

# 2027 Treasures of Central America

## The Panama Canal and Marvels of Costa Rica

*with Dr. Scott Solomon*

January 14–22, 2027



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**January 14–22, 2027**

From \$8,800

*double occupancy, per person*



## **2027 Treasures of Central America**

### **The Panama Canal and Marvels of Costa Rica**

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**Embark on an unforgettable Central American journey under the guidance of Professor Scott Solomon from Rice University, a biologist, science communicator, and expert in ecology and evolution. His lectures and in-field commentary will sharpen your understanding of biodiversity, tropical ecosystems, and the interplay between nature and human culture. With his insight, every rainforest trail, mangrove stand, and island lagoon becomes a living laboratory.**

Begin amid the San Blas islands, then explore Portobelo's rainforests and colonial forts. Traverse the engineering marvel of the Panama Canal, and delve into Darién's remote wilderness, where traditional Emberá life offers lessons in human resilience. Finally, along Costa Rica's Pacific coast, learn how riparian and forest ecosystems support astonishing species richness. With Professor Solomon's contextual interviews and site-based narration, this voyage transcends sightseeing—it becomes a curated journey of discovery through Central America's natural and cultural landscapes.

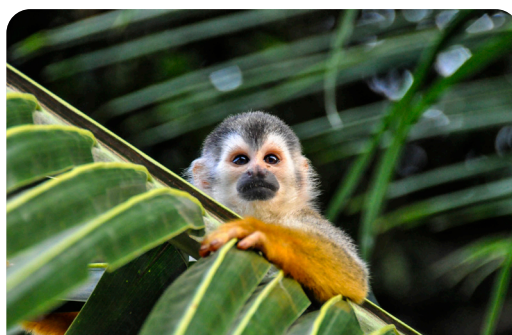
# Your Journey Expert



**Dr. Scott Solomon** is an Associate Teaching Professor at Rice University, where he teaches ecology, evolutionary biology, and scientific communication. He received his PhD in Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior from The University of Texas at Austin. Professor Solomon's research projects have taken him through Panama and Costa Rica, and developed a deep understanding of their land and ecosystems. Professor Solomon has also worked as a visiting researcher with the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC and with São Paulo State University in Rio Claro, Brazil. He has taught field biology courses at Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory in Colorado and in the rainforests and coral reefs of Belize. Professor Solomon received the George R. Brown Award for Superior Teaching and the Outstanding Undergraduate Research Mentor Award from Rice University. He also serves as an associate editor for the *Journal of Tropical Ecology*. His writing and photography have appeared in such publications as *Aeon*, *Nautilus*, *Slate*, and *WIRED*. Professor Solomon has taught two Great Courses: *What Darwin Didn't Know: The Modern Science of Evolution* and *Why Insects Matter: Earth's Most Essential Species*.

## Highlights

- Travel alongside your expert for a uniquely immersive journey, connecting rainforests, reefs, and volcanic landscapes with the evolutionary forces, biodiversity, and human-environment relationships that define Central America.
- Transit the Panama Canal, a modern engineering wonder, with expert commentary that places its construction and operation in the broader story of human innovation and global trade.
- Hike in Portobelo's rainforest and explore its UNESCO-listed colonial forts, learning how ecology, empire, and piracy intersected at this vital hub of Spain's treasure fleets.
- Meet the Emberá people of Darién National Park, gaining insight into how indigenous traditions, crafts, and lifeways have endured amid one of the world's most biodiverse regions.
- Discover Ecocentro Calathea, a conservation garden showcasing southern Costa Rica's remarkable biodiversity through native plants, medicinal species, and vibrant birdlife near Piedras Blancas National Park.



