

## Panama & Costa Rica

### PANAMA CANAL & COSTA RICA CRUISE

#### Why join this Voyage?

- Undertake a full transit of the Panama Canal, one of the world's greatest engineering achievements and most iconic artificially created waterways, on board a small ship
- Explore two of Central America's most wildlife rich and ecologically diverse countries, visiting the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Coiba National Park, the Osa Peninsula and Corcovado
- Travel aboard a small, intimate 62 passenger expeditionary ship, the ideal platform for this type of voyage with her zodiacs, kayaks, snorkelling gear, hydrophone and underwater cameras



#### Trip Summary

This expeditionary voyage uniquely combines two of Central America's gems, Costa Rica and Panama, in a single cruise. However the highlight for many will undoubtedly be the full transit of the Panama Canal. Travelling by small ship you will experience this engineering feat in a far more intimate way than the larger cruise ships, learning about the huge challenges overcome during its construction. Panama however isn't just about the Canal; you will also visit remote Coiba National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and have chance to explore the pristine islands of the Gulf of Panama where you'll have a chance to hike, snorkel or kayak. Highlights of your time in Costa Rica will include visiting Corcovado National Park on the Osa Peninsula, where you will have a chance of seeing plentiful birds and wildlife, and also Manuel Antonio National Park. This Panama Canal and Costa Rica cruise is likely to appeal to both travellers with a keen engineering turn of mind and those interested in accessing some of the Central America's most impressive national parks.

# Itinerary



## Day 1 London/ Miami

Depart London on the direct flight to Miami. Overnight in Miami.

## Day 2 Miami/ Panama City/ Colon/ Embarkation/ Panama Canal

Fly from Miami to Panama City. On arrival, transfer to Colon where you board your expeditionary boat. Set sail through the first part of the canal anchoring for the night in the wildlife rich Lake Gatun. Situated on the highest point this lake acts as the lungs of the canal, pushing water either to or from the Pacific or Atlantic.



## Day 3 Gatun Lake/ Panama Canal transit

Travel by zodiac to the Barro Colorado Nature Monument. Guided by staff from the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, this is a special arrangement to visit the island. During your trek through the tropical forest you will learn of the challenges faced by the engineers and builders of the canal. Returning to the vessel you will continue through the canal. Please note a daylight transit cannot be guaranteed as cargo vessels are given priority, however the canal is well lit at night.



## Day 4 Gulf of Panama Islets

Explore by zodiac the small islands in the Gulf of Panama, you will also have the opportunity to kayak here. It's a wonderful introduction to the region's varied birdlife. Observe large numbers of nesting seabirds including magnificent frigate birds, brown pelicans and blue-footed boobies of Galápagos fame.

## Day 5 Isla Coiba National Park

Visit one of Panama's most remote national parks, the Isla Coiba. Here you can hike the tropical, moist forest trails. The area is also perfect for swimming and snorkelling amid a myriad of tropical fish.



## Day 6 Golfo Dulce, Costa Rica

Today make your first landfall in Costa Rica. By special invitation you will visit the privately owned gardens of Casa Orquideas (Orchid House), accessible only by boat. Here there is an impressive collection of plant life including a profusion of orchids tropical fruit trees, bromeliads, cycads, plams and heleconia; look for tanagers, parrots and gaudy toucans amongst the verdant foliage. Later, explore the forested bay of Golfo Dulce, ideal for kayaking or swimming.



## Day 7 Osa Peninsula

Anchoring off the remote shores of the Osa Peninsula and the environs of Corcovado National Park, the precise landing spot for the day will depend on sea conditions. Options today include swimming in waterfall pools, horseback riding, kayaking or trekking through the rain forest for a chance to see howler, spider and squirrel monkeys.



