



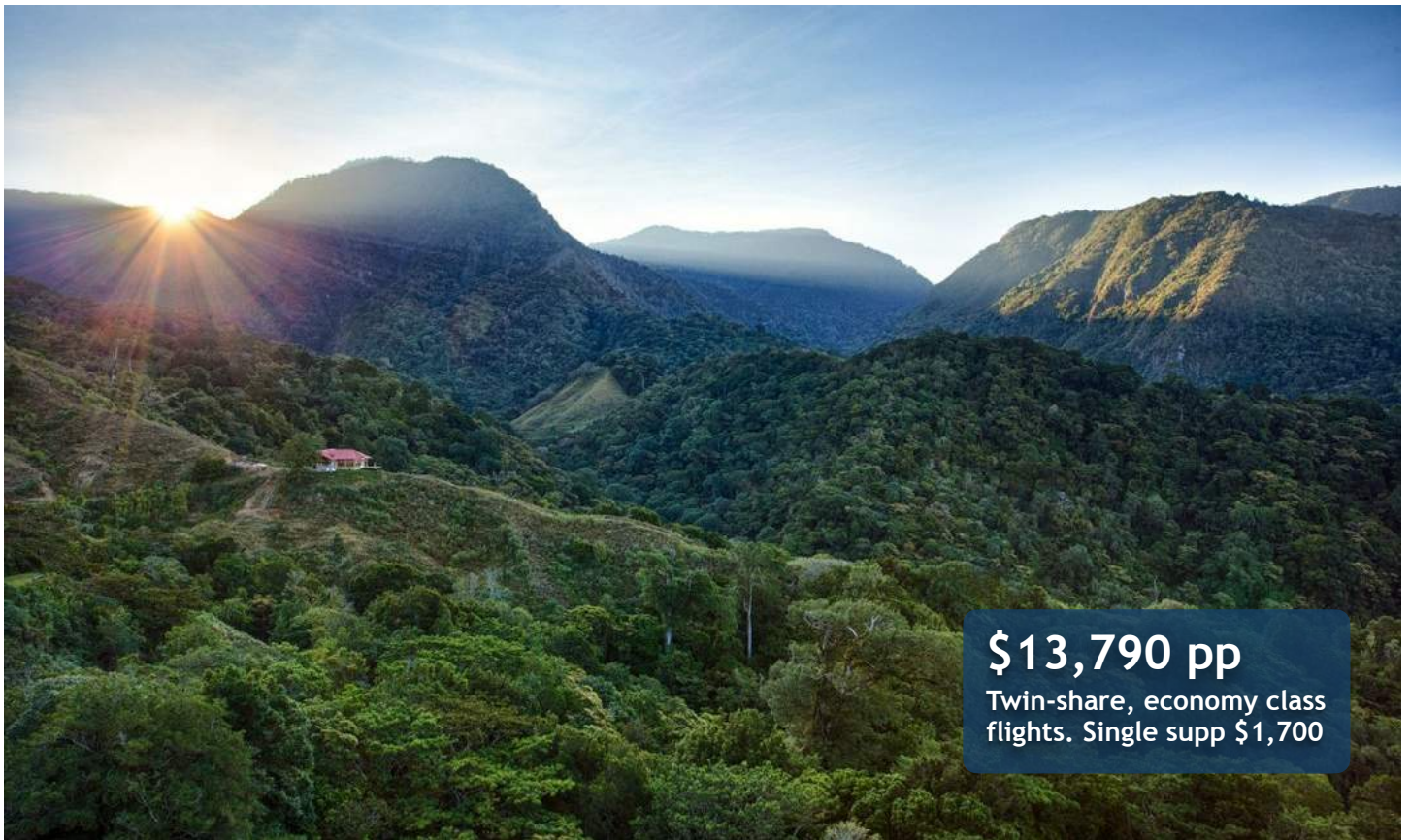
# Panama and Colombia

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## PANAMA AND COLOMBIA — EXPLORED AT LENGTH

Colombia is an amazing land of contrasts and after being off the “wish list” for many travellers for some years, it is rapidly becoming one of the highlights of South America. With its rich cultural history, amazing architecture, geographical diversity and the simple warmth and hospitality of its people, it’s easy to see why this fascinating country is becoming an increasingly popular spot for overseas visitors. Located in the North West of the continent sharing borders with Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador and Peru, Colombia is the 4th largest country in South America and has a population of 40 million.

