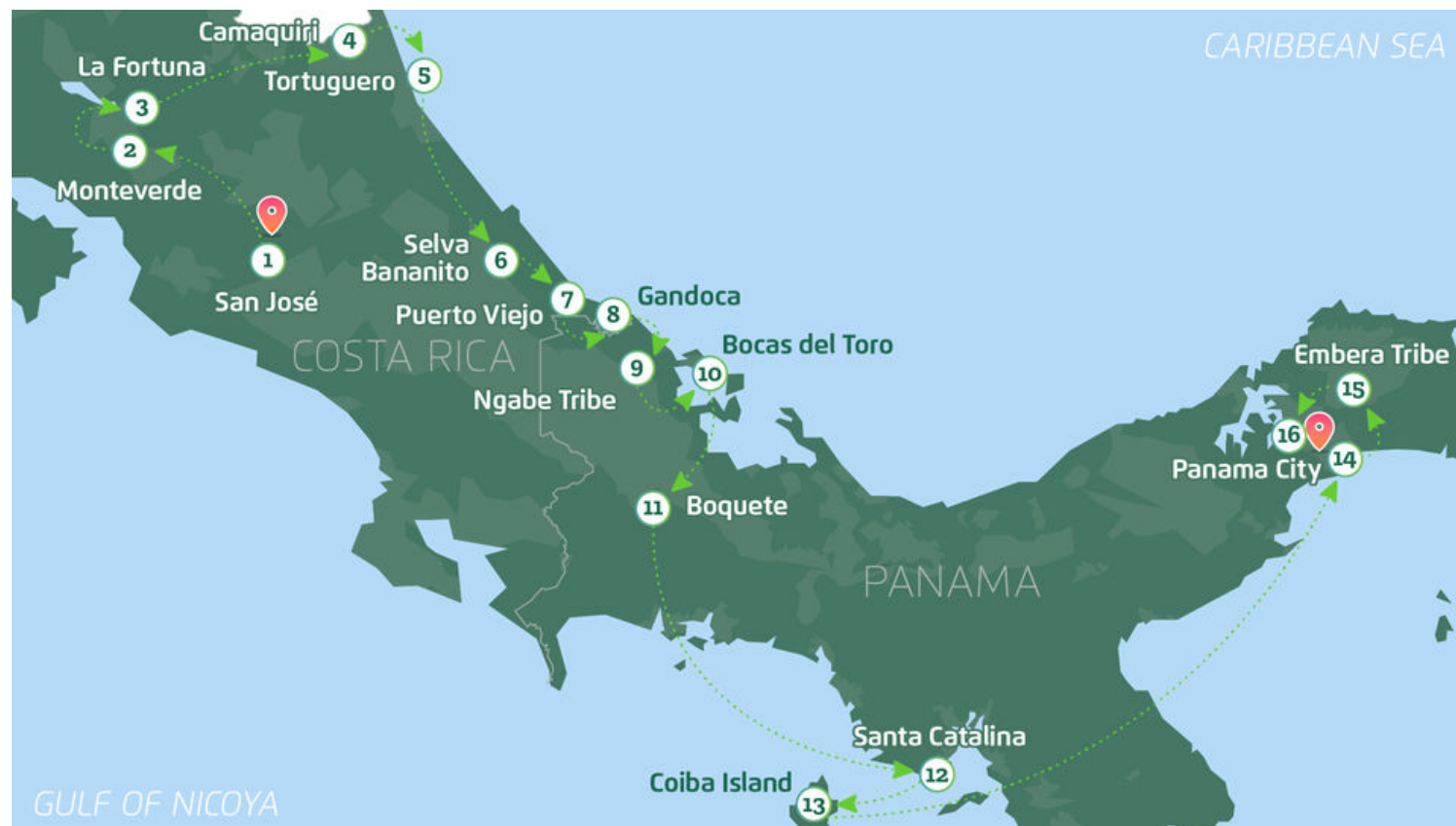




**GAP ADVENTURE: COSTA RICA & PANAMA
(6 WEEKS)**

ProjectsAbroad





GAP ADVENTURE: COSTA RICA & PANAMA 6 WEEKS

Are you yearning for an experience that will change your perspective? This epic six-week journey through Costa Rica and Panama isn't just a vacation; it's a full-blown transformation. Unleash your inner explorer as you trek through lush rainforests, snorkel vibrant coral reefs, and learn from indigenous communities living in harmony with nature.

