

# Panama's UNESCO World Heritage Sites

10 days / 9 nights

*Explore Panama's UNESCO World Heritage Sites, from Panama City and the Panama Canal to Portobelo and San Lorenzo's fortified towns, then discover the stunning natural beauty of La Amistad International Park and its diverse ecosystems.*



## DAY 1

### ***Arrival in Panama City***

Upon arrival at Tocumen Airport, your private driver will meet you outside Customs and drive you to your hotel located in the heart of Casco Antiguo, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

3 nights at the CENTRAL HOTEL

## DAY 2

### ***Panama City: Panama Viejo Ruins, Biodiversity Museum, Casco Antiguo***

Begin your day by visiting the Panama Viejo Ruins, the archaeological remains of the original Panama City, founded in 1519 by the Spanish conquistadors and subsequently destroyed by the Welsh pirate Henry Morgan in 1671. As the first European settlement on the Pacific coast of the Americas, Panama Viejo played a crucial role in the early history of European colonization and trade in the region. It was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1997 and nominated for this prestigious status due to its exceptional cultural value and historical significance.

Explore the remnants of the old city, which was once a thriving hub of trade and commerce. Continue to the Biodiversity Museum designed by architect Frank Gehry. Proceed to Casco Viejo for lunch, another UNESCO World Heritage Site. During a historical walking tour, marvel at the colonial buildings, the Presidential Palace, and the National Theatre, and discover the fascinating history of the Panama Canal at the Interoceanic Panama Canal Museum.

Overnight at the CENTRAL HOTEL

(BL)

### DAY 3

#### *Pipeline Road Nature Walk and Panama Canal Rainforest Boat Adventure*



Your guide will meet you at the hotel lobby for a 45-minute drive from Panama City to Soberania National Park. Go on a nature walk on Pipeline Road where you'll be surrounded by diverse flora and fauna, immersing yourself in the sights and sounds of the tropical rainforest. After the early morning hike, embark on an expedition boat tour of Gatun Lake to look for more wildlife. The voyage across Gatun Lake in the Panama Canal passes by gigantic cargo ships transiting the waterway, making a contrast with the natural surroundings. Along the way, you will have the opportunity to spot Green Iguanas and Three-toed Sloths resting on tree branches, Crocodile, and Osprey in the hunt for Peacock Bass, Snail Kite, and Keel-billed Toucan among other wildlife. Gatun Lake was formed to give way to the Panama Canal in 1914. With a surface of 423 square kilometers, at the time of its creation was the largest man-made lake in the world. The flow of all the rivers within the Panama Canal Watershed is contained in Gatun Lake to provide water for the operation of the lock system. More than 52 million gallons of fresh water are used for every ship that transits through the Panama Canal from one ocean to another. Your expedition boat will allow for close approximations to rainforest-covered islands (former hill tops) in Gatun Lake to search for the White-faced Capuchin, Mantled Howler Monkey, Central American spider monkey, and Geoffrey's Tamarin. Picnic lunch on the boat included. You will be dropped back at your hotel in Panama City early afternoon.

(BL)



## DAY 4

### *The Spanish Main and Pirate Stories*



After checking out from your hotel this morning, travel to the San Lorenzo Fortifications, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, where you'll encounter the impressive fortresses that once defended the Spanish Main. Fort San Lorenzo was established by the Spanish in the late 16th century. It served as a strategic defense post and protected the Spanish Main, a vital trade route, from pirate attacks and other maritime threats. The fort was strategically positioned on a cliff overlooking the entrance to the Chagres River, providing a vantage point to monitor and control access to the Panamanian isthmus. During its history, Fort San Lorenzo faced several attacks and sieges, primarily from notorious pirates like Sir Henry Morgan. The fort underwent various reconstructions and improvements over time to strengthen its defenses.

Lunch will be served at Shelter Bay Marina, nestled within the lush rainforest surroundings of Fort Sherman, offering a unique blend of tropical beauty and maritime activity. You then continue for an approximately 90-minute drive to explore the historical fortifications and artifacts at Portobelo. This small fishing town was a major Spanish colonial port and trading hub during the 16th to 18th centuries, known for its strategic importance in the shipment of gold, silver, and other valuable commodities from the New World to Europe. Both, Fort San Lorenzo and Fort Portobelo were collectively designated as UNESCO World Heritage sites in 1980 under the name "Portobelo-San Lorenzo Caribbean Fortifications."



