

Canal, Rainforest & Highlands

Panama Wildlife Walking Adventure



Classic
JOURNEYS™



“Classic Journeys provides unbeatable access to experiences around the globe.”

— *Travel + Leisure*

Canal, Coffee & Quetzals

As you may have heard, there is a canal in Panama. Watching a football field's worth of ship rise in a lock on a pillow of water is one of the world's great manmade miracles. But what about the much tinier spectacle of a hummingbird barely larger than your thumbnail? Or the quiet whiiiiish as your native dugout canoe slices through a rainforest river? A Panama vacation is one of the finest ecotourism experiences—easy to reach, friendly in the extreme, and not yet on everybody's radar screen. From anteaters to mantled howler monkeys, the wildlife is extraordinary. The Audubon Society conducts its Christmas bird count here so you can just imagine the abundance. To explore the culture of Panama, we travel you to a native village and introduce you to our friends along the way. You'll see things you've never seen, in a place you never thought to visit—which makes this our favorite new example of a travel adventure.

DAY 1

PANAMA CANAL

- Sail across Gatun Lake to see gigantic cargo and passenger ships pass through the Panama Canal
- Spot myriad bird species on an afternoon jungle walk in Soberania National Park

Mid-morning, we'll meet at our luxury hotel right in the heart of Panama City. We'll make our way out of vibrant metropolis and sail across Gatun Lake, weaving among gigantic cargo and passenger ships. This artificial lake is the part of the passage that crosses the Continental Divide from Gatun on the Atlantic to the Miraflores Locks on the Pacific side. We'll also catch a first glimpse of Panama's wildlife such as green iguanas, crocodiles, white-faced capuchin monkeys and osprey on the hunt for peacock bass.

Every schoolchild learns about birds migrating south for the winter. What you probably never knew is that portions of four major North American flyways all converge in Panama. The predictable result is one of the great bird watching opportunities you'll find anywhere. Soberania National Park (where our hotel is located) is the site of the Audubon Society's annual Christmas count because so many species fly through. On our afternoon jungle walk, you're likely to see species you've never imagined!

Overnight: Panama City

Meals: L, D

DAY 2

EMBERA VILLAGE

- Dugout canoe ride up a rainforest river
- Visit to a native tribal village to meet local families
- Explore a rich habitat for jaguars, harpy eagles and blue-fronted parrots

After breakfast, we board traditional piraguas (dugout canoes) for a journey up the Chagres River. It's a sensational perspective on the rainforest that crowds the river like a tall wall of green on each bank. We're privileged today to meet members of the Embera tribe, one of country's seven remaining indigenous tribes. Their village sits right on the river where they'll greet us and welcome us into thatched huts that stand on stilts (equally important protection from rainy season floods and jaguars). Lunch is likely to be the typical fare of tilapia and fried plantains on banana leaves, and we'll have a chance to interact with the villagers and learn about their folkways.

This whole day is a firsthand look at the cultural and environmental challenges that face Panama and so many other countries. The Embera and the wildlife with which they share their land are all threatened by deforestation and development. As you'll see, Chagres National Park remains a rich habitat that contains jaguars, anteaters and mantled howler monkeys as well as bird sanctuary with more than 560 species. Conservation groups are fighting to protect the park and to extend it is as well to preserve the biodiversity.

We leave the rainforest as we arrived—in piraguas—and return to our hotel to relax before dinner.

Overnight: Panama City

Meals: B, L, D

DAY 3

PANAMA CITY

- Stroll the historic streets of the French Colonial Panama
- Marvel at the Miraflores Locks on a guided visit

This morning, join our guide for a visit to Panama City. The nation's capital, it's a lively mix of historic and modern. We'll take a walk in the oldest districts to the 16th century ruins of Panama Viejo as well as 17th century Casco Viejo, where we see the rich architectural influence of Colonial Spain.

We've reserved the afternoon to visit the Panama Canal. You've known since grade school that is one of man's greatest engineering feats. The real revelation, though, is that it is much more than a channel full of water. The canal is actually a series of lakes, locks and channels – and you may be surprised to learn that it actually runs north and south! Here our guide leads us on a visit to the canal museum where we can also see ships being raised or lowered in the locks. The day ends with a short flight to David City.

