

TRAVEL LEADERS®

Panama Tour & Activity Suggestions



Panama

Introduction

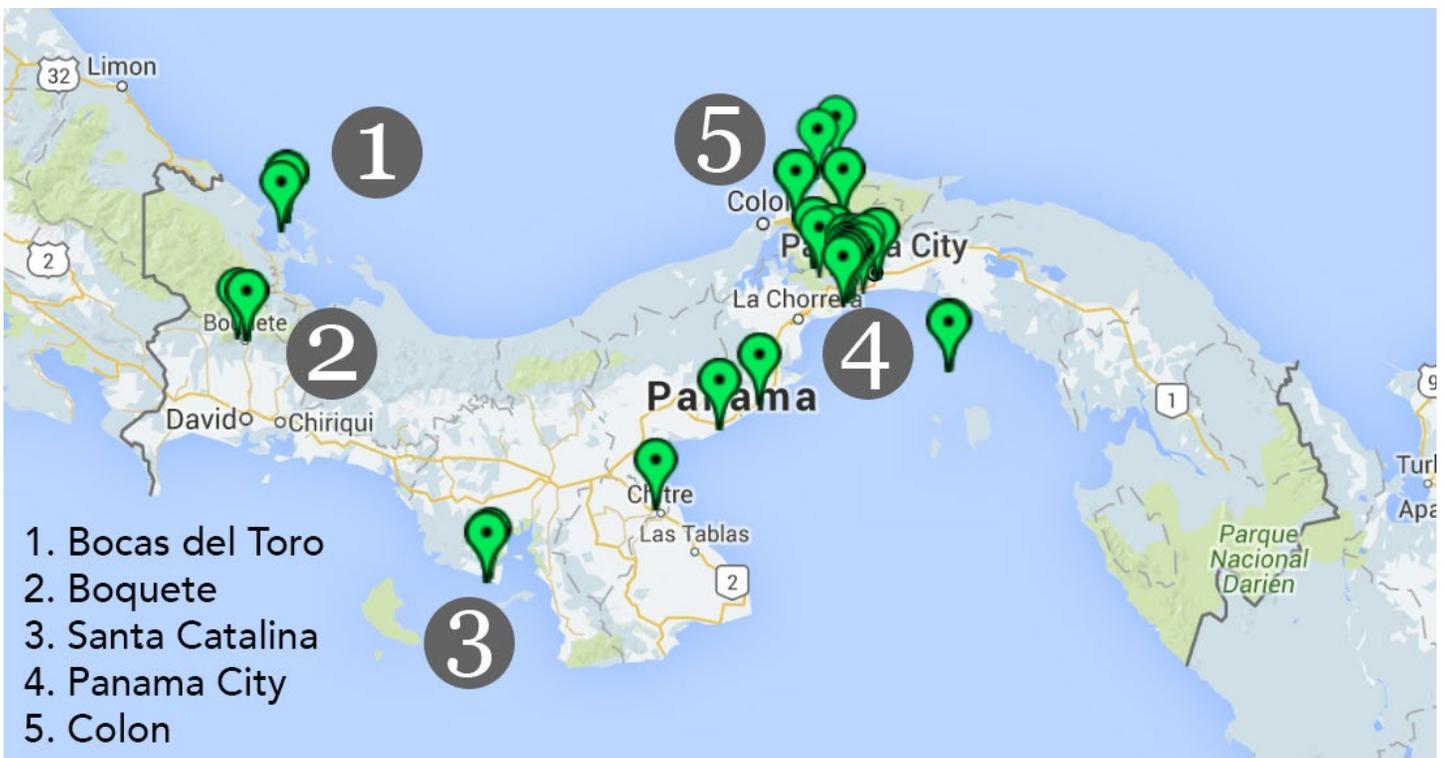
Panama is an incredible travel destination that is often underestimated. Their popular next-door neighbor, Costa Rica, relies on tourism to support their economy, but Panama generates so much money from the Panama Canal that they haven't felt the need to invest as much in tourism. That means that you have an incredible wealth of things to see and do, but without nearly as much tourist traffic!

Furthermore, the infrastructure in Panama is arguably the best in Central America. High quality roads and domestic airports make it easy to visit more than one destination on your trip.

This guide covers the highlights and suggestions for the most popular destinations in Panama. Please note that there are many more options available, so let us know what you are looking for and we can work to make it happen.



Map of Panama Tours & Activities by Region



Bocas del Toro



Scuba Diving

Scuba diving is a must in Bocas del Toro where 95% of the Caribbean's coral species can be found. Whether you are an advanced diver or not yet certified, there is a diving adventure available for everyone in Bocas. Explore both soft and hard soft coral while discovering tropical reef animals such as nurse sharks, sea turtles, rays, and more.



