

# Panama and Costa Rica by Sea: The Natural Wonders of Central America – with Smithsonian Journeys

From **11/02/2023**  
to **18/02/2023**

Ship: **LE BELLOT**

From **Colón**  
to **Puerto Caldera**



Shore excursion or activity in each port of call + transfers included

## In alliance with Smithsonian Journeys.

*This cruise is part of a collection of PONANT voyages that are specially-tailored for English-speaking travellers who want to engage with the world. In addition to the usual elements of the PONANT experience, the listed price for these voyages includes transfers to and from the ship, talks and discussions aboard ship by world class experts, and a shore excursion or activity in each port of call that encourages guests to embrace the sights, sounds, tastes, and smells of the local environment and culture.*

Discover **Panama** and **Costa Rica** with PONANT on this splendid **8-day cruise** aboard *Le Bellot*, which explores the region's abundant natural splendours, local indigenous communities, and the modern marvel of the Panama Canal.

Your journey in **Central America** will start along the white sands and translucent waters of **Holandes Cayes**, one of the coral islets of Panama's **San Blas Islands**. Spend a day in this tropical paradise and enjoy the opportunity to swim and snorkel. Members of the **Kuna** community call these islands home, and you may encounter them along the beach.

After a daytime sailing from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean through the world-famous **Panama Canal**, *Le Bellot* calls at Fuerte Amador for an exploration of **Panama City's Old Quarter** and of the region's fantastic biodiversity at the superb Frank Gehry-designed **Biomeseo**.

Here, you will also visit the Punta Culebra Nature Center at the **Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI)**, a fascinating, open-air museum dedicated to marine science and conservation. On a specially arranged tour guided by Smithsonian staff, hear about the latest studies, observe marine species up close, and explore the unique flora and fauna of the tropical dry forest.

You sail next to the remote and magnificent **Darién National Park**. This

little corner of paradise is a **UNESCO World Heritage site** and home to a remarkably diverse range of plants and wildlife. Rocky coastlines, mangroves, swamps, and tropical rainforests abound and offer a feast for photographers. Here, meet members of the local **Emberá** community.

Your final call will be in **Quepos, Costa Rica**, gateway to the spectacular **Manuel Antonio National Park**, where you will encounter myriad tropical flora and fantastic fauna, including sloths, the noisy howler monkey, the white-faced capuchin, and the tiny squirrel monkey. The combination of forest and ocean also provides a special opportunity to observe both terrestrial and sea birds—toucans, pelicans, hummingbirds, terns, and more.

*The encounters with the wildlife described above illustrate possible experiences only and cannot be guaranteed.*



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## YOUR STOPOVERS :

### COLÓN

Embarkation 11/02/2023 from 16:00 to 17:00

Departure 11/02/2023 at 20:00

**Colón** is the second largest city in **Panama**, at the Caribbean entrance of the **Panama Canal**. Colón is today an important port, and the free trade zone created in 1953 contributed greatly to the development of the city. Colón was founded in 1850 by Americans working on the Panama railroad connecting the Atlantic and Pacific coasts through the isthmus of Panama; the city rapidly overshadowed the older **Caribbean** ports of Panama when the canal opened.

### SAN BLAS ISLANDS

Arrival 12/02/2023 early morning

Departure 12/02/2023 late afternoon

Located on the north-east coast of **Panama**, the **San Blas archipelago** is a string of coral islands in the heart of the Caribbean Sea. More than 300 islands and cays cover an area of 300 square kilometres offering travellers a multitude of treasures. Sheltered behind a long coral reef, **the San Blas Islands** are full of enchanting anchorages. The long sandy white beaches bound by crystal-clear waters will allow you to relax and enjoy incredible marine fauna before engaging with **the Kunas Indian community**. Still subsisting on hunting and fishing, they will welcome you in their villages of bamboo houses gathered near the beaches.

### CROSSING THE PANAMA CANAL

Arrival 13/02/2023 early morning

Departure 13/02/2023 early morning

Aboard your ship, experience something unique, that has inspired the imagination of numerous adventurers in the 20th century: **sailing the Panama Canal**. Its construction started in 1880 under the direction of **Ferdinand de Lesseps**. Abandoned then resumed, this marvel of engineering was completed by the United States and opened in 1914. The canal crosses the Isthmus of Panama and links the Atlantic to the Pacific. Including **three levels of locks** and by raising ships to the level of Lake Gatun, almost as if the water was a lift, it allows them to avoid having to round Cape Horn.

### FUERTE AMADOR, FLAMENCO ISLAND

Arrival 13/02/2023 late afternoon  
Departure 14/02/2023 early evening

An artificial peninsula situated at the Pacific entrance to the Panama Canal, Fuerte Amador is the gateway to several noteworthy sites. Right near there, the impressive Miraflores Locks are a shining example of the engineering feats deployed during the construction of the Panama Canal. Further north, in villages nestling amid dense vegetation, lives the Embera tribe, guardian of the forest and of the Chagres River. This proud people have successfully preserved their traditions and their ancestral way of life, which predate the colonisation of the region by the Spanish.

## PLAYA MUERTO, DARIEN NATIONAL PARK

Arrival 15/02/2023 early morning  
Departure 15/02/2023 midday

The most remote and least developed region of Panama, the province of Darien is an unspoilt land with an extremely rich variety of flora and fauna. Listed by UNESCO as World Heritage, **Darien National Park** offers its extraordinary scenery of rocky coastlines, mountain ranges, mangroves, rivers and creeks. Discover **Playa Muerto**, a tiny coastal village home to the Emberas Amerindian community. You will visit the village, attend traditional songs and dances of the locals, and admire beautiful local craft.

## AT SEA

Arrival 16/02/2023  
Departure 16/02/2023

During your day at sea, make the most of the many services and activities on board. Treat yourself to a moment of relaxation in the spa or stay in shape in the fitness centre. Depending on the season, let yourself be tempted by the swimming pool or a spot of sunbathing. This day without a port of call will also be an opportunity to enjoy the conferences or shows proposed on board, to do some shopping in the boutique or to meet the PONANT photographers in their dedicated space. As for lovers of the open sea, they will be able to visit the ship's upper deck to admire the spectacle of the waves and perhaps be lucky enough to observe marine species. A truly enchanted interlude, combining comfort, rest and entertainment.

## QUEPOS

Arrival 17/02/2023 early morning  
Departure 17/02/2023 late afternoon

Quepos makes for a charming stop-off on the Pacific coast, just next-door to the famous **Manuel Antonio National Park**, an untouched tropical natural reserve lined with white sandy beaches. The town's seafront is an opportunity to stroll through market stalls touting pineapples and bananas in the shade of the manchineel trees. In this coastal town criss-crossed with **tree-lined streets in bloom**, admire the houses and their incredible sculpted balconies. Enjoy a spot of shopping in the **many traditional boutiques**: pick up some handmade cotton clothing, ceramics embellished with Costa Rican designs and home décor pieces in hand-painted wood.

## PUERTO CALDERA

Arrival 18/02/2023 early morning

Disembarkation 18/02/2023 at 08:00

The port of Puerto Caldera lies on the Pacific coast, in the Puntarenas region, at the mouth of the Gulf of Nicoya. Areas of wilderness stretch along the coast. Further inland, among the countless natural wonders to be found in the generous **rainforest** of the **Costa Rica's national parks, Poas and Arena volcanoes** towers up in all their majestic glory. In this luxuriant natural setting, **Costa Rica** protects one of the planet's richest biodiversity: monkeys, sloths, tropical birds, iguanas, crocodiles, waterfalls, canyons, and more than ten thousand species of tropical plants.