



## TRIP IDEAS

# Panama Has Majestic Mountains, Incredible Rain Forests, and Rich Marine Life — Here's How to Plan Your Trip

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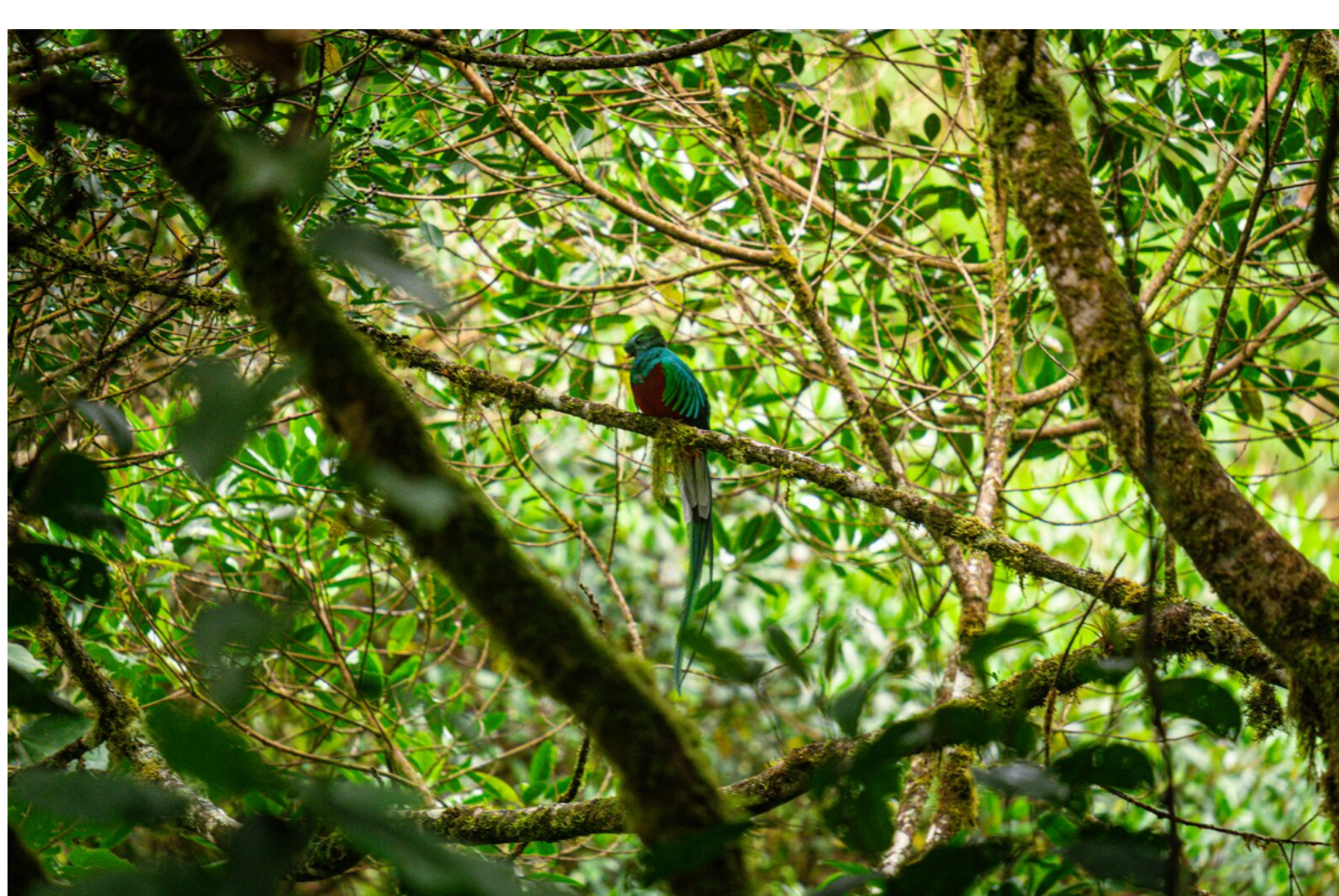
Aerial view of Coiba Island. Photo: Panama Tourism

This Central American country, rich in natural beauty but often overlooked by visitors, is finally coming into its own.



Full disclosure: Panama's exotic allure isn't just tangible, it's magnetic. Majestic mountains with stunning panoramic vistas intertwine with soothingly sifted flour-like beaches and azure waters. Embarking on a journey through Panama inspires nature enthusiasts of all kinds, enchanted at the chance to explore and experience its tall, lush peaks, rich marine life and everything in-between. Unforgettable and soulful, Panama beckons.