Private Sailing Charters

There is no better way to explore the open waters around Bocas del Toro than with a private sailboat charter. You will cut the engines and only hear the sound of the wind and water as you coast from island to island, sipping on cocktails and relaxing. And if you can't get enough of this lifestyle in just a day, you can arrange for custom, overnight trips.



Horseback Riding

Horseback riding in Bocas del Toro is the perfect activity for anyone who wishes to step away from the touristy energy of town and escape into nature. Ride through the jungle, listen to the birds and arrive at a stunning view of the ocean and other islands. Also learn about the history of the region as you ride along the paths.



Island Hopping & Snorkeling

Snorkeling is one of the best ways to discover the many coral reefs that Bocas del Toro keeps just under the surface. Sites like Crawl Cay provide calm waters year round. Many snorkeling tours will also make stops for dolphin watching and leisure time on the beaches of various islands, including Dolphin Bay, Starfish Beach, Boca del Drago, and Red Frog Beach.

Boquete



Coffee Tours

The high altitude of Boquete is perfect for the cultivation of coffee, and it is home to the world's most expensive variety: Geisha Coffee. By taking a tour here, you will learn how to identify the different varieties of coffee plants and then head into a production facility to learn how the beans are harvested, dried, roasted and packaged, before they are shipped around the world to coffee lovers like you and me!



Hike Baru Volcano

The Volcán Barú, or Baru Volcano in English, is the highest point in all of Panama. On a clear day you can even see both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans! The climb can be challenging, however, so we recommend that you be in great shape before signing up. Heavily outfitted 4x4 jeeps can also be arranged to drive you to the top via an off-road trail, but some hiking may still be involved.



Eco Tours & Waterfall Hikes

Boquete has a number of beautiful waterfalls that are great for exploring - and some for swimming! The Lost Waterfalls are the most famous, but we recommend taking a guided hike deep into a canyon where you can see a number of smaller falls. You can also jump off rocks, swim in the large pools and explore the surrounding jungle with few, to no other people around.



Panoramic Tours

Hop in a vehicle and head into the mountains where you will discover a beautiful river and waterfall, a coffee plantation and humming birds and butterflies cruising around exquisitely manicured gardens. Oh, and we nearly forgot to mention the panoramic views! This tour is a great way to spend a morning or afternoon, and can also be paired with other adventures.

Santa Catalina



Scuba Diving Fun Dives

If you are a certified scuba diver, then Santa Catalina will be your underwater paradise in Panama. This is the location of famous Coiba Island, which is home to some of the best Pacific Ocean scuba diving in all of the Americas. You will encounter reef sharks, sea turtles, huge schools of fish, and if the season is right, you can see whale sharks and humpback whales!



PADI Scuba Certification

If you aren't yet scuba certified, then don't worry, you can easily complete a course while you are in Santa Catalina. You actually have a good chance of experiencing all that Coiba Island has to offer just from completing your certification dives! We recommend doing a referral course in which you complete your course and pool work at home, so that you maximize your time at one of the world's best dive destinations.



Panama City



Panama Canal Transit Tours

Our favorite way to experience one of the greatest engineering achievements of all time is to board a ship and sail right through it! A Panama Canal Transit Tour will allow you to be on a ship as it passes through the locks. The locks are responsible for raising and lowering massive ships 85 feet so they can complete their passage. You can do a partial transit (through one set of locks), or a full transit through the entire Canal.



Embera Village Experience

Hop in a dug-out canoe and make your way up river, and deep into the jungle to the Embera Village. You will meet the friendly villagers, learn about their way of life, enjoy a taste of their traditional cuisine and have the chance to purchase some of their handmade crafts. If you are more adventurous, you can turn this day trip into an overnight experience and spend a few days unplugged from the modern world.



Panama City & Casco Viejo Tours

Spanish for "Old Town," Casco Viejo is the historic district of Panama City. This part of the City was founded in 1673, after the original settlement from 1519 was destroyed. It has many beautiful buildings and landmarks, as well as great restaurants and bars. You will also tour the modern center of Panama City and learn about how these two areas merged into the City of today.



Scuba Dive Two Oceans in One Day

Panama is one of the few places in the world where you can enjoy both the Pacific and Atlantic ocean in one day! You will first dive into the Pacific with schools of jacks, sting rays, moray eels, and lobsters. You will then move to the Atlantic Ocean to dive warmer and clearer waters with more coral and smaller animals. Depending on tides and weather conditions, the order of the dives may switch.

