, and the magical atmosphere that is created in an enchanting place.”

Rodrigo Quian Quiroga, neuroscientist

“Hay Festival has made it possible to create a channel that continues to be an alternative channel. Culture can create and educate the judgement needed to convince society to help create a route towards sustainability; culture is the human factor in sustainability.”

Ángela María Gómez, *El Pacto Global*

“I have been attending the Hay Festival for the last 13 years, and this has been the best. It is only fair to offer thanks to all those involved in the management, who are mainly women and I, as a woman, feel empowered seeing role models such as they.”

Rosmery Armenteros, writer

“The Hay Festival Cartagena de Indias continues to be a space where people can come into contact with culture and thought, gathering major figures from literature and journalism.”

Nancy Veladia Ardila, RCN

“The Hay Festival 2025 has established itself once again as one of the world’s most important cultural events. And it has restated its commitment to cultural diversity and access to literature and art throughout Cartagena de Indias and beyond.”

Redacción Cultural *El Universal*

“I want to extend my profound thanks to the Hay Festival for the invitation. It was an unforgettable experience that allowed me to connect with other writers and audiences from outside the USA. My panel with Lena Khalaf Tuffaha and Javier Zamora was one of the great moments, where I felt that we shared a more intimate understanding of art, and its vocation and commitment to others.”

Viet Thanh Nguyen, writer

“With proposals such as this one, the door is opened to the conversation involving national and international authors, who can influence the careers of those who have just begun and who actively participate in these spaces.”

María Jimena Delgado, *El Tiempo*



Rodrigo Quian Quiroga
© Daniel Mordzinski



Acknowledgements

Ally for Latin America



Main Sponsors



Government Ally

Sponsor

Global Partners



Media Allies

Global Media Allies



Hay Joven / Hay Comunitario



Support



Thanks to



Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial · Grupo Planeta · Teatro Adolfo Mejía · Hotel Sofitel Santa Clara · Palacio de la Proclamación
 Project supported by the Ministry for Culture, Arts and Knowledge through the National Programme for Cultural Partnership. Biennial list 2024/2025.



Cindy Herrera
 © Daniel Mordzinski



Hay Festival around the world

Hay Festival Global is a charity providing global festivals of stories, ideas and new possibilities.

The antidote to polarisation, we bring together diverse voices to listen, talk, debate and create, tackling some of the biggest political, social and environmental challenges of our time. Through one-of-a-kind festivals, in unique locations around the world – plus forums, digital platforms and learning programmes – Hay Festival Global celebrates and inspires different views, perspectives and points of view.

In 1987, Hay Festival Global was dreamt up in the booktown of Hay-on-Wye, Wales. Thirty-seven years later, the charity runs events and projects all over the world, from the historic town of Cartagena in Colombia to the heart of cities in Peru, Mexico, Spain and the USA.

Hay Festival Global reaches an audience of millions each year and continues to grow and innovate, earning multiple awards over the years, including Festival of Sanctuary status from refugee charity City of Sanctuary UK and, in 2020, Spain's Princess of Asturias Award in Communication and Humanities.

Coming up...

Hay Festival Forum Seville, Spain
(13–15 February 2025)

Hay Festival Hay-on-Wye, United Kingdom
(22 May–1 June 2025)

NBO Litfest, Kenya
(26–29 June 2025)

Hay Festival Querétaro, Mexico
(4–7 September 2025)

Hay Festival Segovia, Spain
(11–14 September 2025)

Lviv BookForum, Ukraine
(2–5 October 2025)

Hay Festival Forum Dallas, USA
(17–19 October 2025)

Hay Festival Forum Moquegua, Peru
(5 November 2025)

Hay Festival Arequipa, Peru
(6–9 November 2025)

Hay Festival Hay-on-Wye Winter Weekend, United Kingdom
(27–30 November 2025)

Hay Festival Jerico, Colombia
(23–25 January 2026)

Hay Festival Forum Medellín, Colombia
(27–28 January 2026)

Hay Festival Forum Ciudad de Panama, Panama
(27–28 January 2026)

Hay Festival Cartagena de Indias, Colombia
(29 January–1 February 2026)

Discover a world
of different

ideas

books

perspectives

debates

views

workshops

art

thinking

music

comedy

voices

possibilities

poetry

and more.

Stay up-to-date with
the latest news from the
Hay Festival Colombia
by subscribing to the *newsletter*
or following us on:

X: @hayfestival_esp

Facebook: Hay Festival ESP

Instagram: @hayfestival_esp

TikTok: @hayfestival_esp

Youtube: Hay Festival ESP

Blue Sky: @hayfestivalesp

Our video:

[https://www.hayfestival.com/
cartagena/video](https://www.hayfestival.com/cartagena/video)

Fundación Hay Festival Colombia
Barrio Pie de la Popa Cl. 30
No. 19-64 Piso 2 CP 130001
Cartagena de Indias
Colombia

hayfestival.org/colombia