Colombia is the only South American country to boast two coast lines on the Pacific and Atlantic (Caribbean) oceans. It also shares Amazonian rain forest with Brazil and Peru and the Los llanos (vast plains) area with Venezuela. The Andean mountains run from the south to the north of the country.

With its pre-colonial, colonial and republican history, Colombia has a wealth of cultural attractions. Nature and wildlife abound in its diverse landscapes and the spirit and warmth of the Colombian people will ensure your experience will be one that lingers on, long after you arrive back home.

The republic of Panama occupies a narrow isthmus between Costa Rica and Colombia and has a small population of just over 3.2 million. For years it has remained one of the world’s most strategic cross roads, dividing North and South America with its canal. Around half of the country is tropical rainforest. It is very mountainous with less than 10% of the country flat and suitable for agriculture.

The Spanish claimed Panama in 1502 and it was not until 1821 that it became an independent nation. Today, the culture represents a rich mix of Amerindian, Spanish and African influence. Due to the canal and its business opportunities, Panama also has an extensive international community that makes the Canal Zone, one of the most cosmopolitan areas in Latin America. The canal contributes 80% of the country’s GDP.

The tourism industry is growing but it is still not a popular destination. Most visitors don’t venture past the capital – Panama City – which is a thriving cosmopolitan centre, home to over 1 million people or, a third of the entire population!



**Day 1, Friday 5th April**  
**TRANSFERS**

Our flight from Australia to Colombia is to be confirmed, however likely to be Qantas to Los Angeles, connecting with Avianca AV085 at 10:15hrs for Bogota. Arrive at approx. 7.30pm. On arrival, we'll be met at the airport and transferred to the hotel. Overnight at the Hotel Augusta. *Meals in flight*

**Day 2, Saturday 6th April**  
**BOGOTA**

Bogotá, the country's capital and commercial centre, is a bustling metropolis - a mix of old and new, trendy and traditional, stately and charming. It has a population of 9 million people and is home to a dazzling array of museums, churches, colonial mansions and stately buildings. Bogotá has a fine balance between its historical past and its movement in to the future. At around 9.00am after breakfast, we'll enjoy a walking tour of the city including the fabulous gold museum, Simon Bolivar Square and the historic La Candelaria area. La Candelaria is Bogotá's heart and soul. From its humble beginnings, this is the oldest part of the city and the Plaza Bolivar (Main Square) are high on any visitor's agenda. The Square is the focal point of this historic part of the city. Surrounding the square are several important Colonial and Republican style buildings including the Palace of Justice and Colombian Congress. The Plaza is also home to the Mayor's office and the Primary

Cathedral of Bogota that dominates an entire corner. Standing proud in the plaza centre is a statue of Simon Bolivar (Founder of Colombian independence) the first public monument to be erected in the city. As we stroll the streets of La Candelaria away from the main square, our guide will not only explain the history of Bogota but also the intricacies of current Colombian culture and daily life. A short drive from the centre of the old town takes us to the base of the hill that leads to the viewing point and monastery of Monserrate. Overnight at the Hotel Augusta. *B/D*

**Day 3, Sunday 7th April**  
**BOGOTA — ZIPAQUIRA**

Travelling north of the city through countryside, Zipaquirá is one of the more popular tourist destinations in Colombia. It is most famous for its cathedral carved underground in a still functioning salt mine, just west of the township. Overnight at Hotel Augusta. *B/D*

