



EXPLORING PANAMA, THE NEW COSTA RICA

FEBRUARY 3 - 11, 2018

TRIP SUMMARY

HIGHLIGHTS

- Visiting an incredibly beautiful country that is still off the mass tourism radar
- Discovering the amazing diversity that Panama offers, from islands to highlands
- Exploring the San Blas Archipelago and learning about the Kuna inhabitants
- Hiking and rafting in Panama's Chiriqui Highlands
- Sampling Panamanian culture and cuisine

TRIP AT A GLANCE

Dates:	Feb 3 - 11, 2018
Location:	San Blas to Boquete, Panama
Cost:	\$2,895.00
Activities:	Multisport
Arrive:	Arrive by 5 pm February 3 at our hotel in Panama City
Depart:	You are free to leave anytime on February 11

TRIP OVERVIEW

Panama is what Costa Rica used to be. Just emerging as a popular Central American destination, it combines a stable government, diverse ecosystems rich in bird species, and indigenous populations that are both in touch with modern life and still keeping traditional customs. And because most of it is still not well known as an active destination, it receives fewer visitors than neighboring countries: thus it is possible to feel that you have truly gotten off the beaten track here. We'll spend nine days exploring this beautiful country from one end to the other, from the San Blas Islands to the Chiriqui highlands. Maximum: 12

RATING

This trip is rated 2 and is an excellent choice for women who enjoy being active and trying lots of different activities, and who want to experience the incredible diversity of culture and natural history that Panama offers. No previous experience in any of the activities is necessary. **Rating:** 1 [2](#) 3 4 5. A rating of 2 is suitable for any woman who regularly walks at a **brisk** pace 3 to 4 days a week for 35 - 45 minutes. These trips typically involve 3 to 5 hours of daily activity.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- A Panamanian guide (who may be male) and an Adventures in Good Company guide
- Eight nights double occupancy lodging
- All activities specified on the itinerary, including whitewater rafting, kayaking, hiking, and ziplining
- All transportation within Panama, including four internal flights
- Meals as specified on the itinerary
- Gratuities for drivers and day guides

Not included: Travel to Panama city; guide gratuities; alcoholic beverages

OUR ITINERARY

Below is the proposed itinerary for the trip. As is true on any adventure travel trip, plans for any specific day may be modified due to weather considerations, unforeseen circumstances, new opportunities, and group interests.

DAY 1

FEBRUARY 3, SATURDAY



Arrival in Panama. Our trip officially begins at 5pm at our hotel in Panama City. We will have group introductions, a trip orientation, and then go out for a welcome dinner. Whenever you arrive, you will be met at the airport by one of our Panamanian representatives and transferred to our hotel. Panama City is quite safe and if you get here early, its an interesting city to walk around. Overnight Hotel in Panama City (D)

DAY 2

FEBRUARY 4, SUNDAY



Panama is best known for the Panama Canal, so it's fitting that our first day here should be spent learning about it. After breakfast drive along the Panama Canal to Gamboa Public Ramp. We continue our journey through the Canal for another hour by motorboat, and then switch to 2-person expedition kayaks once we are in Gatun Lake. The laske was created by flooding the area now contained in Sobernia and Chagres National Parks, turning many mountain tops into islands and creating an amazing kayaking resource with endless channels to explore. We spend the next few hours scouting channels through the forest, with a break for lunch and a rest on our motor boat. While wildlife is never completely predictable, we are almost guaranteed to see sloths and different types of monkeys, including Capuchin (white-faces), howling, spider, and titi.