Here's a taste of what awaits:

- **Become a Conservation Champion:** Learn from experts and actively participate in wildlife rehabilitation efforts, from tracking elusive jaguars to releasing rescued sloths back into the wild.
- **Connect with Cultures:** Immerse yourself in the rich traditions of the Bribri and Naso peoples. Learn traditional crafts, participate in storytelling sessions, and discover how they're adapting to a changing world.
- **Thrillseekers Adventure:** Zipline through canopies, whitewater raft down roaring rivers, hike active volcanoes, and conquer epic waves with professional surf lessons.
- **Tropical Island Paradise:** Explore the stunning Bocas del Toro archipelago, snorkel alongside colourful marine life, and unwind on pristine beaches.

This isn't just an itinerary — it's a roadmap to personal growth, unforgettable experiences, and a deeper connection with the natural world. Every step of your journey will broaden your horizons and challenge you to grow as a global citizen. Are you ready to make memories that will last a lifetime?

Week 1 CLOUD FORESTS

- Learn from conservation experts
- Zipline across forest canopies
- Hike to Arenal Volcano and see lava fields
- Relax in hot springs

DAY 1 | ALAJUELA

Kick off this once-in-a-lifetime trip with a tour of Alajuela after being collected from San Jose's international airport. Join a cultural orientation during which you'll get to know your fellow travellers and practice your Spanish.

DAYS 2-4 | MONTEVERDE

The adventure really begins as you travel north to Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve. Conservation experts will guide you on a half day hike through the misty trails revealing a world of exotic flora and fauna. You'll listen to talks about the history of conservation efforts in the region, and learn about forest restoration.

The group will have time to explore the town of Santa Elena and will delve into the vibrant world of insects and arachnids at one of Costa Rica's oldest butterfly gardens.

DAYS 5-8 | LA FORTUNA

Travel by bus and by boat across Arenal Lake to reach the town of La Fortuna. Soar through the rainforest canopy on one of Costa Rica's longest ziplines with 13 platforms and 12 cables through the forest. Unwind in soothing thermal pools and visit local crocodile farms.

Explore Arenal Volcano National Park's rich biodiversity and ancient lava fields and hike to Fortuna waterfall. Gain insights into local conservation efforts and how locals are using tourism to fund community initiatives. You'll have a free day to explore or relax here as well.





Week 2

RAINFOREST CONSERVATION

- Learn conservation skills from biologists
- Join night walks through the rainforest
- Visit a Sea Turtle reserve
- Travel by boat through the Tortuguero canals

DAYS 9-10 | CAMAQUIRI

At Camaquiri Research Station and Reserve, you'll engage in conservation volunteering and educational activities. The experience begins with a small hike through restored secondary forest around the station. The group will learn about wildlife monitoring using trap cameras and assist researchers in interpreting and organising local wildlife images. The stay also includes learning about tropical insects and interacting with resident biologists, providing insight into their experiences as on-site researchers.

DAY 11 | TORTUGUERO

Journey by road and boat through the largest and most remote wildlife refuge in Costa Rica (Barra de Colorado). Discover the stunning beauty of the famous Tortuguero Canals. You'll visit a research station operated in partnership with the Ministry of Environment to learn about joint private and public conservation efforts. At night, you'll either see Giant Sea Turtles laying eggs on the beach (Autumn / Fall) or take a night tour of the jungle (Spring). Nesting season for turtles is seasonal, so the Spring group will see nesting turtles in Gandoca.

DAY 12-14 | SELVA BANANITO

Stay at a lodge deep within the rainforest. You'll engage in hands-on conservation activities such as maintaining survey trails and recently planted trees, surveying birds, and working in tree nurseries. You'll hike through primary forests with ancient trees and use specialist equipment to climb 20 metres to the treetops. Enjoy refreshing swims in numerous creeks and rivers during your time in the forest.

Week 3

CARIBBEAN COASTS

- Practice archery with the Bribri community
- Support wildlife rehabilitation work
- Explore Cahuita National Park
- Paddle through mangrove forests and lagoons
- Join community led ecotourism projects

DAYS 15-17 | PUERTO VIEJO

Explore a Jaguar Rescue Center to learn about wildlife rehabilitation and conservation efforts aimed at releasing animals in Selva Bananito. You'll have a unique opportunity to see rescued animals up close. The group will also explore Cahuita National Park, featuring a coastal hike to spot wildlife and enjoy beautiful beaches. Your afternoons will be kept free to relax by the Caribbean Sea.

