

General Trip info

Map

Trip Code: IQVRC

Trip Length: 13

Trip starts in: San Jose

Trip ends in: Panama City

Meals:

Accommodation: Hotel (10 nights), Multishare Cabin (2 nights)

Transport: Local bus, Private minibus, Boat

Daily Itinerary

Day 1

San Jose

Bienvenidos a Costa Rica! Welcome to Costa Rica! Your adventure begins with a welcome meeting at 6pm today. Please look for a note in the hotel lobby or ask reception where it will take place. If you're going to be late, please inform the hotel reception. We'll be checking your passport details, insurance details and next of kin information at this meeting. If you can't arrange a flight that will arrive in time, you may wish to arrive a day early so you're able to attend. We'll be happy to book additional accommodation for you (subject to availability). As this trip spends very little time here, we recommend arriving a day or two earlier to see the sights or take an Urban Adventure with an expert local guide. Home to over half the country's population, San Jose is a bustling city with lively markets, intriguing museums and a dynamic atmosphere. Otherwise, a good place to start is the main plaza. Artisan booths are common here, so you never know when an art fair will pop up. The Gold Museum has an amazing collection of indigenous gold art. If you're in the mood for a bit of shopping, head to the outdoor market in the Plaza de la Cultura or the city's Central Market, where you can buy anything from handicrafts to seafood.

Day 2

Puerto Viejo de Talamanca

Today take a five-hour local bus to Puerto Viejo. A small town on the beautiful Caribbean coast, Puerto Viejo de Talamanca has two sides to it. The main street has a party vibe, featuring dancehall/reggaeton bars and modern restaurants, while further out you'll find great surf beaches, rainforest fruit farms and family homes. The area is home to a mix of Rastafarian, European and indigenous populations. The next two nights will be situated here.

Day 3

Puerto Viejo de Talamanca

If you wish, take your time to explore Cahuita National Park, which is easily accessible from Puerto Viejo. Wander through the park on the lookout for sloths, monkeys, raccoons, snakes and a great variety of birds. While entrance to the park is free, you will be asked for a donation. You can also visit a jaguar rescue centre or wander through the Kekoldi Indigenous Reserve, which is home to birds of prey and medicinal herb gardens. Back in town, consider hiring a bike for the day or hitting the waves for a surf lesson.

Day 4

Bocas del Toro / Isla Colon

Take a one-hour local bus to the border, then walk across an old railway bridge into Panama. Continue by taxi or collective minivan to Almirante, where you'll take a short boat ride to Isla Colon in the Bocas del Toro archipelago. Rapidly becoming a Caribbean favourite, Bocas del Toro has it all - palm-shaded beaches with crystal-clear water, spectacular snorkelling and lots of wildlife. Culturally, Bocas is a melting pot of West Indians, Latinos and expats, resulting in diverse music, nightlife and food scenes. For the next two nights, stay on Isla Colon, the main town in Bocas del Toro and a great spot from where to start your exploration of the archipelago, with most bars, restaurants and local operators located on 1st, 2nd and 3rd street - meters from your hotel.

Day 5

Bocas del Toro

There are several beaches within reach from town - between 8 and 14km from your hotel. However, be aware, apart from Starfish, Sandfly and Big Creek beaches, the rest can have very strong riptides. When the sun goes down, head into town and check out the local bar and restaurant scene. There's no place better to live la vida loca than the Caribbean.

Day 6

Boquete

Travel by boat and local bus to Boquete, keeping in mind that total journey should take eight to nine hours. Boquete is a picturesque town located in the highlands of Panama, surrounded by mountains, crystal-clear creeks and rivers, forest reserves, wildflowers and fauna such as howler monkeys and the resplendent quetzal. Your hotel is located a short drive away from Boquete. Feel free to relax and enjoy the beautiful scenery around the property, which has its own bar and restaurant. There is a free shuttle into town a few times a day and most optional activities can be organised directly from the hotel.

Day 7

Boquete

Today and tomorrow are free for you to explore Boquete. The area surrounding the town is famous for its coffee. While here, consider taking a visit to a coffee plantation or kicking back in town with a cup of the local brew.

Day 8

Boquete

Today, perhaps take a guided bike tour or check out the mini canyons and hidden waterfalls outside of town – maybe even soak your muscles in the local hot springs.

Day 9

Santa Catalina

Catch an eight-hour bus to Santa Catalina, situated on the Pacific coast of Panama. This small fishing village is still a very remote, undeveloped destination and offers some of the best surfing in Central America.

