Discovering Our Planet Together



Costa Rica & the Panama Canal

Explore Tropical Rainforests, Snorkel from Wild Beaches & Cruise the Famous Canal

Table of Contents

Trip Overview 3

Itinerary 4

Accommodations 8

What Makes Nat Hab Different? 9

Dates, Pricing & Info 11

Extensions 15



Trip Details:

Days
8 Days / Nov–Mar

Price
From $6228

Physical Requirements
Easy to Moderate

Costa Rica & the Panama Canal

Explore Tropical Rainforests, Snorkel from Wild Beaches & Cruise the Famous Canal

There are few places in the world where nature is as exuberant, colorful and diverse as in Costa Rica, home to a vibrant array of flora and fauna. From white-faced capuchins and green sea turtles to scarlet macaws and blue morpho butterflies, Costa Rica's tropical wildlife will wow you. But this expedition takes our Central American nature immersion a step beyond to neighboring Panama as well. To many, Panama is synonymous with its famous canal, one of the most celebrated human achievements on the planet. What many people don't know, however, is that Panama offers natural beauty and biological diversity equal to Costa Rica's, with prolific birdlife on tropical islands and one of the largest marine sanctuaries on Earth. You get double the rewards on this special itinerary that includes both of these spectacular nature destinations!

Trip Highlights

Explore with Smithsonian Researchers

Transit the Panama Canal with a stop at Barro Colorado Island where we're joined by guides from the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute

