Highlights of Central America: Costa Rica & Panama

Pre-departure information for your tour

Passport, visa & entry requirements

- This tour visits Costa Rica and Panama (as well as Colombia on the tour extension). In order to enter these countries, U.S. and Canadian citizens need a valid passport with an expiration date extending at least six months beyond the date of reentry.
- We recommend having at least two blank passport pages for entry stamps.
- There is no visa required for U.S. or Canadian citizens.
- Travelers on the tour extension to Colombia must complete Migración Colombia's Online Check-Mig Form within 72 hours of boarding your inbound to Colombia.
- If you are not a U.S. or Canadian citizen, you must contact each country's consulate for your specific entry requirements.'
- You can see the most up-to-date entry requirements for the destination(s) you'll visit on tour by going to goaheadtours.com/entry-requirements and searching the code GTC.

Tour pacing & mobility

- You will walk for at least 2.5 hours daily across moderately uneven terrain, including paved roads, unpaved trails, and muddy paths, with some hills.
- Travelers should be healthy enough to participate in all included walks without assistance. Adding optional excursions may increase the total amount of walking on your tour.
- You should feel comfortable managing your own baggage at times, as well as getting in and out of boats.
- Go Ahead Tours and the Tour Director who accompanies your group are unable to provide special, individual mobility assistance to travelers on tour. The responsibility of the Tour Director is to ensure the group as a whole enjoys a relaxing and informative journey, and he or she cannot be relied upon to provide ongoing, individualized assistance to any one traveler.
- If you have any mobility concerns or physical restrictions, please contact our Customer Experience Team.

Tour Director

- You will have a different Tour Director in each country on this tour.

Transportation & arrival information

- Round-trip flights booked through Go Ahead Tours arrive in San José and depart from Panama City (or Cartagena on the tour extension). A representative from Go Ahead Tours will meet you at the airport and take you to your hotel. Please remain in the arrival lounge, as the representative might be escorting one of your fellow travelers to the bus at the time of your arrival.
- Transfers to and from the airport at your destination are included for travelers who have purchased their flights through Go Ahead Tours. Travelers who purchase their own flights may request airport transfers with Go Ahead Tours for an additional cost.
- Boat rides on the Tárcoles River and Gatun Lake are included in the price of your tour. The tour extension also includes a flight from Panama City to Cartagena.
- All other included transportation on this tour is by private motor coach.

Baggage allowance

- Please note that our travelers are limited to one checked bag and one carry-on bag per person due to storage limitations on motor coaches and other transfers, which may include train connections or flights.
- Contact your airline(s) for baggage size and weight restrictions for your flights, which may include on-tour flights in addition to your round-trip flights to and from tour. Please note that your included on-tour flights may have more restrictive baggage limits.
- Some airlines may impose additional charges if you choose to check any baggage or exceed baggage size and weight restrictions. Be advised that you are responsible for any baggage fees incurred on all flights.
- Make sure you label your baggage and keep valuables, medication, and documents in your carry-on bag.

Clothing & packing tips

- We recommend packing lightweight, loose-fitting clothing that can be easily layered. Comfortable, casual clothing and a sturdy pair of walking shoes are a must for sightseeing.
- A lightweight jacket is recommended, as the temperatures will change with the elevation throughout your tour.
- A sun hat, sunglasses, and rain gear will help you stay comfortable in all types of weather. You may also wish to pack a swimsuit.
- Insect repellent is recommended for certain activities.
- A small bottle of hand sanitizer may be helpful when other facilities are not readily available while on the road.
- Binoculars are handy for a closer look at local wildlife and scenery.
- You may want to pack dressier attire if you plan to visit a high-end restaurant or attend a special performance.