## Day 8 Manuel Antonio National Park

An early start will reward you with abundant wildlife which are most active at this time of the day. It is easy to spot lethargic three-toed sloths in the treetops, but it often takes the expert eye of a naturalist to point out monkeys, agouti, lizards or vividly coloured birds in the forest. In the afternoon, explore Costa Rica's beautiful coast where you will stop for a final hike or swim.



## Day 9 Herradura/ Disembark/ San Jose/ London

Disembark this morning in Herradura and drive to the airport for flights home via Miami, flying overnight.

## Day 10 London

Arrive back into the UK

\*\*Please note that this Colon to Herradura itinerary operates in both directions.

## Activities



- Zodiac cruises
- Whale and dolphin watching
- Shore landings - hiking on uninhabited islands & remote beaches
- Kayaking
- Snorkelling & swimming
- Bird watching

## The Boat

### National Geographic Sea Lion

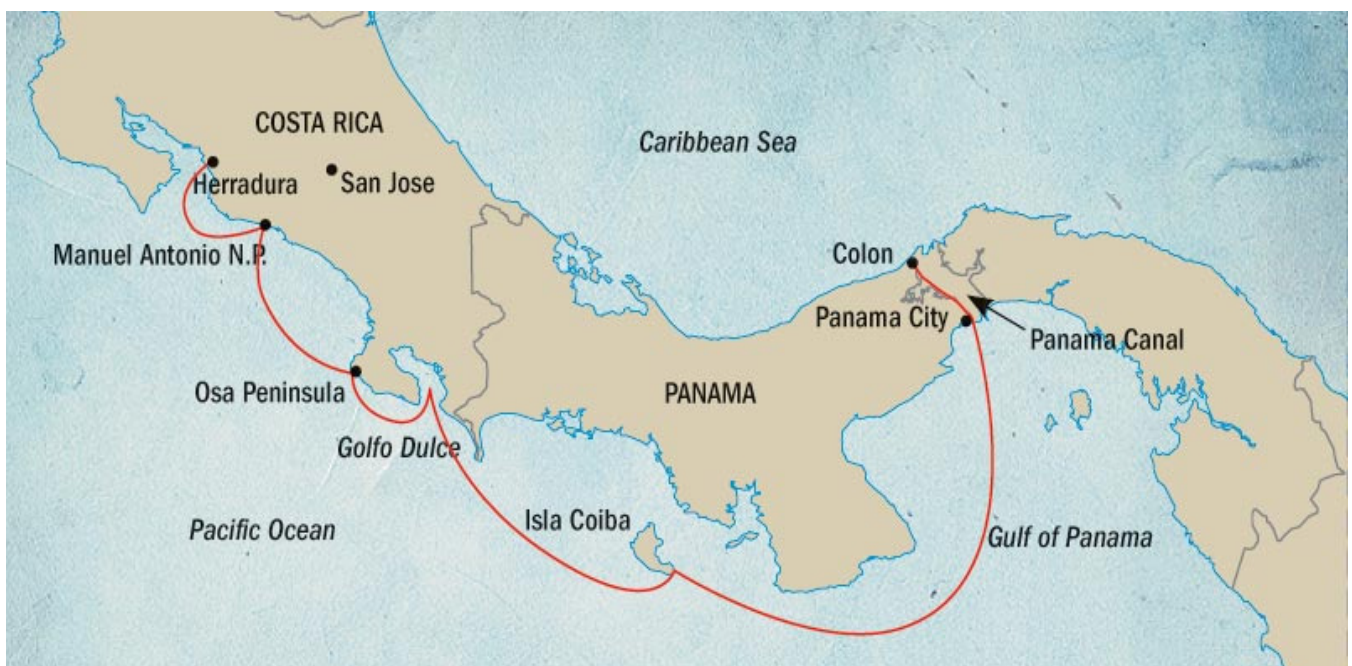
The National Geographic Sea Lion is perfectly suited for this kind of expeditionary voyage, combining all the necessary comforts as your base, while nimble enough to unlock those areas inaccessible to larger ships. The captain has decades of sailing experience in the region, ably supported by the knowledgeable expeditionary staff, who add an important educational dimension to your trip.