**Day 4, Monday 8th April**  
**TRANSFER TO THE AMAZON REGION**

After breakfast, we'll transfer by plane to the Amazon region. The Colombian Amazon forms part of the largest Eco-system on the planet. More than one third of the world's species live in the Amazon rainforest. The River Amazon runs through the jungle and is a lifeline for so many species and humans alike. The river provides water, fishing and habitat and without it many thousands

of people and a far greater number of species of birdlife, mammals and marine life would not exist today. From its humble source in the Peruvian Andes to its immensity at the Atlantic coast of Brazil, this giant eco system is truly one of the natural world's greatest marvels. Using the river as our primary means of transport it is possible to see indigenous tribes, wildlife such as the famous pink river dolphins and pass over the three frontiers of Colombia, Brazil and Peru. Most people start in the Departments capital of Leticia. This interesting city borders both Brazil and Peru and is fast merging with Tabatinga on the Brazilian side. It is only possible to enter Leticia by air or by water from Brazil or Peru. After arrival we will do a full city tour of Leticia, stopping along the way at Tabatinga, Brazil's western most town on the Amazon River. There are no formal border crossing procedures between the two countries at this location and the transition from one town to the other is virtually unnoticeable, except the language of the shop signs changes to Portuguese. Bordering Brazil and Peru, Leticia has a myriad of languages, flavours and sounds. You can enjoy a chilled Peruvian Cristal beer, Brazilian Churasco (local meat dish) served with Colombia sancocho soups, making the town a melting pot of cultures all bonded by the shared jungle backdrop. The town is clean, modern and safe though slightly more rustic running closer to the riverside. Leticia is home to the only major port along this stretch of river. Overnight at the Hotel Waira Selva. **B/D**



**Day 5,  
Tuesday 9th  
April  
PUERTO  
NARIÑO**

Today we'll take an excursion on the Amazon River which includes a visit

to the Victoria Regia nature reserve, the indigenous community of Macedonia, a tour of the island of monkeys, a visit to the Natutama museum and then Puerto Nariño. This town is a picturesque jungle outpost with no road ways, in fact all motorised vehicles are banned, and the only transport from one end to the other is by bicycle or on foot. The main means of entering the town is by boat from the River Amazon into the River Loretoyacú, upon which the town is located. The little town is a tranquil place, with pathways as streets and well kept gardens shouldering brightly painted houses along the way. We will see how the local inhabitants of the region live and work within this mighty jungle eco system. After a local lunch, enjoy a visit to the Natutama Museum which houses an exhibition of the natural life of the Amazon riverbanks and river beaches carved in wood. From Puerto Nariño and another short boat ride through the mangrove canal we will enter into the open water of Lake Tarapoto. Around the lake we will have the opportunity to spot pink Amazon river dolphins, caiman, and maybe even anacondas. Overnight at Hotel Waira Selva. **B/L/D**

**Day 6, Wednesday 10th April  
MARASHA NATURAL RESERVE**

Today we will have a full day to explore the wildlife and fauna of the Marasha Natural Reserve located 30 km upriver from Leticia. **B/L/D**

**Day 7, Thursday 11th April  
PUERTO NARIÑO – ARMENIA**

After breakfast the group will transfer to the airport for our flight to Armenia via Bogota. Overnight at the Hotel Salento Real. **B/D**

**Day 8, Friday 12th April  
FILANDIA, COCORA VALLEY AND SALENTO**

Today we visit the far northeast of Quindío to the beautiful Valle Cocora where the magnificent Wax Palm grows, in one of its few natural habitats, then on to the first settlement of the modern era in Quindío. As we enter into Filandia, the first stop, we'll know we are in the Coffee region of Colombia. The main square has not changed in appearance or character in decades. A coffee break in one of the many small cafes will allow you to take in the quaintness of uninterrupted lines of brightly painted houses in this traditional Pueblo of the region. Our guide will describe the culture and people of the region and how small pueblos (villages) like this form the backbone of rural agricultural life, if you want to feel like you are seeing Colombia then look no further. From Filandia we will drive to the Valle Cocora (Cocora Valley). Part of the wider Parque Nacional Los Nevados, the valley is located on the eastern limits of Quindío along the central Andean range. The valley has a unique landscape like a lush version of a Swiss valley. It has been regarded by Colombia as a sanctuary for its national symbol; the Wax Palm. Overnight at Hotel Salento Real. **B/D**

