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TRIP DETAILS

9 days ~ Panama

*6 days easy to moderate
sea kayaking*

Daily snorkel safaris

Easy rainforest hikes

*6 nights camping,
2 nights hotels*

DATES

Dec 22–Dec 30, '07

Jan 7–Jan 15, '08

Jan 26–Feb 3

Feb 16–Feb 24

Mar 21–Mar 29

Apr 12–Apr 20

LAND COST

*\$2,395 per person
(2-12 members)*

\$150 charter flights

KUNA YALA EXPLORER

Kayak & Snorkel with the indigenous Kuna of Panama

**TRIP LEVEL
MODERATE**

HIGHLIGHTS

- *Sea kayak in the protected waters of the San Blas Islands, the land of the Kuna—a trip we pioneered!*
- *Meet the indigenous Kuna in their remote island villages unvisited by any other tour company—an MTS exclusive!*
- *Enjoy wonderful snorkeling among amazing coral reefs*

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KUNA YALA EXPLORER

Kayak & Snorkel with the Indigenous Kuna of Panama

Discover why this adventure to Panama's San Blas Islands was chosen in the past by *National Geographic Adventure* and *Outside* magazines as one of the top trips in the world! (And why others try to imitate our itinerary!) We pioneered this trip in 1997, and we remain ardent fans, not only 'cause we love sea kayaking, but also because of the islands' extraordinarily rich marine ecosystems and the indigenous Kuna who call this place home.

Here in their sovereign nation, Kuna Yala, stand the largest expanses of primary forests in Mesoamerica, with more species diversity over distance than the Amazon. The harmony between natural and cultural heritage is abundantly clear in this mountainous coastal region of the entire northeast coast of Panama.

The Kuna still spend their days fishing, gathering coconuts, and making *molas* (the famous reverse appliqué cloth art). Cultural rewards abound as you paddle and snorkel among rich coral reefs (among the best preserved and most diverse in the world), glide through pristine mangroves, and camp on uninhabited tropical beaches or near rarely visited villages where the Kuna welcome our group as honored guests. It's an experience like no other in the world—and we're the only company permitted by the Kuna to offer such an intimate trip in their homeland. Our adventure is where some of the more traditional Kuna live, and is part of a community managed sustainable tourism program benefiting more than six villages in the area, providing us with very unique cultural interaction.



ITINERARY

☞ This trip begins with a rendezvous at the Panama City airport on Day 1. We recommend you try to arrive before dinnertime.

DAY 1 ~ Panama City

Arrive in Panama City in the afternoon. Your trip leader or a representative will meet you outside the customs and immigration area at the airport. He or she will answer questions, brief you on the immediate arrangements, and escort you to your hotel on the banks of the Panama Canal. "Welcome" dinner with the group.

D...Country Inn Suites on the Panama Canal

DAY 2 ~ Fly to Digir

A short flight takes us from Panama City to the traditional island community of Digir, where the community and the *Sabila* (chief or community leader) of the island meet us. Culturally, the Kuna are world famous for their political organization, cultural integrity, matrilineal society and fierce defense of their sovereignty with a successful cultural revolution in 1925. Their long established hierarchy of tribal leadership has provided a cohesion that makes the now

55,000 Kunas rich in culture. They are widely known for their beautiful, reverse appliqué textiles called *molos* that are a part of the women's everyday dress. The Kuna live their days in much the same way as they did hundreds of years ago, still sailing their dugout, keel-less sailboats as their main form of transportation. The Kunas' colorful language, beliefs in myths, and value of tradition are well represented during their beautiful dance ceremonies.

We'll have time to explore the village and make friends before heading out for a hike in the rainforest to visit cemeteries and experience incredible bird watching. In the evening we may be treated to some spectacular Kuna dancing!

B,L,D...Camp

DAYS 3-4 ~ Paddling

The Kuna's archipelago arcs over 200 miles with more than 360 small islands and hundreds more coral reefs. It is one of the best conserved marine environments in the Caribbean bioregion. The Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute has shown that Kuna Yala contains the highest diversity of coral species and the best reef development in Panama, including over 82 species of reef sponges!

In the morning we bid farewell to the villagers and begin our journey westward on a two-hour motor trip to an outer archipelago of islands with pure white sandy beaches. Here we'll get into our sea kayaks in the protected waters and explore the different reefs. This area has been identified as one of the "hot spot" areas of marine diversity among the reefs of Kuna Yala, and is a great place for snorkeling. We'll see many different rays, moray eels, parrot and many other colorful fish that live among the coral, as well as nurse sharks, the occasional porpoise, and perhaps even manatee. The best snorkeling may be right in front of your tent!