Panama City



Whale Watching by Boat

Head for the Pearl Islands straight out of Panama City on a fast motor boat. Along the way you will look for whales and dolphins, with a 99% chance of seeing them. You can also stop and snorkel at a reef area, and have lunch on Contadora Island.



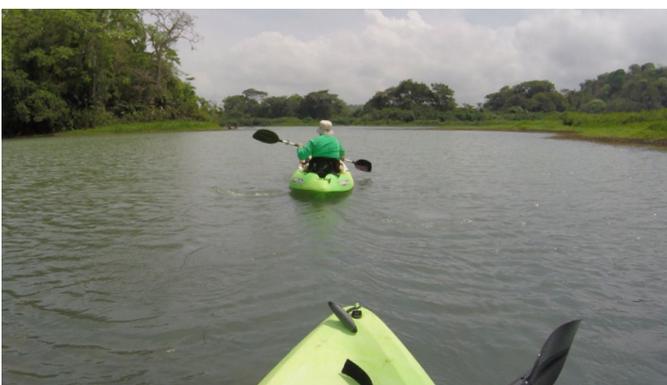
El Valle de Anton Day Trips

El Valle is the only town in the world located inside the crater walls of an extinct volcano. It is located 2 hours West of Panama City. You will see lush vegetation, colorful flowers and beautiful homes. You will learn about the Sleeping Indian Princess legend, you can try the canopy zipline over a 100' waterfall, see ancient petroglyphs, natural hotspots, and a small zoo with the famous Golden frogs that are only found here.



Fort San Lorenzo via Historic Rail

We leave Panama City behind to head for the province of Colon by way of the historic Panama Canal Railway. See the new locks at Gatun that opened in mid-2016. Then head to Chagres National Park to visit the UNESCO world heritage site of Fort San Lorenzo, Panama's most spectacular Spanish ruins.



Panama Canal Kayaking

Part of the Panama Canal goes through Lake Gatun, which is a man-made lake that was created for the ships to pass through. It is here that you can kayak and see these massive ships pass by. More unexpectedly, however, is the jungle along the shore. It is full of a variety of monkeys, toucans, crocodiles and more, which you can paddle up close to. You will not want to miss this incredible experience.

Panama City



Helicopter Tours

For viewing the City, the Panama Canal, and all of its majestic natural surroundings, nothing can you get you closer and more intimate with the scenery than a helicopter, which affords optimum visibility and up-close detail. The helicopter is at your disposal during the tour to explore everything you see. Small plane tours are also available.



Private Yacht Charters

Whether you are looking for a 1.5 hour bay cruise or a private charter to the Pearl Islands, you can do it from Panama City. You will start at the yacht club and head out on the route of your choice. It could include everything from cocktails and a sunset, to snorkeling and island hopping.



Kayak With Whales

For the ultimate close-up encounter with the whales, try kayaking alongside them! You can paddle out in a single or double kayak right from Contadora Island where you will often find the whales very nearby. Or, for a guaranteed visit with the whales, we can take a motorized boat to carry you and the kayaks out to the whales where you can gently slip into your kayak and approach to quietly observe them.



Zip Lining

You will be picked up and transferred to the Caribbean Coast for some high-flying action. Five zip lines will take you through the tree canopy and over parts of Lake Gatun. This is a great way to experience nature from a different perspective, all while getting a thrill!



The Panama Canal & Gatun Locks

The Panama Canal is a marvel of engineering that any traveler in Panama should visit. The Canal is 85 feet above sea-level, and when ships arrive at either end, they have to be lowered back to sea-level in order to continue on their journey. On the Caribbean side of Panama, this takes place within the Gatun Locks. You can watch the large ships pass through the Locks, or you can even board a ship and transit through!



Fort San Lorenzo

Fort San Lorenzo is a Spanish colonial era fort near the mouth of the Chagres River, on the Caribbean Sea. It was here that the Spaniards shipped a large amount of their gold and silver back to Europe. This also led to much conflict, and the fort was destroyed several times before the ruins that still stand today were erected in 1779. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is definitely worth visiting.



Embera Village & Panama City Day Tours

Even though Colón is on the Caribbean side of the country, you can quickly reach the Pacific side and enjoy a day tour of Panama City or the Embera Village. One of these tours will give you a wealth of insight into colonial and modern Panama, while the other will leave you amazed as you witness how the local indigenous people thrive in the middle of the jungle, the same way that their ancestors have for centuries.



Lake Gatun

Lake Gatun is an artificial lake that was created as part of the Panama Canal Project. It is also the second largest man-made lake in the world. And though it is famous for the massive ships passing through its waters, the shores of the lake are lined with dense jungle that is home to monkeys, toucans, crocodiles and more. Take a boat tour, or even kayak around the lake and see where a modern engineering marvel meets nature.