



"A Traveller sees what he sees, a tourist sees what he comes to see" - GK Chesteron

While you may be a traveller or a tourist or a bit of both, Panama is a great place to explore, as it is also a great place to use as your jumping off point. With the rest of Central America to the north and the ever so intriguing and beautiful country of Colombia to the south, you can do it all fairly inexpensively if you are willing to spend a bit of time watching for deals on air fares and hotels. This does not mean spending hours upon hours at your computer. By setting up a few fare alerts on your proposed destinations, you will be amazed at how much they drop from day to day and of course increase at the same rate.

International Travel

I currently have 6 fare alerts set up with www.kayak.com . Two days ago flights from Panama to Toronto return/round trip were \$367.00 for a 2 stop flight. They increased to \$419 for a one stop flight. Last year I spent close to \$700 for the same flight, and I know some of my Canadian friends have spent more. Lima, Peru a few weeks ago was down to \$378 round trip, and Santiago, Chile which is hot on my radar was as low as \$650 for ski season. Europe is always rising and falling in fare prices, and I saw Amsterdam and Madrid as low as \$750 back in January and February. Spain in February is beautiful, with spring like temperatures and spectacular views. One can also get to Europe on the ever so popular re positioning cruise that a few of our friends have just recently enjoyed. Each year at the end of April the ship leaves Panama and sails over to Europe and one can hop aboard for as little as \$390 for transatlantic journey.

Colombia which we did last year, was more than I had expected. Cartagena is a fabulous city, with modern amenities, fabulous beaches and lots of culture. While Cartagena is expensive in accommodations and food, Bogata and Medellin are other beautiful destinations that will satisfy any traveller or tourist.

Another option is to try a multi destination trip. In January, we flew from Panama to Toronto (1 week of visiting), Toronto to Vancouver (1 week of skiing), Vancouver to Panama. The total trip was \$900 and a whole lot of fun. I have fun with it. Panama to Miami to Buenos Aires return to Panama, or return to San Diego. You will often be amazed at how little a 4 destination tour can be if you give yourself a bit of flexibility.

Touring Panama

If touring Panama is something you have been putting off doing, shame on you. Panama is a country filled with adventure, a variety of climates and a lots of culture. If you don't know anyone with a private plane, then hop into your car and get going, or take advantage of the flights out of Albrook to the major destinations that leave once or twice a day. Coronado to Boquete is approximately 6 hours by car, and a very scenic drive. In the dry season, one can now get to the San Blas by car, and of course there is always the bus, which is cheap and comfortable and will give you some time to sit back and catch up on your reading. Pedasi and The Azuero Peninsula is a 3-4 hour drive or a 30 minute flight from Chame.

Contadora which is one of my most favorite destinations in Panama is a must see. With whale watching season approaching (July-August), Contadora should be on everyone's list of fun places to visit. There are a few options, if you are not a flyer or don't like small planes, then hop onto the ferry in Panama City and be over in The Pearl Islands in 90 minutes. Contadora hosts crystal blue waters, fabulous snorkeling and fresh and delicious cuisine. The Pearl Islands has a lot of history and is filled with surprises at every turn.

While we already live in a beautiful part of the world, there is a lot of world out there still to see. Travelling doesn't have to be expensive, there are house swaps and couch swaps and last minute deals that are among a few of the options to get you out there and touring and/or travelling and broadening your horizons. Have fun and if you need any assistance, tips or tricks....you know where to find me.