**Day 9, Saturday 13th April  
COFFEE REGION & BOTANIC GARDENS**

After breakfast, a half day of sightseeing. Throughout the coffee region we will find an impressive variety of flora and fauna, with incredible diversity and colour. The botanical gardens in Calarca, Quindío host a wide collection of trees, plants and insects that live in and flourish in the three departments of this region and beyond. The butterfly sanctuary within the garden houses thousands of stunning florescent and colourful butterflies. Walking through the different modules of the house with its waterfalls and abundant blossoms, the butterflies around you will fill the air with a spectrum of colours. Away from the butterfly sanctuary, heliconias, ferns and palms, of which there are some 235 species growing in Colombia, fill the gardens. Walking through the thick bamboo forest by means of a bridge, we can see how high the Guadua species of bamboo grows. Throughout the tour of the botanical gardens we will be accompanied by a specialist guide. Overnight at Hotel Salento Real. **B/D**

**Day 10, Sunday 14th April  
PEREIRA – CARTAGENA VIA BOGOTÁ**

Today we transfer to Cartagena. Founded in 1533 by Pedro de Heredia, Cartagena was formerly the Caribbean gateway port used by the Spanish. Here they would store the riches plundered from the interior before

they were transported back to the old world. It is not surprising therefore that the city was a draw for buccaneers and pirates who attempted on many occasions to take the city, most notably Sir Francis Drake in 1586 who "mercifully" agreed not to level the city in return for 10 million pesos that he carted back to England. It was after the attack by Drake that plans were made to fortify the city and work on the defensive walls began. These walls still stand today and mark the boundary between the old and new parts of the city. The walls and fort took a total of 200 years to build and complete and the Spanish finished them just 25 years before Colombia gained Independence. Cartagena eventually won its Independence in 1821, a full 3 years after Bogota had been liberated. Cartagena's rich history, diverse culture and pulsing energy delights every visitor, allowing them a glimpse into the past and a chance to relax in superb surroundings. This passionate and vibrant city with some of the best preserved colonial architecture in all of South America is truly an amazing destination. With its interesting mix of African rhythms and indigenous influences, Cartagena exudes character. Depending on the flight schedule, this afternoon you may have time to wander and familiarise yourself with the local area. Overnight at Hotel Don Pedro de Heredia. **B/D**

**Day 11, Monday 15th April  
CARTAGENA**

Cameras ready. Today starts with a guided walk through the historic walled city. The Spanish colonial architecture is some of the most impressive and best preserved in South America with its imposing merchant's houses, narrow streets, flower dotted balconies, stunning civic buildings and beautiful churches. The city is blessed with many squares and public spaces which are now home to sidewalk cafés and restaurants. This is where Colombians and visitors alike, relax and enjoy the magic of this amazing city. From the walled city you will travel to Castillo San Felipe and El Convento de La Popa, two



of Cartagena's most spectacular sites. The Fort of Castillo San Felipe is the largest Spanish fortification in the Americas and dominates the old town. On this amazing structure is a labyrinth of tunnels full of incredible stories. From the fort we will continue to the Convento La Popa. The hill is the highest point in the city and commands excellent views of the bay, old town and the Caribbean. Enjoy the

flower filled patio and the views that stretch all over the city and wander through the cool patio and interior of the convent. Overnight at Hotel Don Pedro de Heredia. **B/D**

