

## Social Science & Humanities

14-Day Program

Forum on Education Abroad Member • Loyola University Maryland — Returning Partner 2026 • 20+ Years in Panama

### Why Panama for Social Sciences & Humanities?

Panama is not a backdrop for a humanities course -- it is the subject. Every site on this itinerary is a place where colonialism, US imperialism, indigenous sovereignty, Afro-Caribbean diaspora, and 21st-century globalization are still being negotiated in real time. Students visit the ruins of the first European city on the Pacific, walk the sites of the 1964 flag riots that triggered sovereignty negotiations, travel by dugout canoe to an Embera community defending its land rights, and sit across from Panamanian university students to compare what development looks like from the other side of it. There is no country in the Americas where the full arc of Western Hemisphere history -- conquest to canal to contemporary globalization -- is more walkable, more visible, or more alive.

### Program Itinerary

Day	Program	Discipline Relevance
1	<p><b>Arrival &amp; Welcome Dinner</b></p> <p>Airport pickup and transfer to Istmo (90 min). Settle into private bungalows. Welcome dinner with Sean and Ayesha. Evening orientation: "Panama as Contact Zone" -- faculty introduces the theoretical lenses and field observation methods that will structure the program.</p>	<p><i>Cultural theory</i></p> <p><i>Group formation</i></p> <p><i>Postcolonial Studies</i></p>
2	<p><b>San Carlos Community &amp; Pacific Coast</b></p> <p>Guided community walk through Market: fishing cooperative, Afro-Panamanian neighborhoods, local economy. Conversation with a community leader on land rights and coastal development. Afternoon paddleboarding. Evening faculty seminar: rural identity and displacement in contemporary Panama.</p>	<p><i>Sociology</i></p> <p><i>Cultural Geography</i></p> <p><i>Anthropology</i></p>
3	<p><b>Panama Viejo + BioMuseo</b></p> <p>Panama Viejo (1519): original Spanish settlement, sacked by Henry Morgan 1671. Contested heritage -- whose story is in the museum, and whose is absent. BioMuseo (Frank Gehry): how Panama narrates itself as the bridge between continents. Discussion: nation-states, mythology, and architecture. (Lunch not included)</p>	<p><i>Colonial History</i></p> <p><i>Heritage &amp; Memory</i></p> <p><i>Museology</i></p>
4	<p><b>El Valle de Anton</b></p> <p>Mountain town inside a volcanic crater at 600m. Artisan market (Nabe, Bugle, Kuna, Embera artisans). Ancient petroglyphs and colonial-era church. Cloud forest hike across the crater rim. Discussion: how indigenous and mestizo communities negotiate modernity, tourism, and tradition. (Lunch not included)</p>	<p><i>Cultural Anthropology</i></p> <p><i>Pre-Columbian History</i></p> <p><i>Religion &amp; Society</i></p>
5	<p><b>El Cano + Nata de los Caballeros</b></p> <p>El Cano Archaeological Site: necropolis of pre-Columbian chiefs (700-1000 CE) -- rarely visited by international students. Nata de los Caballeros (1522): oldest continuously inhabited European town on the Americas Pacific coast. Church of Santiago Apostol, oldest in the Americas still in active use.</p>	<p><i>Archaeology</i></p> <p><i>Pre-Columbian</i></p> <p><i>Civilizations</i></p> <p><i>Spanish Colonial History</i></p>

