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EXPLORING THE PANAMA CANAL: 9 MUST-SEE EXPERIENCES

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QUICK GUIDE #1

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Seeing the Panama Canal

The Panama Canal is one of the world's greatest engineering marvels and a top tourist attraction in Central America. Spanning over 50 miles and connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, this man-made waterway is a vital link for global trade and commerce.

But the Panama Canal is not just a feat of human ingenuity; it's also a stunning natural wonder that offers visitors a unique perspective on the country's history, culture, and natural beauty.

In this article, we will explore eight ways to experience the Panama Canal and discover its fascinating story. Whether you're a history buff, nature lover, or adventure seeker, there's something for everyone along this incredible waterway. So, let's dive in and discover the best ways to see the Panama Canal.

Enjoy!

Jenn

1 Miraflores Visitor Center

The fastest and most common way to see The Panama Canal is from Miraflores Visitor Center, which is one of the three locks located in the Pacific side (including the expansion). It's located near the City of Knowledge in Clayton, 15 km and about a 20-minute drive from the Center of the city (depending on traffic hours).

One-way rate from hotels is usually 30\$, uber is around 8\$, regular taxi 15\$. Other ways to get there are with public transportation, private tours, group tours or the Hop On Hop Off.

The Canal never closes but the visitor center opens from Monday thru Sunday (holidays included) 08:00 – 17:00 hrs with the following entrance fees:

Locals and residents (with a valid ID)

Adults: B/.3.00

Students & Seniors (with ID) up to 17 years old: B/.1.50

Children (between 6 and 12 years old): \$1.50

Non residents

Adults: B/.17.22

Minors (between 6 and 12 years old): B/.7.22

Free admission for children under 6 years old.

Tips: Morning transit is only until 09:00 hrs (it later becomes a one way from the Atlantic side) after that time the next ship will pass after 14:00 hrs. Click here to see the LIVE Transit. <https://logistics.gatech.pa/es/assets/panama-canal/traffic>



2

Partial or Full Transit

The partial transit tour is a popular tour option for visitors to the Panama Canal. It is a half-day tour that takes passengers on a boat through part of the canal, allowing them to experience the engineering marvel of the canal up close.

During the partial transit tour, the boat will enter the canal at the Pacific Ocean side and sail through the Miraflores Locks. Passengers will have the opportunity to watch as the lock gates open and close, and the water level is raised or lowered to allow the boat to pass through.

If you want to have the chance to actually cross the Panama Canal, this is the best way to have an opportunity to cross the canal without being in a cruise. This shared tour takes place on a ferry, you have a guide on board that narrates the operations of the Canal. It takes about 5-6 hours to cross the Miraflores Locks and Pedro Miguel Locks.

Partial Transits are available often (every week) but the Full Transit from Miraflores in the Pacific to Gatun Locks in Colon takes 8-9 hours depending on the direction. Therefore it is important to verify the full transit availability prior to your visit. Both options include pickup, drop off and lunch. Ask us for transit availability here.

What to bring:

- Book or any similar
- Snacks
- Camera and charged phone
- Hat, sunglasses and sunblock for the ferry ride



3

Ocean to Ocean Tour

I absolutely love this experience because it is all about seeing the Canal from the Pacific to the Atlantic in the same day! How amazing is that! Panama is one of the few places in the world where it is possible to see both the Pacific Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean within a few hours' drive.

This experience includes a ride in The Panama Canal Railway, it offers a unique and memorable way to see some of the most spectacular views in Panama, including the Panama Canal and the surrounding rainforests, mountains, and coastlines. The railway passes through a variety of landscapes and ecosystems, from urban areas to dense jungle, and offers travelers an up-close look at the country's rich history and natural beauty.

The ride in the Panama Canal Railway is a comfortable and luxurious experience, with air-conditioned cars, plush seating, and large windows that provide unobstructed views of the passing scenery. You will then meet your driver waiting at your arrival and will transport you to the Agua Clara Visitor Center on the Atlantic side. You will have an unparalleled panoramic view to appreciate both the original canal and the expansion locks. The combination of both views will generate mixed feelings after listening to all the interesting facts of the Canal.

Followed by lunch you can enjoy the view of a 400-year-old Spanish fort San Lorenzo located in Portobello, Colon City. This experience takes about 6-7 hours. It can be a memorable experience to stand on the shores of two different oceans in such a short period of time.



4 Helicopter Tour

A helicopter tour over the Panama Canal locks is a truly exhilarating experience that offers breathtaking views of one of the world's most impressive engineering marvels. As you soar above the locks, you will have a bird's-eye view of the massive ships passing through the narrow waterways, giving you a new appreciation for the sheer size and scale of the canal.

