



PLACES OF INTEREST

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1 The **Panama Canal** deservedly stands alone as the greatest single feat of engineering and construction in this or any other age. It is not a simple subject of an admiring tourist's photograph, an interesting though lifeless union of concrete and steel standing as silent testament to glory long faded. Rather, the canal is, as it has been for the past century, a living and breathing, highly complex and sophisticated organism which functions with and for a purpose. Visitors understandably view the canal with a sense of wonderment, often thunderstruck by the staggering facts and figures represented in the creation of the waterway. However, the one single dynamic which truly represents the incredible audacity of this canal ... the one single element is ... the human element. Thousands upon thousands of unknown and rarely credited common laborers came from many parts of the West Indies and Central America. They toiled under circumstances barely imaginable and accomplished what was all but impossible. In a jungle where rainfall is measured in feet ... not inches ... in heat and humidity which defies description, through an impenetrable forest where alligators, venomous snakes, smallpox, yellow fever and malaria took the lives of tens of thousands ... the story of their achievement is truly remarkable.

2 **Gatun Lake** is man-made and plays a vital role in the operation of the Panama Canal. Visitors touring the lake have the opportunity to see a vast array of wildlife. What once were the tops of lush hills now make up the many rainforest covered islands which dot the lake. Crocodiles, tropical birds, iguanas, monkeys and tree sloths are just a few of the animals which inhabit the islands and shore.

3 **Fort San Lorenzo** was built in the late 1500s. Spain was attempting to protect her financial interests against the audacious attacks of pillaging pirates. The fort was constructed on the orders of King Philip II. It remains one of the largest and best preserved Spanish citadels in Panama.

4 **Panama City**, with a population nearing one million, is the nation's capital, commercial and cultural center. The city serves as the Pacific gateway to the Panama Canal. The Old City, known as "Panama Viejo", was founded in 1519. The ruins are more the work of the English privateer, Captain Henry Morgan, than the ravages of time. Together with "Casco Viejo de Panama" (the walled colonial city, 1671) visitors can get a wonderfully interesting glimpse back to an historic era long past.

Also of interest ...

The **Emberá Indians** are an amazing people ... in body and spirit. They lived in the rainforests of Colombia and Panama for countless thousands of years prior to the arrival of Capt. Columbus. Today the Emberá, limited in practicing their ancient means of survival, have opened their villages to welcome visitors. Guests have the opportunity to meet and learn about these wonderful people as they share the customs and culture which have defined their way of life since long before the first Europeans stepped foot upon the isthmus.

SHORE EXCURSIONS To make the most of your visit to Colón and the surrounding area we suggest you take one of our organized Shore Excursions. For information concerning tour content and pricing, consult your Shore Excursion Brochure or contact the Shore Excursion Desk. When going ashore, be advised to take with you only necessary items and secure any valuables onboard.

LOCAL CUSTOMS Bargaining: Prices are usually fixed. Bargaining is not practiced in the retail shopping venues.

Tipping: A tip of 15% is appropriate in restaurants.

LOCAL CUISINE AND DRINK SPECIALTIES The food in Panama has its roots in Spanish, West African and traditional Native American. This is the food of the Caribbean. Seafood is prominent together with staples such as yuca, coconut rice, beans and corn. Empanadas are deep-fried pocket sandwiches filled with seasoned meat or cheese. Patacones are fried plantains (those big green bananas). Resembling a thick potato, when they're hot from the pan, sprinkled with a little salt, drizzled with lime juice and dipped in cool, fresh sour cream they make a great snack or side dish. Gallo pinto is a tasty combination of beans, rice and pork. Arroz con Pollo is the famously delicious chicken and rice. Sancocho is a hearty chicken and vegetable soup. Flan de Caramelo is a sweet caramel custard desert, popular in the cuisine of many Latin American countries.

Chicha fuerte is a local fermented drink usually made from corn or fruit. If it has not been fermented it is known as batido. A drink combining vanilla, cinnamon, corn and sweet milk is called Chicheme. It is often served with breakfast. Seco Herrero has a high alcohol content. Distilled from sugarcane, many consider this the national drink of Panama. In Panama's Chiriquí Province, around the towns of Volcan and Boquete, high in the mountains of the misty rainforest a few small family farms grow and process some of the very best coffee beans in the world.

SHOPPING FACILITIES Colón 2000 and Cristobal Pier are the duty-free shopping areas. They are in relative close proximity to each other. It is best to take an inexpensive taxi ride if you wish to go from one to the other. The shopping areas were specially designed and built to accommodate cruise passengers. Both facilities offer a wide range of national and international products. It should be noted that the Colón Free Zone (Zona Libre de Colón) is currently the second largest commercial duty-free zone in the world.

LOCAL CURRENCY The coins in Panama are called balboas. U.S. dollars are the official paper currency. Major credit cards are widely accepted. ATM's are available.

POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE

There is a Postal Drop inside the cruise ship terminal.

Dial the following access numbers to use a personal calling card:

AT&T: 800.0109

MCI: 800.0108 or 800.3456

TOURIST INFORMATION There is a Tourist Information Booth also inside the cruise ship terminal.

TRANSPORTATION Taxis are available. Some of the drivers may speak English. The fare should be agreed upon prior to departure.

USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

Yes - Si

No - No

Hello - ¡Hola!

Good Bye - Adiós

Please - Por favor

Thank-you - Gracias

You're welcome - De nada.