Day 10

Santa Catalina

Aside from surfing, the main pastime in Santa Catalina is relaxing, preferably in a hammock. Enjoy a free day around the area and hunt down some activities in the process. Keen for something active? Perhaps take a trip out to Coiba National Marine Park, where you can snorkel with turtles, angel rays and schools of colourful fish. Alternatively, half-day fishing trips or surfboard hire is available in the town. Lessons are readily available, so there's no reason to fear the waves.

Day 11

Panama City

Today, leave the beach and travel by local bus for approximately six hours to Panama City. Panama City is Central America's glitziest with plentiful dining and drinking hotspots. Perhaps mark your first evening in Panama City with a night on the tiles at a samba club.

Day 12

Panama City

Today is free for you to discover Panama City. Explore the historic Casco Viejo, or old town, which features an unusual combination of restored buildings, low-income housing, churches and ruins. You may also like to visit the engineering marvel of the Panama Canal or take a stroll through the rainforest in the Metropolitan Nature Park. Panama City is also famous for its shopping centres, the biggest being Albrook Mall. For more traditional souvenirs, head to the National Artisan's Market.

Day 13

Panama City

Your adventure ends today. There are no activities planned for the final day.

Additional Information

Optional Activities

San Jose - Gold Museum
Puerto Viejo de Talamanca - Cahuita National Park
Puerto Viejo de Talamanca - Jaguar Rescue Centre
Puerto Viejo de Talamanca - Surf lesson (1 hr)
Puerto Viejo de Talamanca - Bicycle rental (per day)
Boquete - Coffee Plantation tour
Boquete - Guided tour of hidden waterfalls
Boquete - Mini canyons
Boquete - Guided bike tour
Boquete - Calderas hot springs
Santa Catalina - Surf lesson (2 hrs)
Santa Catalina - Coiba Island & Grano de Oro snorkelling trip
Santa Catalina - Fishing trip (half day)
Santa Catalina - Surfboard rental (per day)
Panama City - Panama Canal (Miraflores Locks)

Notes for Costa Rica

Costa Rica is every outdoor-adventurist's dream, and is packed full of spectacular scenery, incredible wildlife, and fascinating culture. Costa Rica is one of the most bio-diverse countries on Earth, and is home to many iconic animals such as hummingbirds, quetzals, tree frogs, monkeys, sloths and sea turtles. Complimenting this is some of the most wonderful natural scenery, including incredible coastlines, forests, lakes and volcanoes. Costa Rica is also home to some of the best outdoor activities in the world, with a plethora of opportunities for rafting, trekking, canyoning and horse riding.

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and all EU countries will not need a visa to visit Costa Rica as a tourist for up to 90 days. Citizens of other countries should check with the relevant consulates as to whether a visa is required. If a visa is required, you will need to obtain it in advance. A valid yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers coming from areas with risk of yellow fever transmission (including transiting through an airport in an area of risk).

Notes for Panama

Panama is world-famous for its canal linking the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, which has had a monumental effect on world history and trade. However, there is much more to the country itself, such as amazing mountainous and coastal scenery, a myriad of exhilarating outdoor activities, incredible wildlife and wonderful coffee plantations to explore.

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and all EU countries will not need a visa to visit Panama as a tourist for up to 180 days. Certain nationalities will need to buy a tourist card on arrival at the border for USD5. Citizens of other countries should check with the relevant consulates as to whether a visa is required. If a visa is required, you will need to obtain it in advance.

Important Notes

The routes, activities and places visited as described in these trip notes are intentions and are meant as a rough guide only.

These trip notes have been compiled to help you prepare for your journey once you have booked. They include the full itinerary and dates, and information about kit lists, meeting hotels, insurance, vaccinations, visas, and other information that will help you get ready for your trip.

These notes are updated regularly, so please ensure you have an up-to-date version of these trip notes.

The planned route and itinerary is the intention, but exact night stops and inclusions cannot be guaranteed. It occasionally happens that there must be a change to our planned itinerary - this may be for a variety of reasons, such as climatic, road or bureaucratic conditions. By their very nature, adventure travel needs to be approached flexibly and some regions can be unpredictable. Some Imaginative Traveller journeys go through off the beaten track areas, which often have poor infrastructure and less stringent safety standards than we are used to at home.

Our Groups

Our groups are made up of people from around the world and are usually an interesting mix of nationalities and ages. On average there is a pretty even split, males to females and between solo travellers, couples and small groups of friends. We believe that adventure travel should be open to as many people as possible and so although some trips have a minimum age limit, as long as you are fit, healthy and passionate about travel, we are happy to take you. One of the highlights of group travel is the camaraderie and friendships that are formed along the way, and as well as the variety of people that you will meet.