The UNESCO listing also emphasizes the importance of these sites in illustrating the global trade dynamics and cultural exchange during the time of Spanish colonization. Visit the Customs House, and the Black Christ Church and stroll through the small historical streets of Portobelo. End your tour at Casa Congo Art Gallery to learn about the Bahia Portobelo Foundation and its efforts to preserve local culture.

In fact, the Congo culture is one of Portobelo's intangible UNESCO World Heritage elements and includes music, dance, and rituals influenced by African traditions brought by enslaved people to the region. The annual Diablos y Congos festival is a vibrant and culturally rich celebration that combines African, Spanish, and indigenous traditions. The festival typically takes place in early October.

As an optional activity, craft and paint your own wooden art piece at a local wood workshop or participate in a percussion class at the Escuelita del Ritmo, a cultural and educational organization dedicated to preserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage of the region.

2 nights at CASA CONGO  
(BLD)



## DAY 5

### *Portobelo National Park and the Caribbean Sea*



This morning your guide will pick you up by boat to bring you to the rivers at the back of Portobelo Bay where you start a 1-2 hour kayaking exploration (duration optional). Cross through lush mangrove tunnels to the beginning of a hiking trail where you leave the kayaks behind and start a 1-hour nature hike over the hills through local farmland, arriving at one of the smaller reserve areas inside the Portobelo National Park. You will be looking for several species of monkeys, sloths, toucans, and the famous brightly-colored Poison Dart Frogs - eventually coming out at the white sand beach of Playa Blanca where you can rest and dip into the warm Caribbean waters. A hearty picnic lunch will be served on the beach. After lunch, you continue by boat to Venas Azules for a fascinating kayak exploration around Isla del Padre. You will have the chance to paddle through the crystal clear waters of this famous protected channel (where you can sometimes see sting rays, starfish, sea turtles, and maybe even dolphins) followed by a short stop at a beautiful rocky island with a natural pool and then onward to snorkel the reef at several different locations between the beaches of Puerto León, Playa Francés and Playa La Huerta before returning to the hotel by boat for the evening (around sunset or at any time to be specified).

Overnight at CASA CONGO

(BLD)

## DAY 6

### *From the Panama Canal to the Chiriqui Highlands*



Today you bid farewell to Portobelo and head back to Panama City to catch a flight to the western region of Panama. En route, stop at the Panama Canal Visitor Center at Miraflores Locks for a self-guided tour including a 45-minute IMAX documentary “A Land Divided – A World United” narrated by Morgan Freeman. Learn about the history and operation of the Panama Canal through interactive exhibits and displays at the visitor center.

The highlight of the visit at Miraflores Locks is to observe the lock operation firsthand. From observation decks, you can witness the intricate process of ships being raised or lowered through the locks as they navigate the canal. It's an impressive sight to see massive vessels maneuvered with precision in a system that relies on gravity and water flow. Each time a ship transits through the locks, millions of gallons of water are used. On average, it takes around 52 million gallons (197 million liters) of water to raise or lower a ship through the locks. The Panama Canal plays a crucial role in Panama's economy, contributing significantly to its development and prosperity. The tolls paid by ships for transiting the canal generate substantial income for the country. The highest toll ever paid for a transit through the Panama Canal was reportedly paid by the cruise ship Norwegian Bliss in 2018 – around \$891,000! After a quick lunch, take an afternoon flight to Chiriqui. Upon arrival at David Airport, you'll be transferred for approximately 3 hours to Mount Totumas eco-lodge on the Western side of Baru Volcano where you will be awaited with a delicious farm-to-table dinner.

3 nights at MOUNT TOTUMAS

(BLD)



## DAY 7

### *La Amistad International Park, UNESCO World Heritage Site*



Located at 1,900 m (6,200 ft) above sea level, Mount Totumas is an ecolodge located on a 400-acre private nature reserve that serves as a buffer zone to La Amistad International Park, Central America's largest highland preserved wilderness. It offers stunning views of the surrounding landscapes, including the park's diverse ecosystems and rich biodiversity. Rise early today, to fuel up with a hearty breakfast that will energize you for the day's cloud forest adventure. Equipped with your local guide, embark on a full-day hike to La Amistad International Park, which was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1983. La Amistad International Park is renowned for its rich biodiversity, encompassing diverse ecosystems such as tropical rainforests, cloud forests, and highland ecosystems. The trail starts amidst the emerald-green cloud forest, leading you deeper into a realm of extraordinary biodiversity. La Amistad International Park is a haven of biodiversity, where a vibrant tapestry of bird species and wildlife thrives. Among the towering trees and lush vegetation, the park welcomes the majestic Resplendent Quetzal with its iridescent green plumage, the ethereal calls of the Three-wattled Bellbird resonating through the forest, and the playful antics of the Black-faced Solitaire. Vibrant flashes of color can be witnessed as the Emerald Toucanet and Fiery-billed Aracari glide through the canopy. Below, the forest floor teems with life, including the elusive Jaguar and agile Baird's Tapir. Mid-afternoon you return back to Mount Totumas.