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6	<p><b>Local School Visit #1</b></p> <p>Partner school: bilingual exchange with local students. Discussion of the Panamanian education system. Evening yoga class at Istmo and faculty reflection session.</p>	<p><i>Education Systems</i> <i>Cross-Cultural Communication</i> <i>Youth Perspectives</i></p>
7	<p><b>Recreation Day</b></p> <p>Morning surfing lesson at local beach. Free afternoon for rest, journaling, or independent research. Midpoint faculty check-in.</p>	<p><i>Rest &amp; Integration</i> <i>Independent Fieldwork</i></p>
8	<p><b>Panama Canal + Casco Viejo</b></p> <p>Museo del Canal Interoceanico: Spanish colonial route to French failure to US construction to Panamanian sovereignty. Primary source documents: Torrijos-Carter Treaties. Miraflores Locks: live vessel transit. Casco Viejo walking tour: UNESCO colonial district, gentrification, and Afro-Panamanian community. (Lunch not included)</p>	<p><i>History of US Empire</i> <i>Labor History</i> <i>International Law</i></p>
9	<p><b>Senior Center -- Oral History</b></p> <p>Visit local senior center. Students conduct oral history interviews with elderly residents on social change in Panama over their lifetimes. Faculty can assign transcription and analysis as a course deliverable.</p>	<p><i>Oral History Methods</i> <i>Intergenerational Memory</i> <i>Social Change</i></p>
10	<p><b>Embera Indigenous Village + Portobelo</b></p> <p>Dugout canoe into Chagres River rainforest. Embera community: traditional medicine, governance, land rights, craft economy, and the ethics of tourism. Continue to the Caribbean coast. Overnight in Colon/Portobelo area.</p>	<p><i>Indigenous Studies</i> <i>Ethics of Encounter</i> <i>Land Rights</i></p>
11	<p><b>Caribbean -- Portobelo</b></p> <p>Portobelo UNESCO forts (1597-1630s): transatlantic slave trade site and cimarron resistance. Afro-Panamanian Congo cultural organizations: Festival del Cristo Negro, drumming traditions, Afro-Catholic syncretism. Also includes a boat trip and Caribbean snorkeling. Return to Istmo.</p>	<p><i>African Diaspora Studies</i> <i>Atlantic World History</i> <i>Religion &amp; Syncretism</i></p>
12	<p><b>Local School Visit #2</b></p> <p>Return visit to partner school. Deeper engagement -- collaborative project, infrastructure improvement, or structured presentation in Spanish. Faculty observes qualitative change from Visit #1.</p>	<p><i>Service Learning</i> <i>Community Partnership</i> <i>Sustained Engagement</i></p>
13	<p><b>University Exchange + Farewell</b></p> <p>Day trip to Universidad Tecnologica de Panama, Penonomé campus. Faculty presents; students engage in structured peer exchange with Panamanian students on society, opportunity, and culture. Evening: salsa class and farewell bonfire at Istmo.</p>	<p><i>Comparative Education</i> <i>Peer-to-Peer Dialogue</i> <i>Intercultural Exchange</i></p>
14	<p><b>Departure</b></p> <p>Breakfast at Istmo. Final reflection exercise. Airport transfer to Tocumen International Airport (90 min).</p>	--

All meals at Istmo included. Off-site lunches on Day 3, 4, and Day 8 excursions not included.

### What's Included

- Private retreat center — 8 bungalows, 24 beds (exclusive use)
- All meals prepared by on-site chef
- All activities, bilingual guides, and entry fees
- Ground transportation throughout
- Airport transfers (arrival & departure)
- ACP Dredging Division technical visit coordination
- University exchange coordination (UTP Penonomé)
- Community service partner coordination
- Overnight accommodation — Portobelo area (Day 10)

### Not Included

Airfare, travel insurance, off-site lunches (Days 3, 4 & 8), personal expenses

### Safety & Support

- Panama: US State Dept Level 2 (same as Costa Rica & most of Western Europe)
- US-trained EMT on staff at Istmo
- Medical clinic 10 min away; hospital 90 min (Panama City)
- Sean Davis: dedicated on-site coordinator, full program duration
- 24/7 emergency protocols and documentation available
- Exclusive-use property — no other guests during your program
- Forum on Education Abroad Standards of Good Practice

## Program Pricing

Larger groups = lower per-student cost. All pricing includes lodging, meals, activities, and ground transport.

Group Size	Low Season (Apr–Nov)	High Season (Dec–Mar)	Per Student	Per Student
7 students + 1 leader	\$25,165	\$26,862	\$257/day	\$274/day
12 students + 1 leader	\$35,263	\$37,457	\$210/day	\$223/day
14 students + 2 leaders*	\$39,302	\$41,695	\$201/day	\$213/day
22 students + 2 leaders	\$55,458	\$58,646	\$181/day	\$191/day

\*At 14+ students, a second faculty leader included at no additional cost. | Prices include all lodging, meals, activities, and ground transport.

## Your Hosts

**Sean Davis** — M.S. Educational Administration. Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (Chile). Founded an international school in Panama City. 20+ years in Panama.

**Ayesha Davis** — M.S. Environmental Engineering. Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (Paraguay). 10+ years designing water/sanitation projects with the World Bank and IDB across Latin America. Istmo co-founder.

### Ready to explore?

This itinerary is a starting point, not a contract. We work with study abroad offices to shape programs that fit the faculty member's course, the institution's timeline, and the students' level. Reconnaissance visits available.

Schedule a call: <https://calendar.app.google/Nve9vEcYxtJKpRpE8>

**Want to visit first?** Our reconnaissance visits let you see the campus before you commit. 4 days / 3 nights — email us to book yours ([info@istmoretreat.com](mailto:info@istmoretreat.com)).