The maximum group size depends on the operator and the style of transport, but will usually be a maximum of 15-16 or up to 21-22 on our overland journeys.

Accommodation

Imaginative Traveller trips are designed for shared accommodation, whether staying in hotels, hostels, homestays or campsites, and therefore do not involve a single supplement. Single travellers will share with people of the same sex for the duration of the trip and those that book together will usually be able to share accommodation.

The type, variety and standard of accommodation will vary greatly depending on what options are available in the region you are travelling; hotels can vary from very basic rooms without electricity or running water to high standard hotels with good facilities! Generally in hotels most rooms will be twin-share. Hostels, gers and yurts are nearly always multi-share.

Many trips will feature a stay in a local homestay or community tourism initiative, allowing us to experience a slice of local life in the areas we travel through. On our overland trips, we will sometimes camp in campsites ranging from rather basic or even wild camps to those with excellent facilities, including swimming pools, restaurants and bars.

Dietary Requirements

If you have any dietary requirements please tell us at the time of booking and also remind your leader at your welcome meeting. Our crew will try to cater for any particular dietary requirement or food intolerance whenever possible.

Health

You need to be in good physical health in order to participate fully in our trips. When selecting your trip

please make sure you have read through the itinerary carefully and assessed your ability to cope with the style of travel on that trip. We are always happy to give extra advice if you have additional concerns. Please note that if, in the opinion of our leader, you are unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to yourself and/or the rest of the group, Imaginative Traveller or our partner operators reserve the right to exclude you from all or part of the trip.

You should consult your doctor for up-to-date medical travel information prior to travel, particularly if you have a pre-existing medical condition. We also advise you to declare any pre-existing medical conditions to your travel insurers upon purchase.

Altitude

Imaginative Traveller offers some trips that travel to above 2,800m altitude above sea level - it is imperative at high altitudes to drink lots of water to stay hydrated, be careful not to get burned by the sun, and try not to exert yourself too much. Some pre-existing medical conditions are known to severely worsen at high altitude and be difficult to adequately treat on the ground, leading to more serious consequences. It is imperative that you discuss your pre-existing medical condition/s with your doctor. We understand certain medications are reported to aid acclimatising to high altitude; please discuss these options with your doctor.

Yellow Fever

A valid international certificate of vaccination against Yellow Fever is required in many countries. You may need to present this on arrival at the airport or border crossing. Some countries will refuse entry if you are unable to present your certificate - please see each country's note above for details. It's also quite common for your home country to request a Yellow Fever certificate on your arrival back home.

It is your responsibility to check with your doctor well in advance of leaving home about the Yellow Fever requirements for the countries you'll be visiting.

Malaria and other mosquito-borne diseases

Some areas we travel to have the risk of contracting malaria. If this applies to your trip, please get expert advice before travelling about types of malaria pills and take them as instructed. Recommended types do change from time to time and from area to area. Consult your GP / travel clinic for the most up-to-date requirements and to find the right option for you. If advised by your doctor to take a course of anti-malarial tablets, please complete the course as instructed as malaria can often manifest itself upon your return home if the course is not followed.

Other mosquito-borne diseases such as Dengue Fever, Chikungunya and Zika are continuing to spread and becoming a bigger problem around the world. Bite prevention is vital to avoid contracting any of these diseases as there are no vaccines or specific treatments available. Health professionals have issued warnings for pregnant women travelling to areas affected by the Zika virus.

The mosquito usually bites between the hours of dusk and dawn and so covering up by wearing long-legged and long-sleeved clothing, preferably light coloured and buttoned at the wrists, can help. Do not sleep without closing windows, use a mosquito net where possible and use mosquito repellent applied directly to your skin or soaked into your clothing.

Vaccinations

Recommended vaccinations and other health protection vary according to different regions and recent bulletins issued by health authorities. It is essential to get the latest advice on the region(s) you are planning to travel in so please check with either your doctor or travel clinic in good time before you travel.

We also recommend you check out any specific health advice for the country you are travelling to either via your GP or the following websites: www.nathnac.org or www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk

In the UK, we have been working with Nomad Travel for many years and their website has comprehensive,

up-to-date vaccination and health information. You will receive a 10% discount off all vaccinations given at Nomad Travel clinics.

Activities

Included activities are listed in the day-to-day itinerary, all other activities are optional and at your own expense. If you choose not to participate in the included activities on this itinerary, the cost will not necessarily be refunded; this is something you will need to check with your leader.