## Kiss the Sky



La Amistad National Park

Occupying more than one-third of the country are protected natural reserves, including 13 national and marine parks, and one international park – [La Amistad](#) – located in the extreme northwest, cradling the Costa Rican border. A UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1983, the 991,000-acre rainforest oasis is the largest and most remote nature reserve in Central America, renowned for its rich biodiversity. Bordering it is [Mount Totumas Cloud Forest](#), a 400 acre reserve that provides both incredible accommodations, and experienced local guides who lead the way, blazing through more than 30km of teeming jungle, incredible waterfalls and once-in-a-lifetime wildlife sightings, including the Quetzal, a sacred bird to both Mayans and Aztecs, as well as pumas, jaguars, monkeys and the endangered tapir.

Coffee? Of course. Panama's Boquete Valley and soaring, volcanic soil-rich Chiriqui Highlands are both reputed to grow some of the best Arabica and Robusta varieties on the planet. For a first-hand look, and taste, head to [Janson's Farm](#) in Volcan, a certified, family-owned coffee plantation where you can enjoy a tour of the expansive grounds, and an interactive coffee tasting session. Savour Panama's award-winning Geisha varietal, easily one of its most prized products, thanks to its unique sweet and floral hints of berry, mango, even jasmine and pineapple. One sip and you'll understand why the Geisha is considered to be ambrosia, nectar of the Gods themselves.

Now caffeinated, you're ready to tackle nearby [Baru Volcano National Park](#), the highest point in Panama towering nearly 3,500 meters. It's the only place on the planet where, on a clear day, both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans are visible at the same time. Home to five different ecosystems, seven craters and several hiking trails varying in difficulty, you can make a day of it on foot, or access the peak by 4x4 in 30 minutes. Pro tip: try to time your peak arrival at sunset or consider camping for a more intimate night sky experience.

## Island Hopping and Water Fun



Morrillo Eco Resort, Morrillo

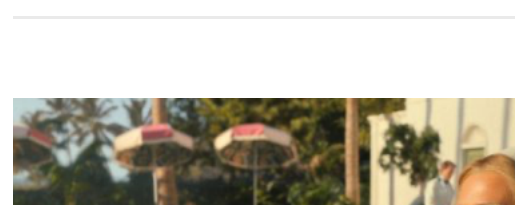
Unspoilt coasts and graceful river bends, with a splash of island vibes and a wealth of wildlife? Yes, please. Howler monkeys serenade visitors at the [Morrillo Beach Eco Resort](#), which prides itself on several sustainable initiatives, including sea turtle protection, and human powered adventures such as guided mangrove [sea kayaking tours](#), an exceptionally gentle way to experience Panama's winding, aquatic labyrinths. Paddle through diverse ecosystems in a soothing and serene natural environment while learning more about, and further appreciating, the nurturing role mangroves play for a number of animal habitats.

Off the coast, and on the Pacific, [Coiba National Park](#) encompasses more than 400,000 acres of mangroves, forest and marine areas within the Gulf of Chiriqui. Coiba Island itself was a penal colony for decades, and while you can tour remnants of its reportedly haunted prison, be sure to see (and hear) the howler monkeys in action near the beach, and gaze up to catch a glimpse of both the Coiba spinetail, and stunning scarlet macaw.

A UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2005, Coiba's rich biodiversity and hundreds of marine species have been able to thrive and flourish. [Pacific Adventure Tours](#) allows visitors the chance to experience it for themselves, offering everything from Humpback whale and Bottlenose dolphin watching, to snorkeling and swimming alongside extroverted tropical fish who love to say hello up close. For those eager to escape the world for a while, Rancheria Island, one of the 38 islands in the Coiba Archipelago, is the perfect outpost to lay down a towel and go for a quiet dip. Lined with towering palms, sugar sands and some of the clearest, most turquoise water west of the Caribbean, it's a shoulder-dropping, mouth-opening screensaver brought to life.



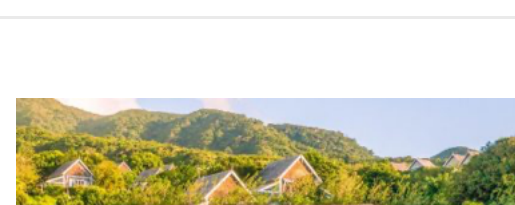
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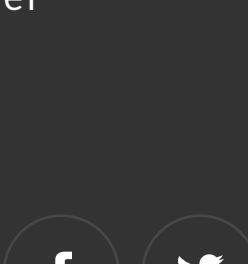
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