Health

- At least 60 days prior to departure, check with your doctor or healthcare provider for the latest updates and entry requirements, or visit the Center for Disease Control and Prevention website at cdc.gov.
- Take proper care with sun exposure, as the sun can be especially strong in some of the regions on this tour.
- There are inherent risks associated with snorkeling and other water sports, particularly for those with pre-existing medical conditions. Discuss your planned activities with your doctor or healthcare provider for the best advice on participation.
- Drink bottled water only. Refrain from ingesting tap water, including when brushing your teeth.
- Avoid eating fresh fruits and vegetables unless they're cooked or washed in clean water and peeled.
- Travelers prone to seasickness should note that this tour includes boat rides.
- If you have medication that you take daily, be sure you have enough for each day of the tour as well as any possible delays encountered.
- If you have dietary restrictions and/or food

GTC23_328
© 2024 EF Education First

allergies please notify Go Ahead Tours at least 30 days prior to departure by logging in to your account and updating your traveler info. To update this information closer to your departure date, please call our Customer Experience Team.
- You can see the most up-to-date entry requirements for the destination(s) you'll visit on tour by going to goaheadtours.com/entry-requirements and searching the code GTC.

Cuisine

- Costa Rican cuisine is based on staples like rice, black beans, and corn with beef, chicken, or fish. Fresh, locally grown fruit includes bananas, mangoes, pineapples, and avocados. Traditional desserts include custards, puddings, and simple cakes. Locally grown coffee is served strong and black, but hot milk is often available if you ask.
- The food in Panama is extremely varied. Spanish and indigenous dishes blend with the flavors of France, Italy, Africa, and the Caribbean. Look out for delicious coconut rice, *sancocho* (chicken stew), and savory snacks, like empanadas and fried yucca.
- On the tour extension, coastal Cartagena relies on fresh seafood and hearty basics, such as rice and corn, like many neighboring South American countries. Much of the local cuisine contains flavors essential to Caribbean food, which make *arroz con coco* (coconut rice) and *patacones* (fried plantains), can't-miss dishes.

Electricity & air conditioning

- All destinations on this tour operate on 110-120 volts and use Types A or B plugs. As these are the same as the plugs used in the U.S. and Canada, a voltage adapter is not needed.
- The strength of the air conditioning in hotels in this region is often not as strong or as cool as what you might be used to in the U.S. or Canada. When air conditioning is available, it is usually regulated seasonally and controlled centrally by the hotel.
- Your hotels may provide hairdryers, irons, and other small appliances. However, these amenities cannot be guaranteed.

Connectivity

- Wi-Fi is available in most hotels, though some charges may apply.
- There is no Wi-Fi on any of the motor coaches.
- Please contact your mobile service provider for information on roaming charges.

Time zones

- Costa Rica is six hours behind Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and one hour behind Eastern Time (ET). Costa Rica does not observe Daylight Saving Time.
- Panama (as well as Colombia on the tour extension) is five hours behind GMT, the same as ET. These countries do not observe Daylight Saving Time.
- From November through March, when it's noon in New York, it's 11am in Costa Rica and noon in Panama (as well as in Colombia on the tour extension). From April through October, when it's noon in New York, it's 10am in Costa Rica and 11am in Panama (as well as in Colombia on the tour extension).

Currency

- You will use the Costa Rican colón in Costa Rica and the U.S. dollar in Panama (as well as the Colombian peso in Colombia on the tour extension).
- Better rates of exchange are usually available overseas, although it's worth ordering some currency from your local bank to use when you first arrive.
- We strongly advise that you take debit/bank cards and credit cards, which can be used to withdraw cash at local banks as needed.
- You can use most debit/credit cards at ATMs on the international networks Cirrus and Plus, but make sure to check with your home bank about withdrawal fees.
- Inform your bank and credit card company of your travel plans so that they won't confuse your international purchases for fraudulent charges.
- International banks and businesses primarily accept debit and credit cards that work with the EMV chip system. If you do not already have at least one debit or credit card with a chip in it, we strongly recommend requesting one from your bank prior to your tour.

Tipping

- At the conclusion of your tour, it's customary to offer your Tour Director and driver a gratuity in local currency or USD. Please keep current exchange rates in mind.
- We recommend tipping the equivalent of $8USD to $10USD per person per day for your Tour Director and the equivalent of $3USD per person per day for your driver.
- If applicable, we also recommend the equivalent of $2USD per local guide.
- Tips can only be paid in cash.

Purchasing excursions on tour

- Most optional excursions will be available for purchase while you are on tour.
- Your Tour Director will only accept cash (in USD only), Visa, or MasterCard as payment for excursions.
- Please be advised that if you pay for an excursion by credit card while on tour, it may take up to three months for your card to be charged.
- Some optional excursions may only be purchased in advance. See page four of your tour itinerary for more information.