**Day 12, Tuesday 16th April  
DAY TRIP TO ISLA GRANDE IN THE ROSARIO ISLANDS**

Discover one of the most beautiful archipelagos in the Caribbean. The fast motor boat departs directly from the pier in Cartagena and will take you on a 60 minute ride through the Bay of Cartagena and into the open sea through the Bocachica strait, and passing between the Colonial forts of Bateria de San Jose and Fuerte de San Fernando before arriving to the beautiful crystal clear waters of the Rosario Island archipelago. This group of 27 islands is surrounded by coral reefs, and is the perfect location to go snorkelling and swimming from the pristine white sandy beaches. It is one of the 46 Natural National Parks of Colombia, created to protect the most important coral reefs located on the Caribbean Colombian Coast. Dinner tonight is at your leisure at one of the many restaurants near your hotel. Overnight at Hotel Don Pedro de Heredia. **B/L**

**Day 13, Wednesday 17th April  
TRANSFER - HOTEL – CARTAGENA AIRPORT - PANAMA CITY**

We will say goodbye to Colombia today checking out from the hotel after breakfast. Our flight is to be confirmed, but likely to be Avianca AV9541 departing for Bogota at 09:15hrs and connecting to AV8372 at 12:30hrs, arriving into Panama City 14:20hrs.

**Welcome to Panama!**



On arrival in to Tocumen International Airport, we'll be met and transferred to our hotel located in

Panama City. The transfer is about 45 minutes. Dinner is at a lovely local restaurant. Overnight is at the Riande Granada Urban Hotel for two nights. **B/D**

**Day 14, Thursday 18th April  
TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILWAY, FORT SAN LORENZO & PORTOBELLO**

Early in the morning we will be transferred to the station at Panama City where we will board the train (which only departs once a day). Recreate the experience of the California Gold Rush and enjoy the spectacular landscape at the heart of the Panama Canal Watershed from the comfort of the train cabin. The huge panoramic windows will allow a breathtaking view as we weave in and out of lush tropical rainforest along the Panama Canal. The Panama Canal Railway offers an unforgettable experience on the first railroad to join the two oceans. After approximately 1 hour we will arrive in Colon City and start our tour in the Caribbean side of the country. A coach will collect the group and transfer us to Fort San Lorenzo. After a 1.5 hour drive we will take a short ferry ride over the Panama Canal, giving us an opportunity to see both the Gatun and Agua Clara Locks



on one end and Colon 2000 Port at the other. On the other side of the Canal we will make our way to Fort San Lorenzo, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Built at the mouth of the

Chagres River, this Spanish bastion served to fortify and protect the river entrance to Las Cruces Trail that led to Panama City on the Pacific Ocean and was later used as the port of entry for gold diggers on their way to California during the second half of the 19th century. We will travel through lush rainforest within San Lorenzo National Park, where we may have an opportunity to see sloths, coatimundis, toucans and other wildlife.

Afterwards we will make our way to Portobelo to visit the ruins of the colonial port, the customs house where the treasure and gold were stored, and Portobelo church, where the famous Black Christ statue is located. It is hard to believe that this sleepy coastal town once was one of the most important ports in the Caribbean Sea. During the 17th and 19th centuries, Portobelo was used as a Spanish Fortress and as a Caribbean terminal. Spices, gold, silver and other products coming from Peru and other Spanish Colonies passed along a trail called the Kings Path, and were loaded on ships to be transported to Spain. Portobelo was attacked by pirates several times; the best known attack was organised by Henry Morgan. On your return to Panama City we will make a brief stop where remnants of Las Cruces Trail, the 400-year-old colonial trail used by the Spaniards to transport gold across the isthmus, are still found.