On the way back we'll stop at the Panama Canal Miraflores Locks. We'll learn how locks work and watch ships rise (or descend) over 40 feet as they transit through it. The Canal is still vital to world trade today and indeed, without it there isn't world commerce as we know it. Dinner is on your own tonight so you can check out any restaurants you may have heard about, or you are welcome to join your guide. (B, L)

DAY 3

FEBRUARY 5, MONDAY



We will catch an early domestic flight to El Porvenir, gateway to the extraordinary San Blas Archipelago. With more than 350 islands spreading out along the isthmus, the archipelago is a Kuna Native Reservation. The Kunas are known for their handicrafts and their unique culture. A nation within Panama, The Kuna have their own language, culture, laws and territory. The Kunas' efforts to preserve their own identity and control over San Blas has made it possible to keep this region the pristine paradise it is today. We will be spending two nights at Yandup Island Lodge, a family-owned lodge on a small private island near the community of Kuna Yala. The island is surrounded by coral reefs and a small beach with white sand and crystal clear water. Your biggest problem most likely will be deciding how to spend your time! The lodge offers tours twice a day, and your choices include visiting nearby uninhabited islands for swimming and exploration (and snorkeling if you have your own gear), learning more about everyday Kuna life and culture with a visit to the Playon Chico community, walking through the rain forest as your guides explain the importance and use of nature for Kuna traditions and beliefs, learning about Kuna beliefs and rituals around death with a visit to a nearby cemetery, or hiking through the rain forest to a small waterfall. Or perhaps more appealing is simply relaxing in a hammock or paddling at leisure through the surrounding mangroves in a traditional dugout canoe. Whichever you do, you will be amply fueled by the fresh local seafood, fish, vegetables, and fruit served in the lodge's dining room that looks over the water. Lodging at Yandup Island Lodge (B, L, D)

DAY 4

FEBRUARY 6, TUESDAY



Another day in Paradise! Perhaps you'll try one or two of the tours or activities that you didn't get to do yesterday. Or perhaps the slow pace and delicious food will lull you into deep rest. Whatever you choose will be just perfect. B, L, D

DAY 5



FEBRUARY 7, WEDNESDAY

Another early morning as we transfer to the opposite end of Panama: the pristine western highlands. We'll start with an early morning flight from Guna Yala to Panama City, which we'll tour before our flight to David. Panama City is rapidly changing, and we will visit the colonial Panama, "Panama Viejo", the old Panama, "Casco Viejo", and the modern Panama City. We'll visit historic buildings such as San Jose Church, the National Theater, the Metropolitan Cathedral, the Old Slave Market, and Old Spanish prisons. We'll end our tour at the Amador Causeway, where three islands were united with the mainland by using materials that had been removed when the Panama Canal during its excavation. <br After lunch on your own, we check in at 3:00pm at the airport for our afternoon flight to David. This part of Panama is completely different both in culture and climate: you will feel like you're visiting a different country. Upon arrival in David we transfer to Boquete, a small and charming mountain village tucked away on the eastern slopes of the Baru Volcano. For the next 3 nights we'll be staying at the lovely Hotel Valle Escondido. (B, D)

DAY 6



FEBRUARY 8, THURSDAY

Today we hike the magnificent a trail in Baru Volcano National Park, home to Panama's tallest peak (11,400 ft) and an enchanting cloud forest. Cloud forests, also called fog forests, occur only in tropical or subtropical mountainous environments, where the atmospheric conditions allow for a consistent cover of clouds. Often taking the form of fog, these clouds hover around the upper canopy of the forest before condensing onto the leaves of trees and dripping onto the plants below. This forest is some of the tallest trees in the hemisphere and 5,000 species of plants found nowhere else on earth. We'll make sure there is plenty of time for pictures, and also for some relaxing time (maybe a massage) at our hotel before we go out for dinner. (B, L, D)

DAY 7



FEBRUARY 9, FRIDAY

Today we spend rafting on the Chiriqui Viejo River. With most rapids being Class III, the river is eminently suitable for beginners. The river passes through a canyon and spectacular waterfalls characterize it. Depending on the water level and section used we will be rafting about 3-4 hours. We will return to our hotel, clean up, and have some free time this afternoon before gathering again for dinner, either at the hotel or a neighboring restaurant. (B, L, D)