Questions? Call 1-855-476-5080

[Discover More](#)



# Treasures of Central America: The Panama Canal and Marvels of Costa Rica

with Dr. Scott Solomon

## Itinerary

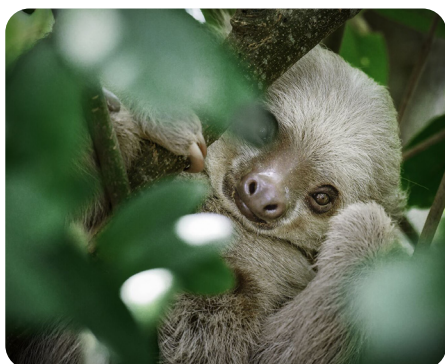


### Day 1: Bienvenidos a Panamá

Arrive in Tocumen International Airport Panama (PTY), Panama City, Panama, where you will be met by your driver and transferred to the Waldorf Astoria Hotel (or similar) for the night. This evening, join your fellow travelers and your Great Courses Journeys Expert for a welcome cocktail reception. Dinner will be at your leisure.

**Included Meal:** Reception

**Accommodation:** Waldorf Astoria Hotel (or similar)



### Day 2: Past and Present in Panama City

After breakfast at the hotel, begin your day with your expert and local guide at the Punta Culebra Nature Center, an open-air facility where exhibits and trails highlight Panama's rich biodiversity and the ecological importance of the isthmus. A short distance away, the Frank Gehry-designed Biomuseo expands this perspective, with interactive displays that trace Panama's unique geology, its role in connecting two continents, and the evolutionary consequences of that union.

Following lunch in a historic setting, continue with a guided exploration of Casco Antiguo, Panama City's colonial quarter. Here, plazas, churches, and restored architecture reveal the city's layered past, from Spanish settlement to modern preservation efforts. Later in the afternoon, drive across the isthmus to Colón to embark *Le Lapérouse*.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodations:** *Le Lapérouse*



### Day 3: Ecology and Tradition in the San Blas Islands

Spend the afternoon in the San Blas Islands, anchored off the idyllic Holandes Cayes. These palm-fringed islets are not only visually stunning but also ecologically rich. Their surrounding reefs are among the healthiest in the archipelago, providing a living classroom for studying coral ecosystems and the vibrant species—parrotfish, angelfish, and more—that depend on them.

The islands form part of the autonomous Guna Yala territory, where the Guna people continue to preserve their language, traditions, and distinctive art forms. Encounters here offer insight into how cultural identity and environmental stewardship are interwoven, providing a deeper perspective on both the natural and human history of this remarkable region.

**Including Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodations:** *Le Lapérouse*





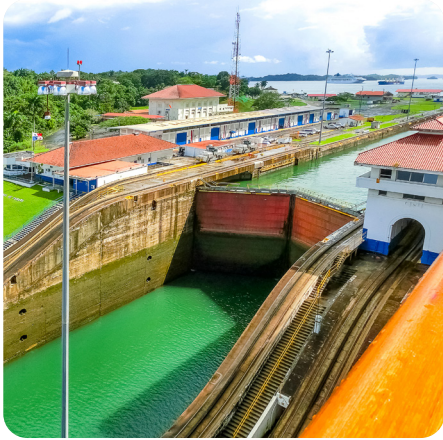
## Day 4: Historic Portobelo and Biodiversity

Your full day in historic Portobelo begins with a guided hike into the surrounding rainforest, where the canopy comes alive with toucans, parrots, and perhaps monkeys or sloths. Along the way, your expert helps frame the ecological significance of these diverse species within one of the most biologically rich regions on earth.

In the afternoon, explore the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Portobelo itself, once a vital Spanish port for treasure fleets crossing the Atlantic. Visit 17th-century forts built to guard against pirates and the Customs House where silver and gold were tallied. The day concludes with a Congo Dance Workshop, where a local troupe introduces the rhythms and traditions of Afro-Caribbean heritage.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodations:** *Le Lapérouse*



## Day 5: A Marvel of Modern Engineering

Transit one of the world's greatest feats of engineering. Begun in 1881 by Ferdinand de Lesseps—famed for the Suez Canal—the Panama Canal was completed in 1914 under American leadership, saving ships nearly 8,000 nautical miles between the Atlantic and Pacific. Discover how its creation reshaped global trade and politics.