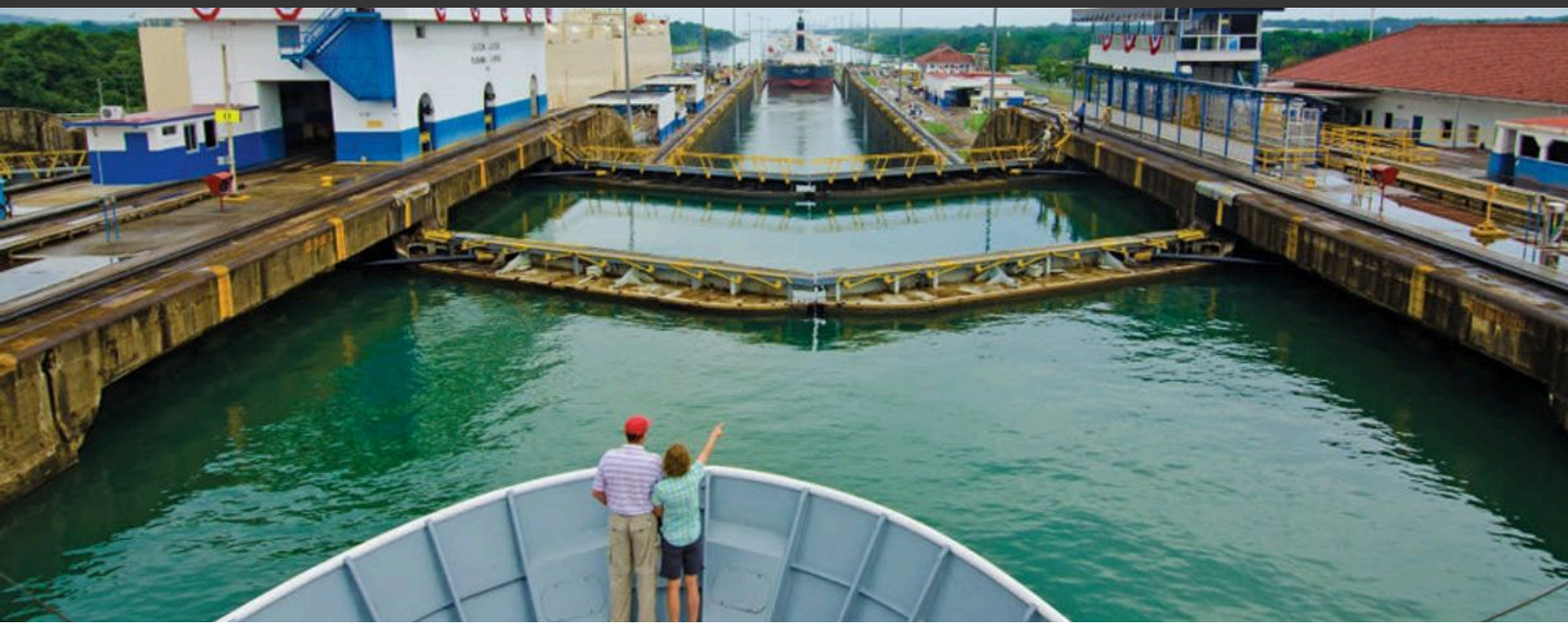
Discover Diverse Rainforest Wildlife

Encounter a vivid, varied array of tropical species—monkeys, sloths, agoutis, and 300+ bird species including toucans and scarlet macaws

See a Less-Traveled Side of Costa Rica

Explore unspoiled Pacific beaches and remote coastal rainforest with stops at Golfo Dulce, the Osa Peninsula and Corcovado National Park

Ready to Book? Call an Adventure Specialist at 800-543-8917



Costa Rica & the Panama Canal Itinerary

Explore Tropical Rainforests, Snorkel from Wild Beaches & Cruise the Famous Canal

Itinerary at a Glance

Day 1	Panama City / Colon
Day 2	Panama Canal
Day 3	Gulf of Panama Islets
Day 4	Coiba National Park
Day 5	Golfo Dulce
Day 6	Golfo Dulce / Osa Peninsula
Day 7	Osa Peninsula
Day 8	Puerto Caldera / San Jose



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Day 1

Panama City / Colon

Board your expedition ship and enter the Panama Canal

- Cross the Isthmus of Panama by road from Panama City to Colon
- Board your expedition vessel and begin the canal transit
- Anchor overnight in Gatun Lake

Our Panama and Costa Rica cruise begins in Panama City, the country's capital. From here, we drive across the Isthmus of Panama to Colon where we embark ship for the first section of our Panama Canal transit, anchoring in Gatun Lake for the night. In 1904, the United States began building a canal that would provide a shortcut link between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, making trade and travel both faster and safer. When it was completed in 1914, ships no longer needed to go all the way around the tip of South America; they could cut through the canal saving 8,000 miles and several months of transit time. Today, roughly 14,000 ships pass through the Panama Canal each year—and one of those transits will be ours.

Day 2

Panama Canal

Transit the Panama Canal from Gatun Lake to the Pacific

- Explore Barro Colorado Nature Monument by Zodiac with Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute guides
- See Panamax and Neopanamax ships moving through the canal
- Sail through the Gaillard Cut and Miraflores Locks, timing permitting

This morning offers a choice of two activities. Take a boat ride to the mouth of the Chagres River and hike on Panama Rainforest Discovery Center trails, or board Zodiacs for an excursion into Barro Colorado Nature Monument in Gatun Lake. This large island encompasses nearly 14,000 acres of wild jungle terrain and is inaccessible to most travelers. By special arrangement, guides from the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute accompany us through the dense tropical forest that so challenged the builders of the canal. We then re-board the ship to continue our transit through this engineering marvel that embodies both the history and future of global shipping. We'll see the gargantuan Panamax and Neopanamax vessels—the biggest ships on Earth—as well as all the landmarks: the Amador Causeway, Bridge of the Americas, and the Centennial Bridge that frames the Gaillard Cut, which we pass through to enter the Miraflores Locks. A daylight journey through the canal cannot be guaranteed, since cargo ships have priority over passenger ships, but the canal is dramatically lit at night.

Day 3

Gulf of Panama Islets

Explore seabird-rich islands by kayak and landing craft

- Paddle among small islands and investigate their shores at water level
- Look for brown pelicans and magnificent frigatebirds roosting among the islets
- Watch for blue-footed boobies along the rocky coast

Our ship is equipped with expedition landing craft and kayaks, enabling us to explore the sea and wild shores at eye level. Today, we utilize both to access a cluster of small islands in the Gulf of Panama for a delightful introduction to the region's prolific and varied birdlife. Observe large numbers of roosting and nesting seabirds including brown pelicans, magnificent frigatebirds and whimsical blue-footed boobies of Galapagos Islands fame.

