**Daylong tour to Gatún Locks, Panama Canal Expansion and Portobelo by train (return trip by car, lunch is included)**

The tour starts early in the morning with the shuttle service to the railroad station where you will take a colorful train of ancient railway cars to Colón. Panama’s railroad was built during the time of The California Gold Rush for the purpose of shortening the course from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. This work finished in 1885, a year when French people decided to buy it for the sake of the construction of the canal. In 1994, the French people sold it to the United States along with the rights over the canal; they in turn administered it until 1979. A passenger service operates since 2001, since the railroad borders the canal and passes along the historic Culebra Cut and the magnificent Gatún Lake; the water used by the canal comes from said lake, it traverses the area’s lush vegetation. From the Visitor Center, you will be able to see at a short distance, you will even be able to touch, the mastodontic vessels that pass through the canal and you will be able to see in detail the ingenious system of locks that lifts ships so that they pass from one basin to another. Forthwith, you will be able to see in detail the canal expansion works that will allow the transit of supersize ships, another ambitious feat through which it is expected to have a water recycling system and larger basins. The tour continues in Portobelo, founded in 1597 as a Caribbean terminal for the trade route of the Isthmus of Panama, superseding this way *Nombre de Dios* after the plundering of Francis Drake. At that time, it was sought to make easier the trip from Panama through Camino de Cruces, a journey that started in land and continued along Chagres River in order allow the transit even during rainy season, a route that superseded Camino Real’s route. This little city guarded by the Caribbean Sea and its gentle hills boasts about its name “Puerto Bello” [Beautiful Port] that was assigned by Christopher Columbus in 1502 during his last trip only just when he sighted land. This quiet and little city still preserves features of that glorious past which are visible in its colonial wooden houses and buildings built expressly around the ruins of the Fort of San Fernando and the Fort of San Jerónimo. Its inhabitants, the Congos, descend directly from African slaves and they have conserved their habits and traditions throughout the time; they are mainly manifested in the music, dance and painting. You will have lunch during the tour.

DURATION: approximately 7 to 8 hours.

TIME: To be agreed.

GUIDE: a private Spanish speaker guide.

INCLUSIVE: shuttle service from/to the hotel, train ticket from Panama City to Colón, entrances to the Visitor Center and lunch. The train leaves very early, that is why we offer takeaway breakfast upon prior request.

NOTES: The train does not work on weekends. If you wish, the rail journey can be replaced with a private shuttle service. Visits order may be modified, even during the tour. You should bring your passport.

RECOMMENDED OUTFIT: comfortable shoes and clothes, hat, sunscreen, repellent, and a raincoat, especially between April and December.