Overnight at MOUNT TOTUMAS

(BLD)

## DAY 8

### *Explore Mount Totumas*



Begin the day with a delicious breakfast and then set off on the lodge's network of hiking trails. Discover hidden waterfalls, traverse moss-covered bridges, and venture into the heart of the cloud forest. Along the way, keep an eye out for the abundant wildlife that inhabits the area. You may spot the Resplendent Quetzals fluttering through the canopy or a playful spider monkey swinging from tree to tree. Your local guide will share insights into the flora and fauna you encounter. During your exploration, you'll come across breathtaking viewpoints that offer panoramic vistas of the surrounding mountains and valleys. Take in the sweeping landscapes and capture photographs that encapsulate the beauty of this pristine environment.

After a day of adventure, return to the lodge and treat yourself to a well-deserved relaxation session. Unwind in the cozy common areas, immerse yourself in a good book, or enjoy the stunning views above the canopy from the lodge's terrace. If you are still up for a 75-minute forest trail hike descending at 250m elevation you'll be rewarded with a relaxing bath soaking in the natural hot springs surrounded by the sights and sounds of nature. No worries about hiking back up the steep trail to Mount Totumas. You have an included complimentary return transfer making sure you'll be back in time for the hearty farewell dinner.

(BLD)



## DAY 9

### *Return back to Panama City*



On your final day, wake up to the serenity of Mount Totumas. Before departing later in the morning, consider taking a short walk along one of the nearby trails. Descend on a 3-hour transfer back to David Airport with a lunch en route included to catch your afternoon domestic flight back to Panama City. Drop off at your Panama City hotel.

1 night at the BRISTOL PANAMA  
(BL)

## DAY 10

### *Depart Panama*

After breakfast at the Bristol hotel, your driver will drop you off at Tocumen Airport for your flight back home.



## TRIP DETAILS

### ARRIVAL

When you arrive at Panama City's Tocumen International Airport, you will be met outside Customs by your Ancon Expeditions of Panama representative. He will be holding a sign bearing your name on it and assist with storing your bags in the van followed by a private transfer to your hotel in Panama City.

### TRIP CLASSIFICATION

- Easy/moderate hiking 2-4 hours per day with rolling, slippery hills.
- Hotel or lodge accommodation comfortable

### INCLUDED

- Accommodation
- Meals as specified in the itinerary (B - Breakfast, L - Lunch, D - Dinner)
- All land, air, and water transportation within Panama
- All airport/hotel transfers on scheduled arrival and departure dates
- In-bound land operator for airline re-confirmations and tour operations
- Guides' services and expenses (we try to assign the same local guide for each region)
- Park, museum, and related entrance fees
- Snorkel gear in Portobelo

### NOT INCLUDED

- International airfare
- Meals not specified in the itinerary
- Alcoholic beverages
- Personal equipment
- Extras in hotels (telephone calls, laundry, room service)
- Gratuities





## WHAT TO BRING

- Reusable water bottle
- Binoculars (preferably 7x35 or bigger)
- Day pack or dry sack
- Sun protection
- Insect repellent
- Lightweight/quick dry cotton clothes
- Rain gear
- Swimwear
- Comfortable footwear (sandals, sneakers)
- Hiking shoes or rubber boots for Mount Totumas during rainy season from May-Dec
- Toiletries and personal medications

## DISCLAIMER & NOTES

- Prices and itineraries are correct at the time of publishing, however, they are subject to change due to tidal/weather or local conditions, availability, or factors beyond our control.
- Weight restrictions apply to luggage in commercial and chartered flights within Panama. When flying with Air Panama, each passenger has the right to check 2 pieces of luggage of up to 50 lbs (23 kg) each. Carry-on luggage is limited to 8.8 lbs per passenger (4 kg). Excess baggage charges assessed by commercial carriers are the responsibility of the passenger.
- Arrangements can be made with your hotel or Ancon Expeditions of Panama to store luggage that will not be needed while away from the city.

