



Panama Information

Travel documents

U.S. citizens traveling to Panama must have a passport that is valid for six months after their expected return date. No entry visas are required for U.S. citizens. Please check travel.state.gov to confirm passport validity requirements prior to your tour. Citizens of all other countries should contact their appropriate embassies to find out what documentation is required for them to travel. Travelers under the age of 18 will need to get a liability waiver signed by their parent or guardian. This allows the Group Leader to assume limited power of attorney and sign liability releases for certain included activities. If the traveler's parent or guardian does not submit this waiver, the traveler cannot participate in those activities.

Vaccinations and health precautions

For information on necessary vaccinations, we recommend you visit [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) or consult your physician for the most up-to-date information.

Tour Director and driver

You will have the same Tour Director during your entire tour—they may also act as a local guide during sightseeing tours and guided activities. You will typically have the same bus driver throughout the entire tour as well.

Safety

Always inform your Tour Director if you should need to leave the group at any point. Store valuables in hotel safe deposit boxes and refrain from carrying large sums of money or wearing valuable jewelry. Although hotels in coastal areas may be located near the beach, swimming is only permitted in certain areas designated by EF for safety reasons. Please be sure to read EF's *Travel & Safety Guide* before going on tour.

Tipping

It's customary to tip your Tour Director and bus driver as a token of appreciation at the end of the tour. We recommend:

- \$6–8 per person per day for your Tour Director
- \$3 per person per day for your bus driver
- \$1–2 per person for each guided activity (like snorkeling)

We encourage Group Leaders to collect tip money from their travelers before leaving for tour. You can tip in U.S. dollars and present the money to your Tour Director and bus driver at the end of tour in the tip envelopes provided by EF. If you have any questions on tipping, please reach out to your Tour Consultant.

Currency

Panama's currency is technically the Balboa, but because the Balboa's exchange rate is fixed to the dollar, most currency seen and used in Panama will be U.S. dollars. When you use an ATM, you will be given U.S. dollars. We recommend withdrawing money from a bank or ATM instead of using credit cards. Although most shops accept credit cards, the phone lines are much slower in Panama, which makes using credit cards time consuming. It may also cause delays in your group's schedule. Traveler's checks are usually not accepted in Panama.

Be sure to notify your bank or credit card company that you will be traveling abroad, and ask what international fees you may have to pay.

Transportation

Travel time between destinations on your Panama tour can take anywhere from 30 minutes to four hours, depending on the itinerary for the day. While most roads are straight and level, travelers prone to motion sickness should consider bringing medication. When traveling by bus through Panama City, traffic may cause delays depending on the time of day. Our itineraries avoid busy traffic times when possible; however, groups may still experience delays if the traffic is heavier than expected.

Accommodations

While in Panama, you will stay in hotels that are simple but clean and comfortable. Be aware that tropical conditions make insects and other small animals (such as ants, mosquitoes, lizards, spiders, and frogs) more prevalent, particularly outside of the city.

Students under the age of 20 will share rooms with two or three other travelers of the same gender in rooms that have single or shared double beds (or a combination of the two). Students may share rooms with other students in the tour group who are not from their own school. Adults typically share rooms with one other adult of the same gender, and may also room with adults in the tour group who are not from their school. Groups may not all have rooms next to each other and can be on different floors, and hotels may be located outside of the city center.

Electrical voltage and outlets in Panama are the same as in the U.S., so you will not need an adapter or converter.

Phones and internet

If you plan to use your personal cell phone on tour, contact your wireless provider to see what fees you may incur for calling, texting, or using data abroad. Wi-Fi may not be available at all hotels in Panama and may be unreliable when available, even on the road. Travelers should plan to be without Wi-Fi for 1–2 days at a time. Consider buying a phone plan for more consistent and reliable connectivity.

Local food

Panamanian food is flavorful but not spicy. Typical dishes include rice and beans, plantains, spaghetti, vegetables, beef, chicken, pork, and fresh fruit. In addition to water, fresh fruit juices will often be served with meals. As well as water. Water is chlorinated throughout the country and safe to drink, however some people may choose to use bottled water. Bottled water is available for purchase everywhere for \$1–2.

Bathrooms

While public bathroom facilities are generally available in Panama, it will sometimes cost around 50 cents to use them (which may include getting toilet paper from an attendant before you enter). Many hotel and public bathrooms do not permit toilet paper to be flushed.

Weather

Panama has a tropical climate with two seasons: wet and dry. The wet season begins in May and lasts through November. During the wet season it will rain every day, which can be anything from a light rain to a downpour. The dry season begins in December and lasts through April. Temperatures remain fairly constant throughout the year but can vary according to region. Please check weather.com for your destinations and travel periods.

Packing

We suggest bringing the following items: a light jacket or windbreaker, rain gear, comfortable walking shoes, water shoes, a hat, sunscreen, a swimsuit and beach towel, insect repellent, cotton clothing that can be dirtied, and binoculars. You may also want to have a small backpack you can carry during the day to hold extra clothes in case the weather changes or you get caught in the rain.

Luggage

Many airlines charge fees for the first checked bags to Panama, so be sure to verify with your airline before you depart or ensure your suitcase fits the allowances for carry-on luggage. Luggage fees for checking bag on the international flights between the United States and Panama are not included in the price of your tour. Travelers may pay to check their bag(s) at the airport when checking in or avoid paying any baggage fees by traveling with only carry-on luggage. Please contact the airline for baggage restrictions and regulations. While baggage fees are not included in your tour price on flights from the U.S. to Panama, they are included for flights between Panama and Costa Rica or Colombia.

Specific Activities

In **Boquete**, groups will experience difficulty levels of 2–3 while whitewater rafting (depending on whether it's dry season or rainy season). Groups will be divided into smaller groups of 5–7 travelers per raft, each with their own local guide. All travelers must wear closed-toe shoes or sandals with straps—flip flops are not acceptable footwear for this activity.

For those travelers participating in **ziplining and/or whitewater rafting**, there is a weight limit of 200 lbs for safety reasons. Before ziplining, operators will need to confirm that travelers approaching this weight restriction fit comfortably into the ziplining harness before being allowed to participate.

For those participating in the boat tour on **Gatun Lake**, please note that travelers will not disembark onto Monkey Island, as it does not adhere to our animal welfare guidelines. Learn more about EF's commitment to animal welfare at eftours.com/our-story/world-animal-protection.