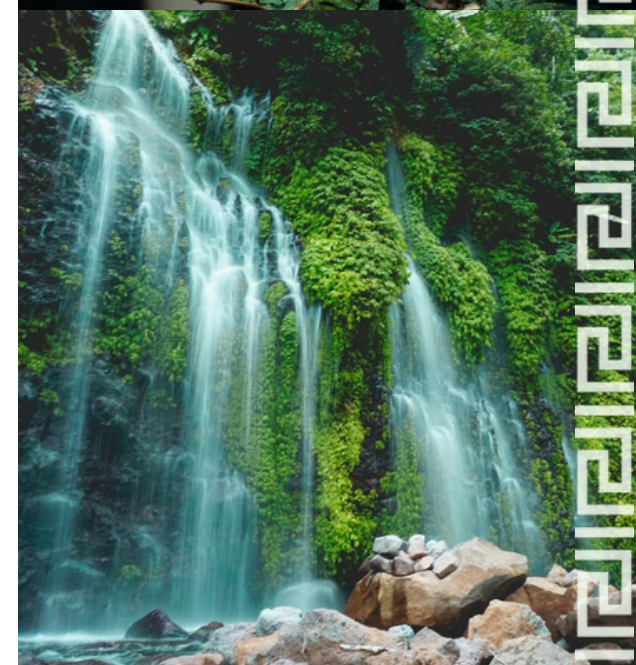
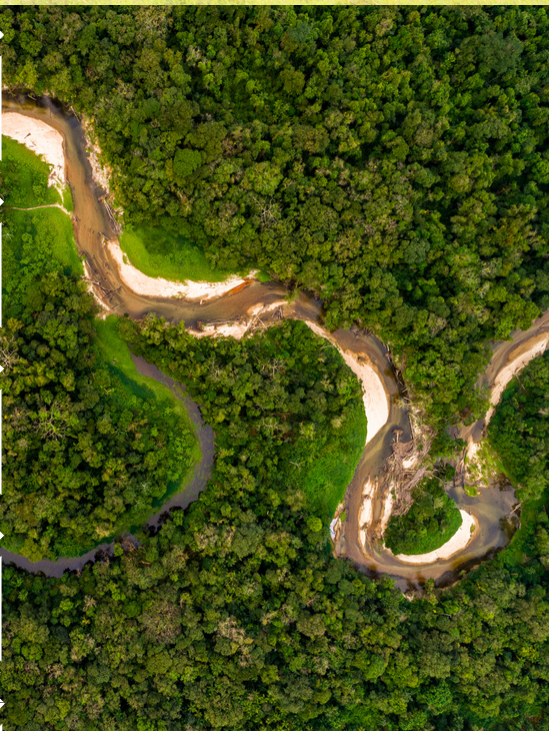
DAY 18 | BRIBRI COMMUNITY

Embark on an overnight cultural immersion experience. Take a boat across the Telire River, observing the interaction between indigenous and non-indigenous cultures through commerce at the rivers edge. You'll continue deeper into the forest to a traditional Bribri reserve. Here you'll learn the traditional skills of archery and weaving suita palm roofs. The day concludes with storytelling by local elders, offering insights into Bribri culture and traditions.

DAYS 19-21 | GANDOCA

Travel to Gandoca Manzanillo Wildlife Refuge and discover a family run community-based ecotourism project. You'll engage in community volunteering, such as removing invasive plants or maintaining community gardens.

Take a boat tour of the internationally recognized Gandoca Lagoon mangroves to learn about wetland ecosystems. Hike to the remote Punta Uva beach to relax and conduct a beach clean-up activity — helping protect this remote coastal area.



Week 4

ISLAND ECOSYSTEMS

- See how indigenous communities live in and respect the rainforest environment
- Venture into coastal caves
- See dolphins and go snorkelling
- Explore tropical Caribbean islands

DAYS 22-23 | NASO COMMUNITY

Cross the border into Panama! Immerse yourself in the rich culture of the Naso people, one of the few remaining Native American tribes living under a monarchy. Nestled along the Teribe River within the rainforest of Parque Nacional La Amistad; this community offers a unique glimpse into indigenous life fighting to preserve its traditions. Stay with a local family and explore the town.

Your Naso guide will lead an interpretive jungle hike to reveal the secrets of the rainforest. From identifying flora to spotting wildlife like sloths, monkeys, and toucans; this experience highlights the Naso's deep connection with the rainforest.