B,L,D each day...Camp

DAY 5 ~ Island of Sichirtupo

Transfer by dugout motorized canoe to the magical white sand island of Sichirtupo, whose surrounding reef and deep channel is glorious for exploring. We will take a relaxing paddle over to the sand flats to witness myriads of sea stars.

B,L,D...Camp

DAY 6 ~ Rio Paloma

The largest expanse of primary forests in Mesoamerica is in the Panamanian Caribbean, with more species diversity over distance than the Amazon. The mountainous coastal region of the entire northeast coast of Panama is the sovereign indigenous territory of Kuna Yala.

We'll take an easy paddle to an uninhabited section of the mainland for a memorable walk along the pristine banks of the crystal-clear Río Paloma. This is a great opportunity to wash up in the fresh clean river water, and creek-bed hiking through the primary rainforest provides us with fantastic opportunities for wildlife viewing, including crocodiles, giant river otters, toucans, birds of prey, monkeys, and possibly tapirs!

B,L,D...Camp

DAY 7 ~ Tubasaniket

Paddle about three hours and explore mangrove habitats. Return to camp for our last night of camping.

B,L,D...Camp

DAY 8 ~ Panama City

Early morning flight back to Panama City. Transfer to the hotel and after settling in, you'll have a chance to relax and rest on the banks of the Panama Canal. Early afternoon departure for a sunset sea kayak soirée in the mouth of the Canal—a spectacular way to bid farewell to the Isthmus as we paddle alongside enormous ships from all over the world. After a quick clean-up back at the hotel, we'll take a stroll through Casco Viejo, the old walled city and a UNESCO World Heritage site. We'll celebrate the success of our expedition at a fine restaurant in the Old Town. *B,D...Country Inn Suites on the Panama Canal*

DAY 9 ~ Departure

Transfer to the airport and depart on homeward-bound flights.
B...

LAND COST

\$2,395 per person (2-12 members)

\$150 charter flights

Rates quoted are per person, based on sharing double accommodations.

Single Supplement—\$150 “requested” singles; \$75 for “forced” singles.

If you prefer single accommodations, you must pay the Single Supplement Fee. If you're traveling alone and wish to share accommodations, we'll try our best to find you a roommate. If that's not possible, we will only charge you half of the single supplement.

What's Included

- ◆ expert leadership
- ◆ accommodations in hotels on Days 1 and 8
- ◆ Charter flights in Panama
- ◆ tent accommodations and all sea kayak arrangements in the field, including camp and cook staffs
- ◆ ,group gear and equipment
- ◆ meals except where noted
- ◆ airport transfers
- ◆ ground transportation
- ◆ additional guides where necessary
- ◆ basic medical and evacuation insurance

What's Not

International and U.S. domestic fares; insurance other than basic medical and evacuation insurance noted above (we strongly recommend you purchase the supplementary trip insurance offered by Mountain Travel Sobek, which includes trip cancellation insurance); optional tipping to leader, guides and local staff; excess baggage charges; airport taxes; cost of medical immunizations; items of a personal nature (sodas, alcoholic beverages, laundry, etc.).

Air Travel

Airfare is not included in the land cost of our trips. For air reservations, we recommend you contact the airlines directly, either by phone or the Internet. In addition, many travelers elect to use their “frequent flyer” miles when

traveling with us. **But please check with our staff before purchasing or obtaining your tickets.** We need to verify your arrival and departure schedule and ensure we have enough participants to operate the trip.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Expert Leadership

Expert leadership is the key to an exciting, unforgettable experience. Our trips feature gifted leaders for whom leading trips is a true vocation. Besides showing you wonders you'd never find on your own, they make sure everything runs smoothly and safely without a hitch. They are knowledgeable about all aspects of your trip, and take great pleasure in sharing their insights with you. More than just guides, they positively elevate your experience by being teachers, companions, and the best of friends. You'll be in good hands with them every step of the way.

Nemesio Alfaro, a native Kuna with 10 years of sea kayaking experience, guides us on our journey across the islands. Nemesio is a gifted mariner, solar technician, and lens grinder. He was born in the village of Carti Sugdup in Kuna Yala and has a deep knowledge of Kuna myths, traditions, and the plants and animals of the *comarca*. Nemesio speaks Kuna and Spanish, and can communicate in English.