Overnight: Chiriqui Western Highlands

Meals: B, L, D

DAY 4

CHIRIQUI WESTERN HIGHLANDS

- Enjoy a morning walk to meet local farmers
- Explore a UNESCO World Heritage site in search of the famed quetzal bird

Most of the produce and dairy that you eat in Panama comes from the Chiriqui province and the rolling foothills of the mountain range known as the Cordillera Central. We go wandering here on trails that local farmers use for access to the patchwork of fields. It is a beautiful walk with Volcan Baru and the mountains in the distance. Strawberries, tomatoes and carrots are among the crops grown here. Along the way, we'll meet the farmers and talk with them about their life on the land and what it's like to work in this lush terrain.

Sharing its boundaries with neighboring Costa Rica, La Amistad International Park is a World Biosphere Reserve and UNESCO World Heritage Site. We spend this afternoon walking El Retoño trail and learning about the dynamics of a tropical cloud forest. As we explore the trails of La Amistad we will be on search for the resplendent quetzal, the silvery-fronted tapaculo, the black and yellow silky flycatcher and many other western highland birds.

Overnight: Chiriqui Western Highlands

Meals: B, L

DAY 5

CHIRIQUI WESTERN HIGHLANDS

- Kayak on Las Lagunas
- Visit a working coffee plantation for a tasting
- Celebrate your Panamanian vacation over a festive farewell dinner

Las Lagunas are the highest natural lakes and wetlands in Panama and the fifth highest ecosystem in Central America. The calm, reflective waters are absolutely perfect for kayaking. This morning, we board sit-on-top kayaks for a paddle. This style of kayak is great because they are more comfortable and easier to maneuver than the traditional style. So as you glide over the water, you can really focus on breathtaking vistas, the tropical forest at the lakes' edge, and keeping your eyes open for the birds and wildlife that are plentiful in this ideal habitat.

The volcanic slopes of Baru offer ideal soil and climate for shade-grown coffee. This afternoon, we visit a working plantation (finca), known for its sustainable farming practices. On our walk, you'll get an up-close look at how cultivation and harvest work. (The beans are harvested by Guaymi Indians in the months of October and February.) You'll also learn firsthand how the crop is transformed from bright red "cherries" to the rich coffee beans that are highly sought after. Of course, the visit isn't complete until our finca hosts treat us to a coffee-tasting.

Later in the afternoon, we'll also visit with a local family that still uses a horse- or ox-powered trapiche mill to press sugar cane. The juice is transformed by long exposure to heat into small bricks of brown, molasses-rich raspadura, Panama's classic sweetener that's used in beverages and cooking. It's a fascinating look at a centuries-old process that is rapidly disappearing.

Overnight: Chiriqui Western Highlands

Meals: B, L, D

DAY 6

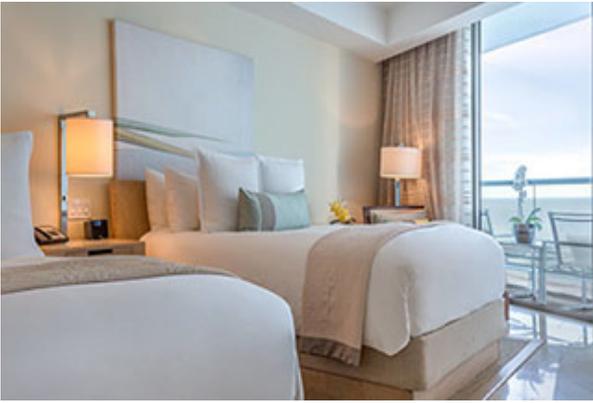
DEPARTURE

After an early breakfast we take a short flight back to Panama City. We will part company at the domestic airport in time for most flights back to the US.

Meals: B



Tour Hotels



JW Marriott Panama City

Situated along the shores of Punta Pacifica, this high-rise hotel boasts a paramount location surrounded by a plethora of businesses, plus shopping and entertainment options in the Financial District.