Your transit begins in Colón, where massive locks lift vessels 85 feet to Gatun Lake, a man-made wonder in its own right. Crossing the lake and passing through the Gaillard Cut—carved through the continental divide—you witness both technical ingenuity and rainforest biodiversity. Descending through the Pedro Miguel and Miraflores Locks, you reach the Pacific at day's end, having experienced the canal as both history and living ecosystem.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodations:** *Le Lapérouse*



## Day 6: Indigenous Culture and Ecological Wonders

Declared a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 1983, Darién National Park protects one of the most ecologically diverse regions in the Americas. Its landscapes—mountains, river valleys, mangroves, and coastal plains—provide habitats for an extraordinary range of flora and fauna, from harpy eagles to jaguars. Scientists regard it as a living laboratory for studying tropical ecosystems and biogeography, particularly the ecological corridor connecting North and South America.

The region is also home to indigenous communities who preserve traditions that predate European contact. In Playa Muerto, meet the Emberá people, whose language, crafts, and daily practices offer insight into centuries of cultural resilience.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodations:** *Le Lapérouse*



## Day 7: A Day at Sea

Enjoy a day at sea, attending lecture by your expert and other education briefings on board, treating yourself to the ship's amenities, or simply relaxing on deck as you cruise the open ocean.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodations:** *Le Lapérouse*





## Day 8: Conservation and Community in Costa Rica

The small Costa Rican port of Golfito serves as your gateway to Ecocentro Calathea, an open-air botanic garden created in 2020 as part of a broader conservation initiative. Dedicated to preserving and interpreting the fragile ecosystems bordering Piedras Blancas National Park, the eco-center introduces visitors to the extraordinary biodiversity of southern Costa Rica. On a guided walk, learn about native trees, flowering plants, and traditional medicinal species while considering how they sustain both wildlife and human communities. The gardens also provide a natural haven for colorful birdlife, from hummingbirds and tanagers to toucans and parrots, illustrating the richness of the region's avian populations. The visit concludes with a pause at the welcome center before returning to the ship.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodations:** *Le Lapérouse*



## Day 9: Departure

After breakfast, disembark and transfer to Juan Santamaría International Airport (SJO), San Jose, Costa Rica for flights home.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast

# What's Included:

- Comprehensive 7-night cruise aboard the deluxe *Le Lapérouse*
- One pre-night at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel (or similar) in Panama City, Panama with welcome reception (dinner on own) on January 14, 2027
- One PONANT EXPLORATIONS Tour Director dedicated to The Great Courses Journeys from the Pre-Night on January 14, 2027, through the end of the voyage/disembarkation on January 22, 2027
- Half day of touring in Panama City, lunch included, with transfer to pier for embarkation on January 15, 2027
- One exclusive The Great Courses Journeys onboard hosted cocktail reception
- 2-3 onboard lectures given by The Great Courses Journeys Expert
- One shore excursion exclusively custom for The Great Courses Journeys at each port of call led by expert guides
- Captain's gala dinners and cocktail receptions aboard ship
- All meals aboard ship including early riser's coffee and pastry, breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner
- Open bar aboard ship excluding premium alcohol, including select wines with lunch and dinner
- 24-hour complimentary room service
- Comprehensive pre-departure materials
- Unlimited WiFi (as available via satellite)
- Airport/hotel/pier transfers and handling of luggage on official arrival and departure days, January 14, 2027 and January 22, 2027, respectively
- Port taxes and charges
- Gratuities to shipboard personnel, porters, guides, and drivers on tours



# Accommodations



## Luxury Ship *Le Lapérouse*

The five-star *Le Lapérouse*, part of the PONANT Explorers expedition yacht series, features 92 cabins accommodating 184 guests. Designed with advanced eco-friendly technology, its “Clean Ship” certification highlights energy efficiency and marine protection. Compact yet luxurious, it navigates shallow bays and sensitive environments while offering safe, comfortable voyages with custom stabilizers. **(7 nights)**