DAY 8

FEBRUARY 10, SATURDAY



Today we start with visiting a Coffee Plantation and learn all about Panama's robust coffee crops (samples included), or, to the Boquete Tree Trek, a completely thrilling zipline. Imagine gliding through the tops of trees that are over a century old, high above pristine rivers, traversing a cloud forest of century-old trees and waterfalls where at anytime you may encounter fog and the gentle rain called "bajareque", as well as monkeys. Fortunately you will be attached securely in a harness to an overhead line. Ziplining is an activity where adrenaline is high but the actual risk is quite low, something that becomes obvious once you see how it is actually constructed. However, it's definitely not mandatory and another equally great option is to go on a bridge walk where the birding is excellent. We will return this afternoon flight to Panama City.

We'll gather again at the Panama City hotel for a Farewell Dinner, toasting our accomplishments and each other (B, D) (B, D)

DAY 9

FEBRUARY 11, SUNDAY



This morning we bid a fond farewell to this country we have come to know and are transferred to the International Airport for our flight home or on to other adventures.

ADDITIONAL TRIP INFORMATION

GETTING THERE

Plan to fly into the Tocumen International Airport (PTY) in Panama City, Panama by 4pm on February 3. You will be met at the airport by an AGC representative and taken to the hotel. If you arrive early, you can take a taxi to the hotel.

If you would like help with any travel plans we recommend our travel agent Sara Schuitemaker at sara@scaneastwest.com or call 800/727-2157

ACCOMMODATIONS

We are staying at a variety of accommodations, showcasing the new and the traditional. We stay the first two and the last night at a hotel in Panama City; two nights in the San Blas Islands at family-owned [Yandup Island Lodge](#); and three nights at a resort in Boquete, [Hotel Valle Escondido](#)

WEATHER

January is in the dry season although rain can occur anytime. In general Panama has two climates - the lowlands including Panama City, which are tropical and humid; and the highlands, which have spring-like temperatures year round. In the lowlands, temperatures during the day range between 80 F and 90 F (25-30 degrees Celsius). It cools off in the evenings, typically into the 60s. In the Highlands the lows are usually in the 50s and the highs in 60s-70s.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND TRIP CANCELLATION/TRIP INTERRUPTION INSURANCE, WHICH COVERS YOUR COST IF YOU NEED TO CANCEL OR INTERRUPT YOUR TRIP for medical reasons, trip delay, lost baggage, and other unforeseen emergencies. Adventures in Good Company will send you information about travel insurance with your registration information, or you may purchase coverage through your own insurance company. In order to avoid disappointment and expense in the event that you must cancel your trip we strongly urge you to purchase some type of insurance coverage. You can also sign up for it online at [Travelex Insurance](#). To get the best rates, use 20-0016 as your location number on the Get A Quote page.

PACKING LIST

FOOTWEAR:

- 1 pair Teva/Chaco sandals, river shoes, or dive booties for kayaking and rafting.
- 1 pair lightweight hiking shoes or boots, athletic shoes with a good sole (the trails are uneven terrain and can be muddy)
- 2 - 3 lightweight pair socks: (Thorlo, Smartwool, running socks, etc.)

CLOTHING

- 2 pair lightweight pants/capris: synthetic (Supplex, or nylon/polyester/spandex blend)
- 2 pairs of shorts: Quick drying nylon is recommended
- 3 - 4 T-shirts (synthetic for paddling and hiking is recommended)
- 1 - 2 lightweight, long-sleeved shirt for hiking and sun protection - button up front is the best
- 1 lightweight raincoat with hood - **waterproof**/breathable fabric like Gore-tex
- 1 wide brimmed or baseball style hat for protection from the sun/rain (a string tied to the hat will keep the wind from blowing it away)
- 1 medium-weight top layer – synthetic or wool pull over - fleece or wool vest works well for this layer
- Underwear/nightwear
- Bathing suit (nylon shorts and a running bra also work as swimwear)
- 1 – 2 changes of casual clothes to wear at end of day