OVERNIGHT: Panama City | **NIGHTS:** 2



Casa Grande Bambito

This luxurious boutique hotel is located in a rainforest surrounded by mountains, volcanic rocks and springs in the highlands of Panama. All accommodations are in suits, and the property offers hot springs, sauna and spa treatments.

OVERNIGHT: Bambito | **NIGHTS:** 3

Tour Dates & Prices

To see the full list of dates and prices for this tour, go to our website by clicking [here](#).

Want to travel with just your group on a date of your choosing? Visit [CLASSICJOURNEYS.COM/PRIVATE](https://www.classicjourneys.com/private) to learn more about Private Journeys.

Trip Essentials

TRIP LENGTH	6 Days, 5 Nights
START	Lobby of Bristol Panama, Panama City, Panama
END	Panama City Airport, Panama City, Panama
TERRAIN	Easy to moderate forest and jungle trails. 2 to 3 hours of walking per day.

What's Included

- All breakfasts and lunches, and 4 dinners
- Full-time experienced guide(s) who are with you throughout the trip and handle behind-the-scenes logistics
- Admissions to tastings, historic sites and other scheduled events as noted in the detailed daily itinerary
- Gratuities for hotels, meals, and baggage
- All land transportation during the trip

Above & Beyond Benefits

- Invisible Check-In
- Privileged Access Events

READY TO BOOK?
CLICK TO MAKE A RESERVATION

Or give us a call

1-800-200-3887

Mon-Fri 8:00AM – 5:00PM PST

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AMBASSADOR CLUB

As a Classic Journeys guest, you are invited to join the Ambassador Club after your first Classic Journeys tour. As a member, you'll have access to [a whole suite of Ambassador benefits](#) you can use immediately and as often as you like.

ENJOY THE UNEXPECTED

When you travel with Classic Journeys, you can expect handcrafted surprises built into every trip, but some things just can't be anticipated. Unusual weather, a once-a-year festival or an unscheduled site closing will inspire us and your local guide to improvise and modify this itinerary. Likewise, the hotels named here are used on the majority of our trips, but occasionally one of them can't accommodate us. If that happens, you can count on us to let you know before departure and make sure you're in a hotel of equal or better quality. It's our goal to make your trip exceptional!

**Any discount offered cannot be combined with other offers, and only applies to published (regularly scheduled public) departure dates in our catalogs or on our website.

THE Classic Journeys Difference

HANDCRAFTING TRIPS OF A LIFETIME.



At the end of the day, we fundamentally believe that every guest on every departure of every trip should have a trip of a lifetime. We're fortunate to play the role of well-connected friend, linking our guests with amazing guides, artisans, winemakers, hoteliers, restaurateurs, naturalists, and too many others to list here.

That's what motivates me and our team — in our La Jolla HQ and around the world — every day. Join Us!

Franklin
President & Founder



You can expect the highest standards:



Luxurious Lodgings:

Ours include coveted properties that appear in "World's Best" and "Gold List" rankings.



Included Activities:

You'll never be surprised with add-on fees on your activities that include snorkeling to cooking lessons.



Local Guides:

Your guides are locals who are always at your side like well-connected friends.



Small Group Travel:

With an average of just 10-12 guests, it's a small footprint that guarantees you access that's off-limits to larger groups.



Amazing Cuisine:

From Michelin-starred restaurants to lunch in a farmhouse kitchen, you'll have a seat for the region's signature dishes.



Unmatched Value:

"Excellent value" and "unbeatable access" are two of the reasons that Travel + Leisure has consistently voted us a World's Best Tour Operator.

You'll enjoy these handcrafted travel experiences in Panama...

- Seeing the ships up-close at the Miraflores Locks
- Canoeing to the rain forest village of the Embera Tribe
- Walking past waterfalls in a bamboo forest
- Kayaking on the calm waters among uninhabited islands
- Exploring with local guides who help you spot anteaters and monkeys in the rainforest

"I never felt like a tourist."

-Elizabeth C., New York, NY