DAYS 24-27 | BOCAS DEL TORO

Discover the tropical paradise of Bocas del Toro, an archipelago where Caribbean culture meets stunning natural beauty. Explore the islands by boat and e-bike, visiting breathtaking locations like Starfish Beach, Dolphin Bay (an important breeding sanctuary for dolphins), and Red Frog Beach. Snorkel in crystal-clear waters at Crawl Bay to observe colorful marine life. Delve into environmental consciousness at Plastic City, learning about recycling efforts in the region.

The adventure continues on Bastimentos Island, where you'll cruise through mangrove forests and explore caves home to essential bat populations. The island is teeming with life and you'll likely see three-toed sloths hanging from trees during your island hikes. You'll have a final day to relax or explore at your own leisure.

Week 5

MOUNTAINS TO SEA

- Go White Water Rafting
- Join chocolate and coffee making workshops
- Snorkel and explore Coiba National Park
- See cloud forests from hanging bridges

DAYS 28-32 | BOQUETE

Nestled in the highlands of Panama, Boquete is a charming town surrounded by cloud forests, and famous for its adventure activities. You'll spend a full day white water rafting along the Chiriqui Viejo river. Take a 4x4 truck deep into the cloud forest to gain unparalleled views from hanging bridges. Learn about this incredibly diverse ecosystem from experienced guides.

Work alongside community members for a day to plant new trees and learn about threats to this ecosystem. You'll also have one day for independent exploration or rest.

Experience the rich cultural heritage of the Ngäbe People. Local women have created a sustainable cacao plantation using permaculture techniques and traditional methods. Learn about the entire chocolate-making process, from seed to bean, and even craft your own chocolate bar. Coffee enthusiasts will delight with a tour of Geisha coffee plantations, learning about and tasting some of the world's most expensive and sought-after coffee varieties.

DAYS 33-34 | COIBA ISLAND

Coiba National Marine Park, known as the "Galápagos of Central America," offers an unparalleled adventure for nature enthusiasts. Hike through lush forests to spot exotic and endemic wildlife. A highlight is snorkelling in crystal-clear waters to observe sea turtles, white-tip reef sharks, and even a chance to see whales! This unique experience combines terrestrial and marine exploration, showcasing the park's rich biodiversity above and below the water.





Week 6

PACIFIC SURF & CITY DISCOVERY

- 3 days of surfing lessons
- Travel by dugout canoe to visit the Embera people
- Marvel at the Panama Canal

DAYS 35-37 | SANTA CATALINA

Relax by the beach and catch some waves as you're taught to surf over three days. Local instructors will show you the basic techniques and check on your progress each day. You'll have free time to keep practicing or explore the coast.

DAYS 38-39 | PANAMA CITY

Tour the colonial and modern districts of the city, as well as the ruins of Panama Viejo (Old Panama). Learn how Panama's coveted geographical position has shaped its history, and explore the Miraflores Locks to get an up close view of the Panama Canal's operations.

Visit the stunning Bio Museum. Designed by world famous architect, Frank Gehry, it tells the geological history of Panama and its effects on climate and human evolution.

DAY 40 | EMBERA COMMUNITY

Take a traditional dugout canoe upstream through Chagres National Park to an Embera indigenous community. Immerse yourself in their well-preserved traditions and culture by experiencing their art, music, dances, and cuisine. Discover the challenges they face with the creation of national parks around their village and their growing reliance on ecotourism instead of their usual hunting and subsistence farming practices.

DAYS 41-42 | PANAMA CITY

Enjoy your final full day at your own leisure with the friends you have made. Group leaders will take you to the airport for your onward travel from Panama City.

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WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- All activities and tours highlighted in the schedule
- Three meals per day and drinking water
- Accommodation - a mix of homestays, hostels, hotels, and lodges
- All transport in Costa Rica and Panama - a mix of public and private coaches, and boat rides.
- Airport pickup and drop-off
- A minimum of two support staff with the group during activities
- Visa support and advice

PROGRAM DESIGN

Five Gap Components provide the focus for the development of this program. They ensure the perfect blend of adrenaline, exploration and meaningful travel:

- Adventure
- Community
- Exploration
- People & Planet
- Transformation

We pride ourselves on our ability to deliver authentic, unforgettable experiences — with safety, support, and the freedom to explore.

HOW DO I BOOK?

Contact us to discuss dates and secure your place, or ask any questions: info@projects-abroad.org