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Day 4

Coiba National Park

Snorkel and hike in one of the world's largest marine sanctuaries

- Snorkel among schools of tropical fish with guidance from the expedition staff
- Hike forest trails across Isla Coiba, a former penal colony long protected from development
- Watch underwater footage captured by the ship's naturalist diver

Coiba, established as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2005, is one of Panama's most remote national parks. The collection of 200 islands comprises part of the Marine Life Corridor protected area created in 2016 by the presidents of three nations—Costa Rica, Ecuador and Colombia—to safeguard sea turtles, sharks and a host of other offshore species. Only the Great Barrier Reef and Galapagos National Park are larger marine sanctuaries. Because Isla Coiba, the main island in the group, was formerly a penal colony, public access to the area was very restricted, and most of the islands' natural resources have flourished untouched due to limited human contact.

We'll have options for easy hikes on a network of trails through the lush tropical forest that blankets Isla Coiba, as well as numerous water activities: go kayaking, paddleboarding, swimming or snorkeling among schools of colorful tropical fish. The ship's staff will assist both novice and experienced snorkelers alike. If you'd prefer to remain on the white sand beach, the ship's naturalist diver will take underwater footage, which is shared during our evening gathering in the lounge.

Day 5

Golfo Dulce

Explore a wild tropical gulf shaped by local conservation

- Visit Casa Orquideas, a private botanical garden reached only by boat and invitation
- Look for toucans, parrots, tanagers and butterflies among orchids and tropical plants
- Kayak or cruise the forested bay, watching for dolphins and humpback whales

Today we make our first landfall in Costa Rica. At Casa Orquideas, a privately owned botanical garden accessible only by boat and special invitation, we'll see a profusion of orchids while looking for butterflies, tanagers, parrots and toucans. The beautifully landscaped garden also shows off hundreds of species of ornamental and edible tropical plants that have been collected and cared for since the garden's establishment in this remote area in the 1970s.

Later, we explore the forested bay of Golfo Dulce—"Sweet Gulf"—an ideal spot for kayaking, paddleboarding, Zodiac cruises and swimming. Golfo Dulce is one of Costa Rica's most scenic places, a site of serene natural beauty unmarred by any development, thanks to strong local efforts to promote conservation. Verdant rainforest, mangrove estuaries and golden beaches edge the shores of the large bay, which is home to dolphins and humpback whales. During our visit, we learn about plate tectonics under the gulf, the deep-seated forces responsible for Costa Rica's many volcanoes and geothermal hot springs.

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Day 6

Golfo Dulce / Osa Peninsula

Meet local families and support sea turtle conservation

- Share a meal with families who cultivate cocoa, heart of palm and sugar cane in the rainforest
- Assist sea turtle researchers and, when possible, help release rehabilitated hawksbill turtles
- Kayak the calm waters of Golfo Dulce or hike through mature rainforest

We go ashore at Playa Blanca, a pristine sand and coral beach on the eastern shore of the Osa Peninsula. This promontory of land flanked by the Pacific Ocean on one side and Golfo Dulce on the other is one of Costa Rica's most remote destinations, a primitive paradise of primary rainforest, empty beaches and tiny settlements. Travel inland to meet some of the inspiring local residents who live in this far-flung corner of Costa Rica, sustaining a life on the land through cultivating cocoa, heart of palm and sugar cane—though their farms are small patches amid the dominant rainforest that blankets the peninsula in a thick green cloak. We'll share a meal with some local families during our visit, followed by time to hike in the mature rainforest or kayak in the peaceful waters of Golfo Dulce, the only tropical fjord on the continent.

Today we also visit the Latin American Sea Turtles (LAST) Association on the Osa Peninsula, where we assist researchers with data collection and hear presentations by the staff, including the head biologist who has dedicated her life to conserving these endangered reptiles. The center works primarily with the hawksbill turtle, which can weigh up to 200 pounds. As part of its work, the organization takes in injured animals, many having been entangled in fishing gear. They are nursed back to health and eventually returned to their native habitat in the Pacific Ocean. At the end of our visit, we are invited to participate in the release of rehabilitated turtles back into the sea—a poignant moment. In the evening, enjoy sunset drinks and a beach barbecue ashore.

