Passage through the Panama Canal & Costa Rica
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Suggested Readings and Travel Tips
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Central American Politics and Development Bibliography


**Tips for Pre-/Post-Program Travel**

**Panama City:** The main must-see is the Casco Viejo or colonial part of the city. A visit to the Panama Canal Museum is a must-see there. Panama City is a very commercialized financial center, so there is more shopping than anything else, but for the more culturally inclined, it might be best to leave the city and go to the nearby first colonial site in Panama, Panama Viejo. It is nearby the main city and there should be a range of organized excursions to choose from. If you wish to venture further but still within day-trip range, there is El Valle de Anton, which has historic significance and some eco-tourism possibilities. Bocas del Toro was also suggested to me. The Gamboa Nature Preserve is nearby, right along the Panama Canal, though we might see that during the main trip. There is an island in the canal, Barro Colorado, that has some fabulous hiking and nature site-seeing. Again, that might make it into the main trip itinerary with the help of naturalist guides.

**Costa Rica:** I have not been in CR and am not familiar with San José, but everyone tells me to not spend much time there. It is a crime-ridden and highly congested city that belies the calm and security of the rest of the country. However, if there is time, a visit and tour of the century-old opera house, which is a small-scale replica of the one in Paris, is worth it. If you can get to San Pedro (about 15 miles outside of San José), then a tour of the Universidad de Costa Rica is worth it. The Archeology Museum of Costa Rica is worth a look. For the economists (ha ha!), a tour of the gold museum in the Central Bank is possible. I am also told that Sábana has a great art museum.