The helicopter tour also provides a unique perspective of the surrounding rainforest, with its lush greenery, winding rivers, and diverse wildlife. You may even spot some of the animals that call this region home, such as monkeys, toucans, and sloths.

Overall, a helicopter tour over the Panama Canal locks is a thrilling and unforgettable adventure that offers a one-of-a-kind view of this iconic landmark and the natural beauty that surrounds it.

If you are seeking a luxurious experience or you simply don't have enough time to spend sightseeing you can rent a helicopter for 30 minutes to see the locks in the Pacific side, if you would like to see both sides you can request a 1-hour ride. This high-end option for one passenger will cost you \$2,000 approx.

Tip: Make sure to book with anticipation.



5 Panama Canal Museum

The Panama Canal Interoceanic Museum is a museum located in Panama City that tells the story of the construction and history of the Panama Canal. This building was originally built as The Grand Hotel by George Loew, then it became the headquarters of the French Canal Company and after it was bought by the Panamanian government to transform it into the National Postal Office, now serving as a Museum since 1997.

The museum features interactive exhibits, artifacts, photographs, and videos that showcase the canal's history, engineering, and impact on global trade. Visitors can learn about the canal's construction, the challenges and triumphs of the engineers and workers who built it, and the canal's role in shaping Panama's economy and culture.

The museum also highlights the natural environment of the canal zone, including the flora and fauna of the rainforest that surrounds it. The exhibits are organized thematically, and visitors can explore the museum at their own pace. It is a fascinating and informative museum that offers visitors a unique insight into the history and impact of one of the world's most important engineering feats.

They are open from Tuesday to Sunday from 10:00 hrs to 18:00 hrs with the following entrance fees:

Locals & Residents

Adults \$5.00

Students, Children or Seniors \$2.50

Non Residents

Adults \$15

Students, Seniors \$7.50



6 Agua Clara Visitor Center

The Agua Clara Visitor Center is a popular tourist destination located in the city of Colon, Panama. It is an observation and education center that offers visitors a unique perspective on the operations of the Panama Canal.

The visitor center features an observation deck that provides stunning views of the new Agua Clara Locks, which were inaugurated in 2016 as part of the Panama Canal expansion project. From the deck, visitors can see the massive ships passing through the locks, giving them a sense of the scale and complexity of the canal.

The Agua Clara Visitor Center also has interactive exhibits, multimedia presentations, and displays that explain the history, engineering, and ecological importance of the canal. Visitors can learn about the canal's role in global trade, the challenges of its construction, and the environmental impact of its operations.

Agua Clara Visitor Center is an excellent destination for anyone interested in learning more about the Panama Canal and its impact on global trade and the environment. It offers a unique and informative experience that is both educational and entertaining. Operating hours from 08:00 until 15:30 hrs.

Locals and Residents

Adults: \$3.00

Children \$1.50

Students and Seniors \$1.50

Non Residents

\$10.00

\$1.50



7 Gatun Lake Expedition

The Gatun Lake Expedition is a very popular tourist activity in Panama. This is a large artificial lake that was created during the construction of the canal. This lake is also home to many species of fish, and visitors can try their luck at fishing. The expedition involves taking a boat to the Gatun Lake, where visitors can observe the surrounding rainforest and its wildlife for about one hour.

This tour provides a unique opportunity for viewing wild animals in their natural habitat, you can appreciate capuccino monkeys, howler monkeys, lazy sloth's, stoic alligators, turtles and so much more. Sometimes they get curious of visitors and come down from the trees.

The experience of being in the Gatun Lakes while seeing the canal's locks and the large cargo ships passing through during their passage across the worlds, it's an incredible feeling of amazement.

This expedition is a great way to explore the natural beauty of Panama and learn about the country's history and culture. Some other experiences you can enjoy in the lake are: Monkey Island Boat Tour, Nocturnal Boat Safari, Kayaking on the Panama Canal and Sport fishing on the Gatun Lake.

What to bring:

Comfortable clothes and shoes (sneakers or hiking shoes)

long pants, hat, sun block, sunglasses, camera and binocular

Optional: mosquito repellent



8 Drive over the locks

If you have taken an Ocean to Ocean tour or are driving a car you can cross the Panama Canal on the Atlantic Bridge in Colon City. This will be the closest centered picture you can get of the locks without having to take a boat.

9 Dinner at The Canal

If you are in Panama for business and your availability is only after 5pm you can consider having dinner at the Panama Canal Miraflores visitor center. The restaurant is usually open for dinner service.

We recommend calling in advance and making a reservation in the Balcony area since it has a perfect view of the locks and ships, and during this time, is where the biggest ships go through.

Please Note: This option is currently unavailable for renovations.