### **Waldorf Astoria Panama**

*Panama City, Panama*

The Waldorf Astoria Panama, a five-star luxury hotel in Panama City, blends elegant design with modern comfort. Guests enjoy refined accommodations, an outdoor pool, a full-service spa, and two upscale restaurants. Ideally located near the National Theater and the city’s vibrant districts, it offers both sophistication and convenience for discerning travelers. **(1 night)**



SPA



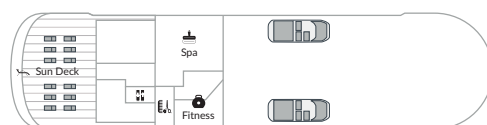
RESTAURANT



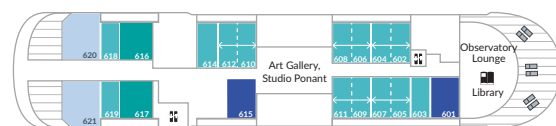
OWNER'S SUITE

# Le Lapérouse Deck Plan & Pricing

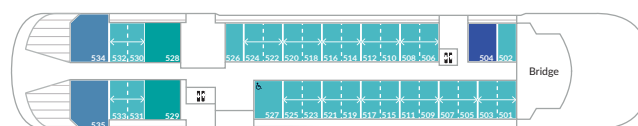
DECK 7



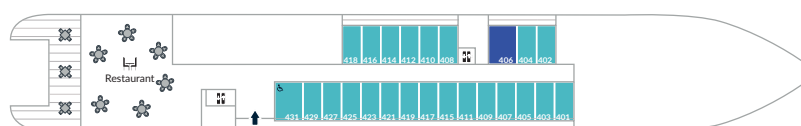
DECK 6



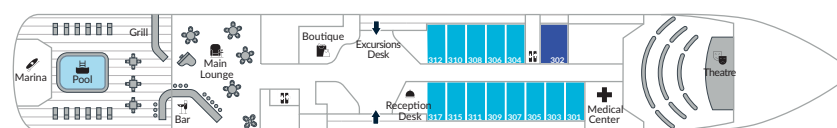
DECK 5



DECK 4



DECK 3



DECK 0 / The Blue Eye underwater lounge

- Deluxe Stateroom Deck 3
- Prestige Stateroom Decks 4-5-6
- Deluxe Suite Decks 3-4-5-6
- Prestige Suite Decks 5-6
- Privilege Suite Decks 5-6
- Grand Deluxe Suite Deck 6
- Owner's Suite Deck 5

Suites 431 and 527 are designated for guests with reduced mobility.

CATEGORY	DOUBLE OCCUPANCY <i>per person</i>	SINGLE OCCUPANCY <i>per person</i>
Deluxe Stateroom - Deck 3	\$8,800	\$12,590
Prestige Stateroom - Deck 4	\$9,490	\$13,630
Prestige Stateroom - Deck 5	\$9,850	\$14,170
Prestige Stateroom - Deck 6	\$10,270	\$14,800
Deluxe Suite - Decks 3, 4, 5, 6	\$13,360	\$19,430
Prestige Suite - Deck 5	\$17,210	\$25,210
Prestige Suite - Deck 6	\$17,980	\$26,360
Privilege Suite - Decks 5, 6	\$18,750	\$27,520
Grand Deluxe Suite - Deck 6	\$20,360	\$29,930
Owner's Suite - Deck 5	\$23,910	\$46,360

**Departure: Treasures of Central America: The Panama Canal and Marvels of Costa Rica**  
**January 14-22, 2027 | Deposit: 25% of Tour Fare**

You will be allocated a cabin within The Great Courses Journey's allotment, specific cabin requests based on availability.

For Full Terms & Conditions [Click Here](#)