

EXTRA! 10 TRAVEL TRICKS TO SAVE YOU TIME + MONEY

TRAVEL + LEISURE

AUGUST 2009

WORLD'S BEST Hotels Airlines Cruises Islands Cities AWARDS

2009
READERS'
POLL

travelandleisure.com

Display until August 28, 2009
\$4.50



You Tell Us Your Favorites

LATIN AMERICA



SPOTLIGHT: PANAMA

See why Panama is quickly becoming Central America's new "it" destination for eco-chic escapes and green luxury.

From left to right: Panama City's cosmopolitan architecture; the electric fuchsia of a hibiscus flower in bloom; stunning beach scene in the San Blas Islands; the lush jungle of Darien National Park.



Chic seaside dining overlooking the sparkling Caribbean. Right: Walking on a boardwalk to a secluded bungalow.

From the lively mix of old and new to sugary beaches, Panama is one of Latin America's most buzzed-about destinations. This alluring gateway between nature and culture is an absolute must for ecotourism with a spark. Go for the lush rainforests, stay for the sustainable resorts, great restaurants, and stylish vibe that's garnered comparisons to Hong Kong and Miami.

■ **WHERE TO STAY:** Panama City is often described as three cities in one—old Panama, colonial Panama, and modern Panama—with hotels ranging from centuries-old mansions to five-star boutiques. Centrally located in the shopping and financial district, The Bristol strikes a balance with lovely old-world elegance and one of the best restaurants in town, Barandas, which serves Panamanian specialties by award-winning chef Cuquita Arias.

■ **WHAT TO SEE:** Going green gets a massive splash of style in Panama City. Located within city limits, minutes from downtown's shops, the Metropolitan National Park is a true "urban jungle." However, an even sleeker take on ecotourism is the new Museum of Biodiversity, which looks more like a contemporary art museum than an ecological showcase.

■ **WHERE TO GO:** The city's seamless flow between nature and skyline only hints at the extraordinary beauty that lies beyond.

San Blas Islands: The fully sustainable Coral Lodge has secluded bungalows right on the water's edge with infinity-pool-like access to snorkeling and diving.

Bocas del Toro Archipelago: Relax in the pure surroundings of the solar-powered Punta Caracol Acqua-Lodge, then explore mangrove forests and off-shore coral reefs in the Isla Bastimentos National Marine Park, which is just a short boat ride away.

Mountain Region: In the Chiriquí province, visit the soaring Baru Volcano National Park—from its peak, travelers can see both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

LATIN AMERICA

SEE IT YOUR WAY WITH KENSINGTON TOURS

Some of the world's most amazing sights and experiences are found in Central and South America, so getting some insider advice and know-how goes a long way. For the last decade, **Kensington Tours** has made its mark designing custom private tours for thousands of travelers. Here are some surprising ways to get a great value.

LEAVE THE GROUP:

On average, arranging a private Kensington tour will save travelers about 30 percent compared to comparable luxury group tours.

MIX IT UP: With a private guide and vehicle travelers have the flexibility to set their pace. Kensington Tours will design customized itineraries that allow their guests to strategically mix-and-match hotels to splurge-and-save.

PUSH BOUNDARIES: From Panama and Costa Rica all the way down to Antarctica, there is so much color in the region. Maximize your time with two-in-one journeys, like the Galapagos & Machu Picchu Explorer (ten days; from \$4,142), to see more for less.



For private tours to more than 80 countries, go to kensingtontours.com or call 888-903-2001.



KENSINGTON TOURS
PRIVATE GUIDED TRAVEL WORLDWIDE



To plan a Panama escape and experience green luxury, go to visitpanama.com.