Day 7

Osa Peninsula

Search for wildlife in Corcovado's coastal rainforest

- Trek through rainforest inhabited by monkeys, sloths, coatis and elusive wild cats
- Watch for endangered scarlet macaws and other tropical birds
- Kayak along the remote Corcovado coastline, conditions permitting

We anchor off the Osa Peninsula today, with access to Corcovado National Park. This remote region on Costa Rica's southern Pacific coast lies off the standard tourist itinerary, and we'll savor an immersion in untouched tropical wilderness. National Geographic called Corcovado "the most biologically intense place on Earth," and we gain a sense of that after spending a full day exploring this coastal rainforest heavily populated with wildlife. We find all four of Costa Rica's monkey species here, five wild cat species, including Central America's largest jaguar population (all are very elusive, however, and rarely seen), two crocodile species, both two- and three-toed sloth, white-nosed coati, giant anteater and spectacular tropical birdlife, with the endangered scarlet macaw a special prize. Our exact landing spot for the day will depend on sea conditions. There will be opportunities to kayak through the transparent aqua water and/or trek through the rainforest in search of wildlife.

Day 8

Puerto Caldera / San Jose

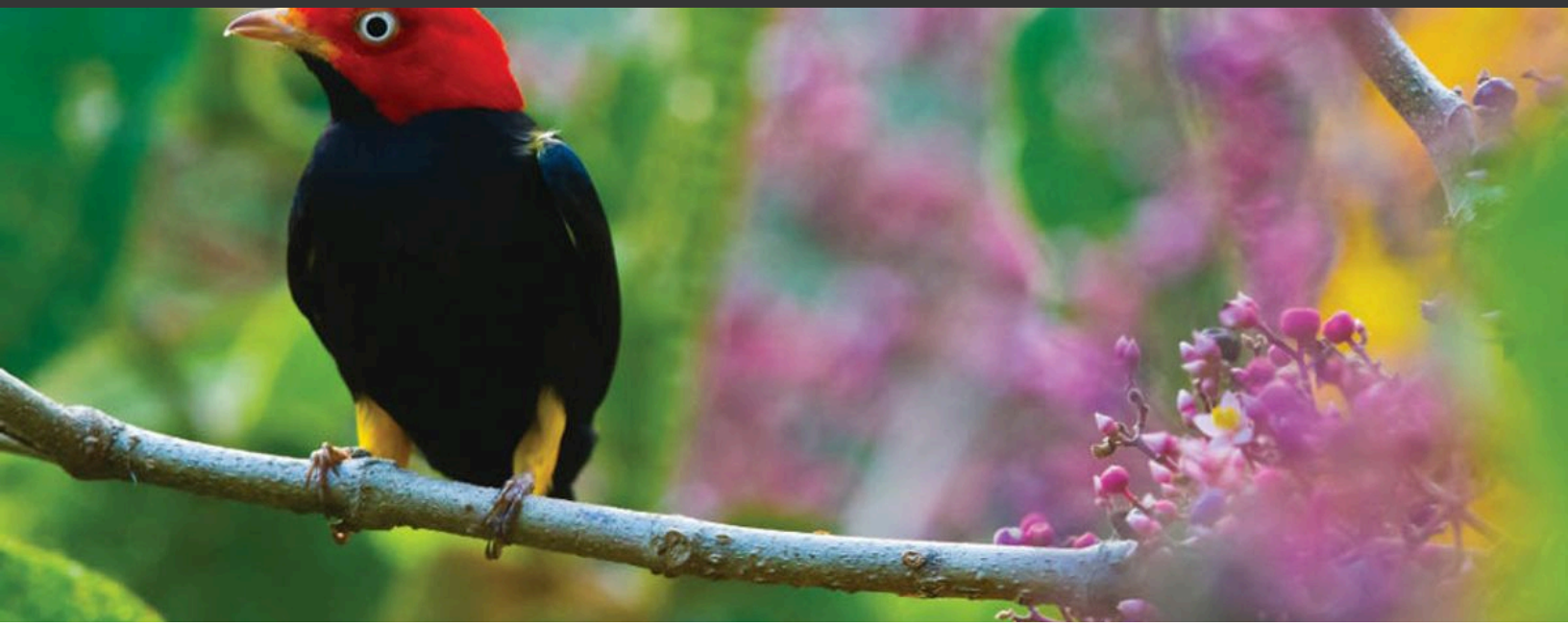
Disembark in Costa Rica and continue to San Jose

- Leave your expedition vessel at Puerto Caldera
- Transfer to San Jose for homeward flights

Our ship makes its way north to Puerto Caldera on Costa Rica's Pacific coast where we disembark this morning. A transfer is provide to the airport in San Jose for flights home, or on to other adventures.