With a maximum capacity for just 62 guests in 31 outside cabins, you are guaranteed a very personalised adventure. The ship features a well-stocked library, comfortable lounge with full-service bar and facilities for films, slide shows and presentations. There is an observation deck, partially covered sun deck with comfortable chairs, where you can relax and LEXspa. The open bridge policy provides guests an opportunity to meet the Officers and Captain, as well as a convivial place to hang out and observe. There is a choice of 3 cabin types and all cabins are well-appointed with outward facing windows, private bathroom facilities and climate controls. Meals are served in single seatings with unassigned tables for an informal atmosphere and easy mingling.

With a sturdy fleet of zodiacs and virtually un-tippable kayaks, you can be off the ship and out exploring within a moment's notice. There is also a bow camera, hydrophone, snorkelling gear, splash-cam, underwater video camera and video microscope. The ship also has an onboard Doctor and ship to shore communications are available via satellite.

## Route Map



## Expedition Dates for 2012

### Colon - Herradura

7<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> January 2012  
21<sup>st</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> January  
4<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> February  
18<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> February  
3<sup>rd</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> March  
17<sup>th</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> March  
31<sup>st</sup> March - 7<sup>th</sup> April

### Herradura - Colon

14<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> January  
28<sup>th</sup> January - 4<sup>th</sup> February  
11<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> February  
25<sup>th</sup> February - 3<sup>rd</sup> March  
10<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> March  
24<sup>th</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup> March

## Guide Prices for 2012

### Cabin Type

(from guide price quoted per person)

Category 1: <b>Main Deck</b> (no's 300-305)	£3,775
Category 2: <b>Bridge/ Upper Deck</b> (no's 100-104, 200-212, 215)	£4,110
Category 3: <b>Bridge/ Upper Deck</b> (no's 105/6, 214, 216/7, 219)	£4,815

### Includes

- Overnight accommodation in Miami, room only
- Return flights from Miami to Panama City/ San Jose  
8 day voyage on a full board basis
- All zodiac and shore excursions with guides
- Complimentary use of kayaks, snorkelling equipment and wet suits

### Excludes

- International flights London - Miami return
- Any additional meals, accommodation or excursions not included in the itinerary
- Gratuities on board
- Items of a personal nature, e.g. laundry
- Visas, if required

Please note that these prices are a **guide only** and are subject to exchange rate fluctuations and fuel surcharges.

## Flight Inclusive Packages

We can offer a fully inclusive package from the UK to include international flights as per the suggested itinerary above, from £650 per person depending on choice of airline. The advantage of booking the whole trip through Steppes Travel is you will then benefit from full ATOL cover.

## Single Supplement

For those solo travellers wishing to secure their own cabin, this is available in cabin categories 1 & 2, typically based on a multiplier of 1.5 that of a twin berth. Please contact the office for an accurate quotation.

## Pre/ Post Voyage Extensions

For those wishing to explore Central America further, pre or post cruise extensions inland in Costa Rica and Panama, as well as Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala can be designed on a tailor-made basis. Please call the office to discuss ideas.

## Want to discuss this trip?

Please call **Sue** on **01285 880981** for more details or to check availability



Having spent the best part of 5 years on my "gap year" working in travel seemed the natural progression. I am most at home travelling to remote wilderness areas of the globe. With a life-long passion for wildlife I love to get up close either by kayak or on foot and learn the local bushcraft skills. My travels have taken me to all seven continents. Most recently travelling to Antarctica, Spitsbergen, the Canadian High Arctic on expedition vessels, voyaging the Amazon Basin and paddling down the Yukon. Next I hope to go whale watching in Baja California then polar bear tracking in the Russian Arctic.

Sue is Country Director for Steppes Voyages  
[Sueg@steppestravel.co.uk](mailto:Sueg@steppestravel.co.uk)