Brock Tabor has been working in the outdoor industry since 1989 when he spent his first summer fighting off blackflies, rabid squirrels, and 9-year-olds in the Adirondacks. Since that time he has developed an unusual desire to "mess around in boats." He has guided kayak, raft, and hiking trips from the Alaskan Arctic to the beaches of Papua New Guinea. This will be Brock's third year working in Kuna Yala. He has a background in geosciences and spends his free time operating a kayak school in Juneau.

Leader assignments will be confirmed in the Final Bulletin sent to you three weeks prior to departure.

Activity Level

Mountain Travel Sobek trips are designed for flexible, energetic people who like to be active and intellectually involved, and have a spirit of adventure and a positive attitude. We rate this trip as moderate, although it can be physically strenuous at times. It is participatory in nature, and you will enjoy your experience more fully if you are in good health and physically fit. Due to the rugged nature and remote location, you should have an "expeditionary" spirit. Our use of sea kayaks and motorized dugout canoes allows us access to some of the more remote and less traveled spots in the archipelago. Most sea kayaking sections are optional, and a training and orientation session precedes the first day of paddling. Sea and weather conditions in Panama can be rainy and windy and some days may require a full day's effort. An average day of paddling will range from 3-6 hours, mixed with some rest time where our aim is to relax or explore our surroundings.

Weather

The climate in Panama is tropical, with an average temperature of 80°F year-round. Nights however, are generally cooler with fresh breezes. The major weather hazard is sun exposure. Great care needs to be taken to avoid burning. Though our trip will be during the summer (or dry season), heavy rains (*aguacero*) are still common. This is also the season when the trade winds blow from the north, helping to cool the temperature.

Clothing & Equipment

You only need to bring personal gear, a light sleeping bag and pad, snorkeling equipment, and a daypack. Mountain Travel Sobek supplies comfortable and roomy two-person tents and other community camping equipment. We'll send you a list of recommended clothing and equipment after you sign up.

Visas

A \$5 tourist card is necessary for U.S. citizens. It's good for 30 days and is extendable. These can be bought at the airport at your gate upon departure from the U.S.

THE NEXT STEP

Ready to go? Signing up is easy!

Just call us at 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235) and reserve your spot! You can also book a reservation online at our website (www.mtsobek.com). If you prefer to use a travel agent, he or she can book your trip at no extra cost and provide other helpful assistance.

Then Leave the Rest to Us

Before you go, we provide you with extensive pre-departure information, including clothing recommendations, suggested reading lists, up-to-date health advice prepared by our consulting physician (an expert in wilderness medicine), and other details from procuring visas to advice on local customs.

Why Mountain Travel Sobek is Your First Choice for Adventure

Mountain Travel Sobek is the pioneer in active adventure travel. No other adventure travel company can lay claim to that title. We were the first to take Americans trekking in Nepal, raft the wild rivers of Africa, and open up many previously inaccessible corners of the world to curious travelers. We set the standard for adventure travel and have a strong reputation for excellence that we do everything we can to maintain. Since we are the leading adventure company, we have a lot to live up to, so we make sure we provide safe, quality trips and the best customer service to our passengers.

With Mountain Travel Sobek, you're guaranteed a unique paddling adventure. We are one of the few adventure travel companies who have developed new and exciting kayaking trips in all corners of the world. The guides have an impeccable safety record and know how to provide an unforgettable adventure.

References

Don't take our word for how great our trips are. We'll be happy to provide you with references of satisfied past travelers. Just give us a call at 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235).

Questions?

Feel free to call us at 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235) if you still have any questions or concerns. You can also access our award-winning website at www.mtsobek.com. We're here to help you.

Note on Itinerary

Although we will do our best to adhere to the itinerary schedule as listed, it is subject to change. Please read the Limitation of Liability and Booking Conditions in the four-page Participant Information Form. You can find all this

information on our website at www.mtsobek.com/faq and the form itself at www.mtsobek.com/pdf/participant_info.pdf.

Terms & Conditions

Once you have made a deposit for a trip, you agree to be bound by all our terms and conditions including the Limitation of Liability Clause. The full Terms and Conditions can be found at www.mtsobek.com/faq/#liability or call 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235) for a copy. These are partial conditions. Your participation is contingent on your signature on the full list of terms specified in the four-page Participant Information Form (www.mtsobek.com/pdf/participant_info.pdf). Any dispute concerning, relating or referring to the Terms and Conditions, to any literature concerning this trip, or the trip itself, shall be resolved exclusively by binding arbitration in San Francisco, California, according to the then existing commercial rules of the American Arbitration Association. Such proceedings will be governed by substantive California law (but not procedural law) without regard to the California Arbitration Act.

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