Note: *This itinerary should serve as a guideline only: actual stops are determined by weather, wildlife activity, and a host of other factors in order to provide the best possible experience. This flexibility is what makes traveling on our nimble expedition ships so much more rewarding than on a large vessel with a locked-in voyage plan.*

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Costa Rica & the Panama Canal Accommodations

Explore Tropical Rainforests, Snorkel from Wild Beaches & Cruise the Famous Canal



National Geographic Quest

Built in 2017, this state-of-the-art expedition vessel is designed to navigate coastal waters where wildlife congregates, facilitating viewing from an open bow, spacious sundecks and 50 luxurious outside cabins.

For detailed descriptions, visit nathab.com/adventure-cruises/the-panama-canal-the-wonders-of-costa-rica/ships.

Sail with the World Leader in Conservation-Focused Small Ship Cruising

Costa Rica & the Panama Canal

We're proud to offer a worldwide slate of Expedition Cruises through our partner, National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions. Nat Hab joined forces with National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions in 2016 to expand our mutual collection of nature adventures. Founded in 1958 by Lars-Eric Lindblad, the company pioneered eco-conscious expeditions for "citizen explorers" and today is the world leader in conservation-focused small-ship cruises. Our Adventure Specialists are intimately familiar with the ships and itineraries and are on call to answer any questions you might have.

1

Transit the Panama Canal as Few Have the Chance To

Our transit elapses over 48 hours, so you can see the canal and learn about its mechanisms by day, then view it dramatically lit at night. This is an in-depth experience of this remarkable achievement of human engineering, with an immersion in the canal's natural surroundings en route. Within the Canal Zone, we have special permission to overnight at Barro Colorado Island in Gatun Lake, serenaded by the sounds of the rainforest. Barro Colorado has been the site of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute since 1923, and Smithsonian scientists will accompany us on a guided forest walk.

2

Experience Makes a Difference

National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions has been exploring Costa Rica and Panama for more than two decades. The world's leader in small-ship expedition cruising, National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions owns and operates the *National Geographic Quest*, a new state-of-the-art vessel used on all departures of this voyage. The result is knowledge and attention to detail that few tour operators in the region can provide.

3

Diversify Your Wildlife Encounters with Local Naturalists

Every voyage sails with a veteran National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions Leader and a team of Costa Rican and Panamanian naturalists, offering a guide-to-guest ratio of one naturalist for every 12 guests, with a wealth of daily activities to choose from. The intimate scale of the ship means we can easily reach places inaccessible to larger vessels, offering quieter and more in-depth nature encounters. The ship's naturalists know these shores and trails intimately; they are adept at spotting wildlife, and their expertise means a more meaningful adventure for you.

4

Gear Up to Explore the Region's Exceptional Biodiversity

The ship is a base camp for exploring this remarkable land bridge between North and South America, and it has a full complement of tools to help you be an engaged, active explorer. Five expedition landing craft, plus eight single and 12 double kayaks, provide access to intricate shorelines and remote rivers. Step ashore on empty beaches with no tourist infrastructure. Snorkel gear is available for every guest, so you'll never miss a chance to swim with colorful fish and other tropical marine life. Video microscopes, high-definition screens, hydrophones and other tools provide added opportunities for in-depth understanding.

Ready to Book? Call an Adventure Specialist at 800-543-8917

5 **Take Advantage of Optimally Timed Wildlife Sightings**

Traveling with our own personal expedition team grants us access to their deep knowledge of Costa Rican and Panamanian habitat. They know when rainforest inhabitants are most active, and forays are scheduled accordingly. There may thus be some early morning outings or walks in the forest as wildlife is awakening for the day. Your early rising will be amply rewarded with freshly roasted Costa Rican coffee to fuel you before setting out to spend time with blue-footed boobies, noisy parrots and delicate butterflies.