Overnight Riande Granada Urban Hotel. **B/D**



**Day 15, Friday 19th April  
PANAMA CITY – GAMBOA**

This morning we will travel to Gamboa, about 40 minutes out of the city. We'll check in to the hotel, then take the aerial tram to enjoy the view of the surrounding 100 hectare rainforest. On the climb there are spectacular views of the Chagres River and the Embera indigenous

community. At the top you can view the entire Soberania National Park and the Panama Canal. During the afternoon, a guided walking tour through the tropical rainforest. Overnight at Gamboa Rainforest Resort. **B/D**

**Day 16, Saturday 20th April  
PANAMA CASCO VIEJO, BIODIVERSITY MUSEUM & MIRAFLORES LOCKS**

In the morning we will visit the Panama Old Quarter (Casco Viejo), the Cathedral tower, the Old Panama Museum and then continue to the Biodiversity Museum, located on the Amador Causeway in Panama City. It was designed by renowned architect Frank Gehry. This is Gehry's first masterpiece in Latin America. The design was conceived in 1999. In 2004 it was announced that Gehry would donate his design to the people of Panama. Overnight at Gamboa Rainforest Resort. **B/D**

**Day 17, Sunday 21st April  
PANAMA CANAL PARTIAL TRANSIT – NORTHBOUND \***

Today at the appropriate time we will be transferred to Flamenco Marina (near Panama City) for our transit. Once arrived at Flamenco Marina we will check-in for our Canal Transit. We will sail towards the entrance of the Panama Canal on the Pacific Ocean. Take a moment to admire the Bay of Panama and Panama City's splendour skyline before passing under the Bridge of the Americas. The Panama Canal partial transit tour begins with entering the Miraflores Locks and we will be raised 18 m

above sea level in two distinct steps. Then we will enter Miraflores Lmake, which is a small artificial body of fresh water that separates Miraflores from



Pedro Miguel Locks. Next, we will enter Pedro Miguel Locks, which is the second set of locks on the Pacific side, and here the vessel is raised 9 m in one step. After exiting the Pedro Miguel Locks, we will be able to view the new Centennial Bridge which crosses over the Canal. We will then enter the north end of the Gailard Cut where the Chagres River flows into the Canal. The Gailard Cut (also known as Culebra Cut because its curves resemble a snake) is one of the main points of interest for visitors because it was carved through the Continental Divide and this section of the Canal is full of history and geological value. The Pacific Queen will travel the Cut's 13.7 kms on the way to Gamboa Dredging Division. As you transit the Cut you will be able to appreciate the continuous maintenance that this area requires, because it is very susceptible to landslides. In this area, you will also be able to observe the work in progress of the Panama Canal expansion project. Finally, disembark at the Gamboa Dredging Division. Overnight at Hotel Gamboa Rainforest. **B/D**

\*Note this transit journey can either go northbound or southbound, depending on the day and Panama Canal Authority. Also, due to the dry season and low water level in Gatun Lake which provides water to all the Canal operations, the Panama Canal Authority has implemented strict water conservation guidelines. These measures restrict transit schedules and may cause changes in Canal Transit departure times. Currently this

transit is scheduled northbound, if it remains as such the group will disembark and go straight back to the hotel as it will be in the same area. If transit journey switches to southbound we can make arrangements for the group to board the boat in Gamboa and then return to Gamboa from Panama City by private transfer.

### Day 18, Monday 22nd April CHIRIQUI PROVINCE

Early this morning we will be transferred to the airport for our flight to David on Air Panama 7P 0670 departing 07:00hrs. This flight is approximately 35 minutes. Upon arrival we will be met by our local host and begin to explore the area. We begin with a tour of Finca Dracula, an orchid farm located 5 minutes away from Guadalupe, Cerro Punta. The name of the farm comes from the Dracula Orchid — and there are 124 species of Draculas growing in the Finca's greenhouses. They only wake up in the night lifting up a blossom with a ghoulishly



vampire face. Different faces, different colours—but none raise their heads during daylight hours. We will also visit Sitio Barriles a famous

archeological site. Afterwards, travel to Mount Totumas an eco-lodge located on a 400-acre private cloud forest reserve. This will be your home for the following 2 nights. Enjoy this amazing area at your leisure, exploring the many different trails in the area. Overnight at Totumas Eco Lodge. *Box Breakfast/D*