A selection of optional activities is listed in the day-to-day itinerary. This list is designed to be a helpful guide as to what is commonly available in each location, and is neither an exhaustive list, a guarantee that the activity is available, or an endorsement or recommendation. Please note that certain activities may not be available on your particular visit if they are overbooked, underbooked, out of season, or for any other reason - the list of activities is made according to our latest information and in the best faith, but please be aware that things may change between our last visit and your arrival. Please also note that it may not be possible to do all the activities listed in the time available at each destination, and it is recommended to give yourself extra time in your joining or ending city if you would like to participate in some optional activities there.

If you do any optional activities, you do so at your own risk and it must be clearly understood that your participation is your own decision and does not form part of your contract with Dragoman. You may be required to sign/complete a waiver form or optional activity form for some optional activities.

Insurance

It is a condition of booking that you have comprehensive travel insurance. Without evidence of valid travel insurance you will not be allowed to start the trip. This can be arranged by Imaginative Traveller through our website or by contacting our team of travel consultants.

If you prefer to arrange your insurance independently, it should have a minimum medical (including repatriation) cover of £2,000,000. We recommend that any policy also has a minimum level of cover for Personal Liability of £2,000,000 and for Cancellation and Curtailment of £5,000. Cover for loss of baggage, personal effects, money and other inclusions are down to personal choice although please bear in mind that personal effects are more likely to go missing whilst travelling and you should ensure that your policy is adequate to cover the value of your personal effects e.g. cameras, tablets, phones etc. Please note that Imaginative Traveller and our partner operators are not responsible for your personal effects and are not insured for their loss.

If you prefer to arrange your insurance independently, it should cover you for any activities that you may wish to participate in, such as white-water rafting, trekking, horse-riding, etc. and the 24-hour Emergency Assistance Company must be experienced in handling situations in developing countries if applicable (e.g. they have the ability to arrange repatriation from remote areas such as the Sahara or trekking in the Andes). If you are travelling to high altitude (such as embarking on a trek to the summit of Kilimanjaro), please make sure that this is also covered.

Please double check if you have annual travel and/or credit card policies to ensure they have the cover you require, as many of these policies are not suitable with adventure travel to remote areas. Many credit card medical insurance policies are not valid for travelling outside your country of residence or outside the EU.

Please also check the age limits on any policy you wish to take out and make sure that you thoroughly inform the insurance company of any pre-existing conditions.

Passports

Check that your passport will still be valid for 6 months after the end of the trip - this is important as some countries WILL refuse entry to anyone whose passport is due to expire. A temporary or emergency passport is not valid on our trips. You will need to provide us with your passport details prior to departing for your trip. If you change your passport please remember to inform us.

Pre and Post Trip Accommodation and Transfers

At Imaginative Traveller we believe you should make the most of the places you visit, so if you would like to see more of the joining or finishing point cities, why not book additional accommodation to extend your stay? We can take away the hassle of time zones and language barriers by making the booking for you. This accommodation is only available at the joining or finishing city of your trip, immediately before or after the trip you are travelling on. Please note our rates do not reflect last minute walk-in rates or internet specials.

We can also book arrival airport transfers for you as long as we have your flight arrival details. These are normally payable in cash upon arrival; however we do have pre paid transfers in a few destinations.

Please contact our reservations team for details of the accommodation and transfers that we can offer, as not all hotels offer this service.

Responsible Tourism

Imaginative Traveller is committed to ensuring that we have a positive impact on local communities and that we implement policies to minimise any negative impact on the local environment. We recognise that we are guests of local communities and strive to make them benefit directly from our visit. You can find full details of Imaginative Traveller's responsible tourism policy on our website.

Issues on the trip

While we always endeavour to provide the best possible holiday experience, due to the nature of travel and the areas we visit sometimes things can and do go wrong. Should any issue occur while you are on your trip, it is imperative that you discuss this with your group leader or our local partner straight away so that they can do their best to rectify the problem and save any potential negative impact on the rest of your trip.

We recognise that there may be times when your group leader may not be able to resolve a situation to your satisfaction. If this is the case please contact our customer relations department on

customer-relations@imtrav.net

You may also choose to provide details in your feedback questionnaire which we ask you to complete at the end of your trip, but we do ask you to be aware that it is very difficult for us to provide any practical help after the trip is complete.

Feedback

After your travels, we want to hear from you! We rely on your feedback. We read it carefully. Feedback helps us to understand what we are doing well and what we could be doing better, and it allows us to make improvements for future travellers.