6 **Get the Finest Possible Nature Photos**

Fascinating wildlife, untouched beaches and lush rainforest vegetation afford terrific opportunities for photographers. Juxtaposed with the massive concrete and steel engineering project that is the Panama Canal, the diversity of photo opportunities are hard to surpass. A National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions certified photo instructor is on board to provide assistance with your camera and instruction in elements of composition to help you take your best photos ever.

7 **We're Committed to the Planet**

Natural Habitat Adventures is a standard-setter in eco-conscious travel. We have been the world's first carbon-neutral travel company since 2007. And we continue to break innovative ground in adopting practices that help to protect our global environment. Because of our concern for the environment, we are pleased to partner with National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions for our Expedition Cruises, a company that shares our values and commitment to the planet.

8 **Natural Habitat Adventures is WWF's Travel Partner**

Because of our environmental commitment and the outstanding quality of our adventures, World Wildlife Fund has chosen Natural Habitat Adventures as its worldwide travel partner, a designation we're very proud of! When you book your National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions cruise with us, a portion of your trip fee supports WWF.

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Dates & Pricing Summary:

Price
From $6228

Group Size
Limited to 100 Travelers

Physical Requirements
Easy to Moderate

Costa Rica & the Panama Canal Dates, Pricing & Info

Explore Tropical Rainforests, Snorkel from Wild Beaches & Cruise the Famous Canal

2026 Departures

Departure – Return	Pricing	Notes
Nov 29 - Dec 6, 2026	**From $7629**	Aboard National Geographic Quest · Puerto Caldera to Colon
Dec 20 - Dec 27, 2026	**From $7630**	Aboard National Geographic Quest · Colon to Puerto Caldera
Dec 27, 2026 - Jan 3, 2027	**From $9515**	Aboard National Geographic Quest · Puerto Caldera to Colon

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2027 Departures

Departure – Return	Pricing	Notes
Jan 3 - Jan 10, 2027	**From $9000**	Aboard National Geographic Quest · Colon to Puerto Caldera
Jan 10 - Jan 17, 2027	**From $9000**	Aboard National Geographic Quest · Puerto Caldera to Colon
Feb 6 - Feb 13, 2027	**From $9500**	Aboard National Geographic Quest · Colon to Puerto Caldera
Feb 13 - Feb 20, 2027	**From $9500**	Aboard National Geographic Quest · Puerto Caldera to Colon
Feb 20 - Feb 27, 2027	**From $9500**	Aboard National Geographic Quest · Colon to Puerto Caldera
Feb 27 - Mar 6, 2027	**From $9750**	Aboard National Geographic Quest · Puerto Caldera to Colon
Mar 6 - Mar 13, 2027	**From $9750**	Aboard National Geographic Quest · Colon to Puerto Caldera
Mar 13 - Mar 20, 2027	**From $7750**	Aboard National Geographic Quest · Puerto Caldera to Colon
Mar 20 - Mar 27, 2027	**From $7750**	Aboard National Geographic Quest · Colon to Puerto Caldera
Nov 27 - Dec 4, 2027	**From $6800**	Aboard National Geographic Quest · Puerto Caldera to Colon
Dec 4 - Dec 11, 2027	**From $7500**	Aboard National Geographic Quest · Colon to Puerto Caldera
Dec 16 - Dec 23, 2027	**From $6228**	Aboard National Geographic Quest · Puerto Caldera to Colon
Dec 23 - Dec 30, 2027	**From $7250**	Aboard National Geographic Quest · Colon to Puerto Caldera
Dec 30, 2027 - Jan 6, 2028	**From $6800**	Aboard National Geographic Quest · Puerto Caldera to Colon

2028 Departures

Departure – Return	Pricing	Notes
Jan 6 - Jan 13, 2028	**From $6800**	Aboard National Geographic Quest · Colon to Puerto Caldera
Jan 18 - Jan 25, 2028	**From $7500**	Aboard National Geographic Quest · Puerto Caldera to Colon
Feb 5 - Feb 12, 2028	**From $7500**	Aboard National Geographic Quest · Colon to Puerto Caldera
Feb 12 - Feb 19, 2028	**From $7500**	Aboard National Geographic Quest · Puerto Caldera to Colon