ESSENTIALS

- Passport** and Xeroxed copy
- 1 one-quart water bottle, must be wide mouthed for refilling purposes
- Headlamp or flashlight and extra batteries
- 100% UV sunglasses with case and retention strap
- Ear plugs (for a good night's sleep)
- Insect repellent
- Small day or fanny pack for day use (hiking)
- Bandanna
- Wristwatch/travel alarm clock

TOILETRIES (small everything)

- Toothbrush, toothpaste, dental floss, hand sanitizer, shampoo, contact lens paraphernalia, sanitary supplies
- Sunscreen and lip protection with an SPF of 30 or greater
- Personal first aid/patch kit - Band-Aids, 1 safety pin, moleskin, compeed (or blister bandages), ibuprofen, any personal medications

Please note: Individuals who have had or have the potential for a severe allergic reaction to insect stings, specific foods or medications must bring an epi-pen. Please consult your physician and tell your guide.

OPTIONAL (not required, personal preference)

- snorkeling gear (mask, snorkel and fins). These can be rented in San Blas, but we recommend you bring your own if you own them
- binoculars
- watch: water resistant
- waterproof camera bag
- camera, film/memory card, and an extra camera battery
- powdered hydrating drink mix (Gatorade, lemonade, etc.)
- small dry bag to carry wallet, passport, sunscreen, etc. for day use while paddling. A garbage bag inside your day pack can also work well.
- book
- extra sunglasses
- gloves for paddling (bike gloves work well)
- small pocket knife
- journal and pen

NOTES ON PACKING

Adventures in Good Company's packing list covers everything you need to assure your safety and comfort. You may not use everything you bring; however, you need to come prepared for all possible weather conditions. At the same time, you must be able to carry your own luggage, sometimes up and down stairs. **As space for luggage on our trips is limited, please stick to the packing list as closely as possible.**

CLOTHING: Panama is typically pleasant at this time of year - warm and humid – with some rain. Bring clothing that can get wet (synthetics are best). Clothing will get salt stains, so don't bring new clothing.

Rain Gear: We recommend a jacket made of coated nylon or a waterproof/breathable fabric. This layer will be worn as a wind-proof layer as well as a rainproof layer on this trip, so having it be breathable is a good addition. Coated nylon is not very breathable, but it is lightweight, waterproof, and can be relatively inexpensive. Gore-tex (and other brand-identified waterproof materials) is a great material, but can be quite expensive. If you have any questions about raingear, please call us.

Personal First Aid Kit: Bring a small first aid kit with familiar medicine and first aid supplies you might need. Recommendations include the following: blister or foot remedies like moleskin, Compeed, blister bandages, or similar, a small role of duct tape (always useful!), remedies for respiratory ailments, stomach ailments, sore muscles or joints. The guides will have a first aid kit but having what you know works well for you is a good idea.

Shoes/Boots: You will need two types of footwear: one for boat-wear and one for hiking, For boat-wear bring something that can get wet such as river shoes, sandals, keens or Solomon water-shoes or dive booties. You may want to bring a couple lightweight pairs of socks to wear under your water shoes as well (helps prevent blisters). For hiking you want a lightweight pair of boots/hiking shoes with a good sole that are comfortable and broken in. The trails may be muddy and uneven terrain.

Hydration: Being able to easily access your water without assistance, so that you can drink frequently, is important to your safety and enjoyment. One method is to have a WIDE-MOUTHED water bottle attached to your waist strap. Another option is to use a **HYDRATION SYSTEM** such as CamelBak, Platypus, and MSR bladder bags, which are collapsible water bags with a hose attachment that you drink from. The bags fit inside or outside your pack with the hose positioned over your shoulder so that you can access your water as you hike.