## ACCOMMODATION

### CENTRAL HOTEL, CASCO VIEJO



This historic hotel is located in the Casco Antiguo of Panama City, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, next to the Panama Interoceanic Canal Museum and facing the Plaza de Independencia. Located opposite the Cathedral, the hotel is just steps away from the Municipal Palace, and is close to the Presidential Palace, along with other attractions in the area. The Central Hotel opened its doors for the first time in 1874. It hosted guests such as Theodore Roosevelt and Count Ferdinand de Lesseps among other public figures of the time. It was the first hotel in Panama, serving as a “rendezvous” for all of the passengers who traveled to the American continent, and becoming famous throughout the western hemisphere for offering high-style European and American services at reasonable prices. The hotel is unique given its location, modern appearance, history, and institutional connections. The hotel features 135 rooms, a pool, a restaurant, a bar, and Spa.

**Address:** Plaza de la Independencia, Casco Viejo, Panama City, Panamá

**Website:** [www.centralhotelpanama.com](http://www.centralhotelpanama.com)

**Phone:** +(507) 392-1307

**Check-in:** 15:00 hrs

**Check-out:** 12:00 hrs



## CASA CONGO, PORTOBELO



Located in front of Portobelo Bay, Casa Congo is an open and inclusive space, built to host training workshops, craft production, and artistic exaltation. Visitors can experience various forms of Congo art and understand the importance of the rich Spanish-colonial and African historical legacy that has Portobelo. The Congo House has four rooms filled with local art and identity. The yellow & blue suites have private terraces where you can enjoy a unique and exclusive view over Portobelo Bay. All rooms of the Congo House have private bathrooms, fans, air conditioning, and a mini-fridge. This is a lovely choice to experience a few days of tranquility on the unspoiled Caribbean coast.

**Address:** Bahía de Portobelo, Portobelo, Panama

**Website:** [www.casacongo.com/es/houses-2/casa-congo/](http://www.casacongo.com/es/houses-2/casa-congo/)

**Phone:** +(507) 202-0111

**Check-in:** 3:00 p.m.

**Check-out:** 12:00 p.m.

## MOUNT TOTUMAS, CHIRIQUI



Welcome to the highest lodge in Panama! At 1,900 m above sea level, Mount Totumas' cabins were built from sustainable timber harvested from the reserve's 2nd growth forests and, where possible, dead or dying trees were harvested. Mount Totumas supports the local cottage industries and all the furniture in the cabins was made by local craftsmen using the lodge's own timber. The lodge has a total of 11 rooms spread over four different accommodation areas. The Bellbird Lodge is our top choice for travelers who are looking for spacious and comfortable accommodations. The Bellbird Lodge has three Double rooms, 1 Couple Suite (1 King), and 1 Triple Suite (1 King + 2 Twin), all with bathrooms (and the suites even come with a private balcony offering stunning views over the cloud forest). The Coffee House has 4 private rooms with a balcony. The Cabin is perfect for families or friends offering a loft-style accommodation and fits up to 7 guests. The Howler Tree Cabin is a 20-foot-high tree house and is the most intimate accommodation in the middle of the forest, perfect for a couple that seeks more privacy. Mount Totumas is powered with renewable energy from a micro hydropower station and guests can enjoy hot water, electricity, and complimentary Wi-Fi Internet (except at the Tree House). Chef Alma brings her expertise in Asian and European cuisine and creates dishes that have the power to pull guests away from the views out the window.

**Address:** Mount Totumas Cloud Forest Resort, La Amistad International Park, Chiriqui

**Website:** [www.mounttotumas.com](http://www.mounttotumas.com)



## BRISTOL PANAMA



>> *Ranked as one of the Top 5 hotels in Central America by Condé Nast Traveler* <<

Long considered the city's finest, the Bristol Panama offers distinctive charm and warmth in the heart of the financial district, minutes from shopping, cultural attractions, and nightlife. Unrivaled in its service and setting, this is a highly acclaimed hotel with timeless architecture including 125 luxurious guest rooms and 48 suites; is handsomely appointed and spacious. Enjoy the hotel's fitness room, Spa facilities, pool, business center, 8°58' Lounge, and one of Panama's finest culinary offerings at the Salsipuedes Restaurant. The hotel is also a Virtuoso member hotel.

**Address:** Avenida Aquilino De La Guardia, Panama City, Panamá

**Website:** [www.thebristol.com](http://www.thebristol.com)

**Phone:** +(507) 264-0000

**Check-in:** 15:00 hrs

**Check-out:** 12:00 hrs