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Departure – Return	Pricing	Notes
Feb 19 - Feb 26, 2028	**From $7500**	Aboard National Geographic Quest · Colon to Puerto Caldera
Mar 2 - Mar 9, 2028	**From $7900**	Aboard National Geographic Quest · Puerto Caldera to Colon
Mar 23 - Mar 30, 2028	**From $7250**	Aboard National Geographic Quest · Colon to Puerto Caldera

2029 Departures

Departure – Return	Pricing	Notes
Jan 6 - Jan 13, 2029	**From $7500**	Aboard National Geographic Venture · Colon to Puerto Caldera
Jan 20 - Jan 27, 2029	**From $7500**	Aboard National Geographic Venture · Puerto Caldera to Colon
Jan 27 - Feb 3, 2029	**From $7500**	Aboard National Geographic Venture · Colon to Puerto Caldera
Feb 10 - Feb 17, 2029	**From $7500**	Aboard National Geographic Venture · Puerto Caldera to Colon
Feb 17 - Feb 24, 2029	**From $7500**	Aboard National Geographic Venture · Colon to Puerto Caldera
Mar 3 - Mar 10, 2029	**From $7500**	Aboard National Geographic Venture · Puerto Caldera to Colon
Mar 10 - Mar 17, 2029	**From $7500**	Aboard National Geographic Venture · Colon to Puerto Caldera
Mar 24 - Mar 31, 2029	**From $7500**	Aboard National Geographic Venture · Puerto Caldera to Colon
Mar 31 - Apr 7, 2029	**From $7500**	Aboard National Geographic Venture · Colon to Puerto Caldera

See https://www.nathab.com/adventure-cruises/the-panama-canal-the-wonders-of-costa-rica/dates-fees for the latest pricing details.

Included

Accommodations aboard ship, dinner from Day 1 to breakfast on final day, non-alcoholic beverages aboard ship, excursions and entrance fees, services of National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions' leader, naturalist staff and a ship doctor, use of kayaks and snorkeling equipment, all port charges and service taxes.

Not Included

Air transportation; horseback riding; personal items such as alcoholic beverages, emails, voyage DVD, etc.; discretionary tips to naturalist staff and crew; optional travel and/or medical evacuation insurance.

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Physical Requirements

Easy to Moderate

Our Panama and Costa Rica expedition cruise does not require a high degree of physical fitness overall. A range of options will be offered to you, and we stress that all activities are optional. Shorter walks will always be available. Faster paced walks for those who want more of a workout will also be offered. Depending on conditions, trails may be potentially wet and muddy, and uneven terrain may be encountered. Kayaking will be an option available to guests. Travelers should be aware that the heat and humidity in the tropics may be very high and roads may be bumpy. Please be prepared for water landings.

Mandatory Insurance

Since the areas we travel to are remote and wild (that's why we go there!), we require that all guests have, at minimum, medical evacuation insurance for this program. This is for the safety of all guests. We require that your chosen independent insurance plan includes at least $250,000 in medical evacuation coverage.

To protect your investment and to provide peace of mind while you travel, we also strongly recommend purchasing comprehensive travel insurance. Plans may cover everything from medical treatment to trip cancellations and delays and lost luggage. Please contact our office if you would like more information about the medical evacuation and comprehensive travel insurance policies we offer by calling 800-543-8917.

Getting There & Getting Home

We can best serve you by having National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions' air department book your flights, since National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions is most familiar with the special requirements of each trip. Please call National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions directly at 800-397-3348. Note that while National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions' air department will offer you its best available rates on airfare, you may find better fares online.



Costa Rica & the Panama Canal Extensions

Explore Tropical Rainforests, Snorkel from Wild Beaches & Cruise the Famous Canal



Panama City & San Lorenzo Extension

Witness history in the making at the recently expanded Panama Canal, see its works in detail, and capture close-up photos as enormous ships transit this engineering marvel.

$1540

Natural Habitat & WWF: Discovering Our Planet Together

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WWF's membership travel program is operated by Natural Habitat Adventures (Nat Hab). To date, Nat Hab has provided more than $6 million in support of WWF's mission and will continue to give 1% of gross sales plus $175,000 annually through 2028. WWF® and ©1986 Panda Symbol are owned by WWF. All rights reserved.