### Day 19, Tuesday 23rd April HALF DAY WILDLIFE OBSERVATION AT THE CLOUD FOREST RESERVE

Today we will enjoy a guided hike in search of wildlife and to enjoy the untouched fauna. If lucky, we will have the opportunity to spot Resplendent Quetzal, Three Wattled Bellbird, and Crested Guan and perhaps even the elusive Highland Tinamou. 15 species of hummingbird have been spotted including the Magenta-Throated Woodstar, Brown-Violet Ear, Fiery-Throated Hummingbird and Long-Billed Starthroat. We will also visit a local coffee farm. Overnight at Totumas Eco Lodge. *B/D*

### Day 20, Wednesday 24th April AZUERO PENINSULA

At the appropriate time we will depart for the Azuero Peninsula known as the folkloric heart of the country. As we make our way to our destination enjoy the amazing views across Panama's countryside. Lunch is in a local restaurant. Stops will be made at points of interest such as the small town La Arena right outside of Chitre known for its pre-Columbian pottery. In the evening we will have a traditional dinner. This transfer takes approximately 4 – 5 hours. Overnight tonight at the Hotel Cubitá. *B/Picnic lunch/D*

### Day 21, Thursday 25th April ISLA IGUANA TOUR

After breakfast we will be collected for an exciting adventure to Iguana Island.

The tour begins with a 1.15 hour transfer to Playa El Arenal in Pedasí, where our boat will be waiting take us to Iguana Island - a wildlife refuge 8 kilometres off the coast. The island is famous for its white sand beach, crystal waters, extensive mangrove forests and coral reefs, including 12 different types of corals that shelter more than 300 species of fish. Dolphins are frequently seen, as well as (harmless) sharks, turtles and - between June and October - humpback whales that migrate from cold waters to Panama's Pacific coast with warmer water temperatures. Iguana Island is also home to a large breeding colony of frigate birds and - as the island's name indicates - iguanas. Once on the island, we will explore the different coral reefs snorkelling and exploring the colourful submarine world. Later, we can relax on the stunning white sand beach for a while, before exploring a hiking trail that crosses the island from west to east (with our guide) to observe the numerous iguanas. Around noon, we will enjoy a fresh picnic-style lunch directly at the beach. Please consider that there are no restrooms no any other facilities on the island because is a nature reserve. In the early afternoon, you will be taken back to Pedasí and further on to Chitré. Overnight at the Hotel Cubitá. *B/L/D*



### Day 22, Friday 26th April RETURN TO PANAMA CITY

Our trip is almost over, but before travelling back to Panama City, we will visit Pesé in the heart of the province of Herrera and home of Hacienda San Isidro, where the best rum in Panama is produced: Ron Abuelo. After a brief historical introduction in a colonial house, we will move in an oxcart through the cane fields towards the Hacienda. We'll visit the distillery to learn about the different steps that are necessary to produce alcohol based on sugar cane: grinding, fermentation and distillation. Then visit the wineries where the rum ages and matures in oak barrels. Now is the time to try the different rums that are produced in Hacienda San Isidro: In a guided tasting we will sample the Ron Abuelo Añejo of 5 years, 7 years, 12 years, the special collection of 3 rums of 15 years and the Ron Abuelo Centuria - a hearth of 30 years. After the tasting, a traditional Panamanian lunch and an open-bar of cocktails and drinks based on rum to complete this tour. After lunch we will be transferred from Azuero peninsula back to Panama City. Tonight is our farewell dinner. We stay overnight back at Riande Granada Urban Hotel *B/L/D*

### Day 23, Saturday 27th April DEPART FOR HOME

Transfer to the Tocumen International Airport for flight back to Australia. (Note. We may need to at the airport up 3 hours before flight departure). *B*